

EXECUTIVE REPORT BY THE NBA PRESIDENT AT THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING OF THE NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION HELD IN AWKA, ANAMBRA STATE, ON THURSDAY, 7TH MAY 2026

PROTOCOL

1. It is with great pleasure that I welcome distinguished members of the National Executive Council to this historic meeting being held in Awka, the capital of my home state, Anambra. Anambra, known as ‘the light of the nation,’ was created on August 27, 1991, by the bifurcation of the old Anambra State. It shares borders with five states: Delta, Imo, Enugu, Kogi, and Rivers. Although Awka is the capital city, the largest city is Onitsha, followed by Nnewi, which is renowned as a commercial and industrial hub in West Africa. The name ‘Anambra’ is derived from the Omambala River, which flows through the state.
2. Awka is known for metalworking, and its blacksmiths were prized throughout the region for making farming implements, dane-guns, and ceremonial items. It is a land of rich legal heritage, intellectual distinction, and enduring contributions to the development of the Nigerian Bar. Anambra State occupies a unique place in the history of the Nigerian legal profession. It has produced some of the most illustrious jurists, advocates, and thought leaders who have shaped the trajectory of law and justice in Nigeria. From the Bench to the Bar, the State has consistently stood as a beacon of excellence, discipline, and legal innovation. Beyond its institutional significance, this meeting holds deep personal meaning to me, as Anambra State is my home.
3. It is therefore both an honour and a profound privilege to host this NBA NEC meeting before the last NEC meeting before the PRE AGC NEC Meeting of my administration in this distinguished State. This gathering is not only symbolic of homecoming but also reflective of the enduring unity and diversity of our great Association. Since our last NEC meeting held in Maiduguri, Borno State, the

Nigerian Bar Association has remained steadfast in advancing the rule of law, defending constitutional governance, promoting professional integrity, and implementing the resolutions reached by this Council at the Maiduguri NEC Meeting. A detailed account of our activities and interventions during the period under review is presented below.

4. In line with NEC's strong stance on protecting the integrity of the judicial process and preventing undue influence, the NBA formally petitioned the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), calling for an investigation into public statements made by political actors, including Senator Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso and others, which appeared to suggest attempts to influence judicial outcomes. This intervention reinforces the Association's commitment to judicial independence and the sanctity of court processes.
5. Pursuant to NEC's resolution, the NBA has concluded the reconstitution of its representatives on the Council of Legal Education in line with the approved three-year tenure framework. This step strengthens institutional representation and ensures that legal education in Nigeria continues to meet evolving professional and global standards.

KEY INTERVENTIONS AND ENGAGEMENTS

Opening of NBA Yola Branch Law Week (February 9, 2026)

6. During the period under review, I delivered a keynote address at the opening of the NBA Yola Branch Law Week, themed "Beyond the Present: Innovation, Adaptation and the Future of Our Profession." In my remarks, I emphasized that every generation of lawyers inherits a profession shaped by the decisions of those before it, but bears the responsibility not merely to preserve it, but to prepare it for the realities of the future. I reflected on the evolution of legal

practice, from an era defined by landlines and physical processes to one increasingly driven by digital systems, and noted that change has always been a constant in both society and the legal profession.

7. I stressed that the true question before us is not whether change will come, but whether we are prepared for it. I called on legal practitioners and institutions, particularly the judiciary, to embrace innovation through technology-driven processes such as e-filing and digital court systems. Drawing lessons from global examples, I warned that even strong institutions risk irrelevance if they fail to adapt. I further encouraged lawyers to prioritise continuous professional development, noting that competence, relevance, and growth in today's legal landscape are inseparable from a willingness to innovate.

Engagement with ECOWAS Court of Justice on Enforcement of Judgments (February 17, 2026)

8. The Association hosted the President of the ECOWAS Court of Justice, Honourable Justice Ricardo Cláudio Monteiro Gonçalves, alongside distinguished Judges and members of the Court's Registry, at the NBA National Secretariat. The engagement focused on a critical issue affecting the effectiveness of judicial systems: the enforcement of court judgments.
9. In my remarks, I emphasized that the true authority of any court lies not merely in its ability to deliver judgments, but in the assurance that such judgments will be obeyed. I noted that when decisions are treated as advisory rather than binding, the credibility of the justice system is eroded. I reiterated the NBA's commitment to strengthening enforcement frameworks through collaboration, institutional dialogue, and advocacy. The discussions underscored the need for stronger cooperation among the Bar, Bench, and governments within the region to ensure that judicial decisions translate into real and enforceable outcomes.

LPDC Prosecution Team Training - Strengthening Professional Discipline (February 18, 2026)

10. The NBA organised a two-day residential training programme for members of the NBA Prosecution Team at the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee (LPDC), themed “Understanding the LPDC Framework and Prosecutorial Mandate.” This engagement was aimed at strengthening the capacity of those responsible for enforcing professional discipline within the Bar. In my address, I underscored that discipline is the backbone of any profession and that the strength of the Bar lies not in its privileges but in its standards. I emphasized that the role of LPDC prosecutors is not ceremonial but central to maintaining ethical accountability within the profession. I encouraged members of the prosecution team to approach their duties with diligence, fairness, and integrity, noting that public confidence in the legal profession depends significantly on our ability to regulate ourselves transparently and effectively.

NBA Effurun Branch 10th Anniversary Celebration (February 22, 2026)

11. I joined members of the NBA Effurun Branch in celebrating their 10th Anniversary, themed “Celebrating a Decade of Dynamic Growth and Development: The Journey So Far; A Look into the Future.” The event provided an opportunity to reflect on the growth of the Branch and its contributions to the development of the legal profession. I noted that the Branch, which was established during my tenure as General Secretary of the NBA, has evolved into a vibrant and impactful community of legal practitioners. I commended its leadership and members for their commitment to professional development and the strengthening of Bar-Bench relations in Delta State. I also used the occasion to caution against the monetization of NBA elections, emphasizing that leadership must be anchored on competence, credibility, and integrity.

Strategic Engagement on Forensic Integrity and Anti-Fraud Systems (February 25, 2026)

12. The NBA hosted the leadership of the Chartered Institute of Forensic and Certified Fraud Investigators of Nigeria (CIFCFIN) at the National Secretariat for a strategic engagement on strengthening institutional integrity in Nigeria. The discussions focused on the role of forensic science in preventing fraud, strengthening criminal justice systems, and enhancing public confidence in governance. I emphasized that Nigeria must move from reactive responses to fraud to proactive prevention mechanisms. Issues such as certificate forgery and document manipulation were highlighted as recurring threats to institutional credibility. The NBA reaffirmed its readiness to collaborate in capacity building, awareness creation, and strengthening systems that ensure authenticity and accountability in public and private transactions.

Body of Benchers Lecture and LPDC Report Presentation (March 6, 2026)

13. We participated in the 2nd Annual Lecture of the Body of Benchers and the public presentation of the LPDC Report, where I delivered remarks on the evolving role of the legal profession. We highlighted the increasing number of lawyers being called to the Bar and the corresponding need to ensure that the profession remains structured, supportive, and capable of nurturing young lawyers. I emphasized that the Body of Benchers plays a critical role beyond the ceremonial call to Bar, particularly in safeguarding standards, ethics, and discipline. I also commended ongoing collaborations aimed at reforming the Legal Practitioners Act to strengthen regulation and modernise legal practice in Nigeria.

Strengthening Legal Cooperation Between Nigeria and Liberia (March 11, 2026)

14. The NBA participated in the opening of the March 2026 Term of the Supreme Court of Liberia, where we conveyed the goodwill of the Nigerian Bar Association and reinforced the importance of regional legal cooperation. We emphasized that the strength of the rule of law in West Africa depends on collaboration among legal institutions across jurisdictions. We also highlighted the need for knowledge exchange, cross-border professional development, and cooperation in areas such as arbitration and mediation. The NBA also extended an invitation to members of the Liberian Bar to participate in the 2026 Annual General Conference in Port Harcourt, reinforcing our commitment to regional integration and professional solidarity.

Introduction of NBA Digital Signature Studio (March 13, 2026)

15. In furtherance of the Association's commitment to digital transformation, the NBA introduced the Digital Signature Studio on the NBA Digital Seal Portal, enabling lawyers to sign documents electronically securely and efficiently. This innovation allows legal practitioners to create, store, and affix digital signatures seamlessly, aligning legal practice with global technological standards. The system enhances efficiency, authenticity, and verifiability in legal transactions, marking a significant step in modernising legal practice in Nigeria. It reflects the Association's broader commitment to equipping lawyers with the tools necessary for contemporary practice.

NBA Awka Branch Engagement (March 14, 2026)

16. We attended a meeting of the NBA Awka Branch, where we engaged with members on issues of professional development, welfare, and the future of the Bar. We commended the Branch for its commitment to continuous learning and enforcement of the Legal Practitioners' Remuneration Order, noting that proper remuneration is essential for sustaining a dignified legal practice. We also encouraged members to remain actively engaged in Bar activities and to

participate in the forthcoming Annual General Conference, while reaffirming the NBA's commitment to protecting the rights and welfare of lawyers.

Condemnation of Sexual Violence at Ozoro Festival (March 21, 2026)

17. The Association responded decisively to deeply disturbing reports of widespread sexual violence against women during a cultural festival in Ozoro, Delta State. Women were reportedly assaulted in broad daylight—forcefully stripped, groped, and subjected to degrading and inhumane treatment by mobs, while bystanders watched, recorded, and in some cases encouraged the acts. The NBA unequivocally condemned these acts, describing them not as culture but as criminality in its most primitive form. The Association emphasized that such conduct constitutes grave violations of the fundamental rights to dignity of the human person, personal liberty, and security, as guaranteed under the Constitution and relevant international instruments. It was stressed that no custom, tradition, or cultural practice can justify the humiliation and violation of women. The NBA called on the Delta State Government and law enforcement agencies to ensure that all perpetrators and enablers are identified, arrested, and prosecuted, while urging community leaders and festival organisers to take responsibility for preventing a recurrence of such lawlessness.

Constitution of Caretaker Committee for NBA Auchu Branch (March 23, 2026)

18. In furtherance of its constitutional responsibility to ensure effective governance across its branches, the NBA constituted a Caretaker Committee for the Auchu Branch following the expiration of the tenure of its Executive Committee and the failure of the Branch to conduct elections within the constitutionally prescribed timeframe.

19. The Committee, chaired by Mr. Omo-Davidson Aluhu Alegbe, with Ibrahim Mohammed as Secretary and Michael Okoghie as Member, was mandated to administer the affairs of the Branch and conduct elections in accordance with

the NBA Uniform Bye-Laws. The Committee was specifically directed to ensure that elections are conducted on or before the third week of June 2026. This intervention was necessary to restore constitutional order, prevent administrative vacuum, and safeguard democratic governance within the Branch.

Protection of Courtroom Decorum and Condemnation of Improper Conduct at the Federal High Court (March 25, 2026)

20. On March 25, 2026, the Nigerian Bar Association issued a strong statement condemning the misuse of courtroom space following an incident involving Mr. Omoyele Sowore at the Federal High Court, Abuja. The Association expressed grave concern over reports that Mr. Sowore entered the courtroom accompanied by individuals carrying recording devices and appeared to set up what amounted to a media engagement within the courtroom environment. He was reported to have proceeded into the inner bar, mounted one of the tables, and began addressing what he described as national issues, even though his matter was not listed for hearing, and he was not accompanied by legal counsel. The situation created tension within the courtroom and resulted in a confrontation with learned Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Musibau Adetunbi, SAN, who firmly objected to the conduct and insisted on maintaining the decorum and sanctity of the court.
21. In our response, the NBA emphasized that while court proceedings are open to the public in a constitutional democracy, such openness is not without limits. Courtrooms are not platforms for performance, advocacy theatrics, or media briefings, but solemn spaces reserved strictly for the orderly administration of justice. The Association reiterated that the right of access to courtrooms must be exercised within the bounds of discipline, respect, and decorum, and that any conduct capable of undermining judicial authority, intimidating legal practitioners, or disrupting proceedings constitutes a serious affront to the rule

of law. The NBA, therefore, condemned the incident in clear terms, expressed solidarity with legal practitioners who upheld courtroom standards, and called on court authorities to take necessary measures to preserve the dignity of judicial proceedings. The Association reaffirmed its commitment to defending the integrity of the legal profession and ensuring that courtrooms remain spaces of order, respect, and disciplined advocacy.

Defence of the Legal Profession Against Judicial Intimidation (March 26, 2026)

22. The Association took a firm and unequivocal stance against emerging reports of judicial overreach involving the intimidation, humiliation, and unlawful detention of legal practitioners under the guise of contempt proceedings. Particular concern arose from incidents where judges ordered the detention of lawyers after proceedings, including a case where counsel was allegedly punished for statements made in a written address, as well as reports of degrading treatment of lawyers in courtrooms, such as being compelled to kneel or face walls under threat of contempt. The NBA strongly decried these actions as high-handed, unconstitutional, and inconsistent with the principles governing the exercise of contempt jurisdiction.
23. We reiterated that the power to punish for contempt is not intended to serve as a tool for personal vindication or judicial ego, but rather to protect the administration of justice. It emphasized that criticism of the court, when made in good faith and in temperate language, does not amount to contempt. The NBA further stressed that any perceived professional misconduct by a lawyer should be referred to the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee, rather than attracting summary punitive measures. The Association demanded the immediate release of affected lawyers, called for an investigation by relevant judicial authorities, and warned that failure to address such conduct could result in coordinated institutional responses, including boycotts.

24. In deprecating these actions, we reminded judges of Lord Tucker's statement in *Izuora v. The Queen* (1953) 13 WACA 313 at page 346, that it is not every act of discourtesy to the Court by Counsel that amounts to contempt, nor any conduct which involves a breach by Counsel of his duty to his client. Our courts must try to distinguish between acts of discourtesy/ incivility, uncouth behaviour, acts of rudeness, etc. We noted that while these acts may be annoying, they are not necessarily acts of contempt of Court. Contempt must not be equated with conduct which will inevitably obstruct or disrupt the proceedings of the court or which is not to the liking of the judge. A distinction must be drawn between what may annoy a Judge and what amounts to contempt. It cannot be said that whatever implied 'criticism of the court as happened in the Port Harcourt case or the earlier for transfer, was not fair and was not conveyed in civil and temperate language. Put differently, it is not a contempt of court to criticize the conduct of a Judge or the conduct of a court, even if such criticism is strongly worded, provided that the criticism is fair, temperate, and made in good faith.
25. In our view, the power to punish for contempt was abused in these circumstances as the remand orders appear to have been used to assuage the injured feelings of the presiding judge. It is not contempt of court when a judge does not agree with Learned Counsel's method of advocacy or with the facts as narrated by counsel. A lawyer has a constitutional right of audience in court and should not be intimidated or detained for carrying out this duty. How a lawyer chooses to present his case is his own style. It would be unconstitutional and an abuse of office for a Judge to abridge Counsel's right of audience by dangling or invoking his powers of contempt or for carrying out this duty. As stated by Oputa (JSC) as he then was, "The test whether or not a judge takes himself, too seriously or thinks too much of himself is in his attitude towards contempt of his court".

26. The administration of justice rests on a delicate but enduring partnership between the Bench and the Bar, one built not on fear but on mutual respect, restraint, and a shared commitment to the rule of law. The Judge presides with authority; the lawyer appears with courage. Each is indispensable, and neither is subordinate to the other in dignity. These incidents across our courts reveal a troubling departure from this balance, one that threatens to erode the very foundation of justice. When judicial authority is exercised in a manner that intimidates, humiliates, or suppresses counsel, the courtroom ceases to be a temple of justice and risks becoming a theatre of fear.
27. While courts possess inherent powers to protect their authority and dignity, such powers must be exercised within the bounds of the law and in accordance with the principles of fair hearing and due process. A legal practitioner is entitled to present a client's case fearlessly and within the confines of the law. Where a court considers the conduct of counsel improper, the proper course is to invoke recognised disciplinary mechanisms, including referring the counsel to the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee (LPDC), rather than resorting to summary punitive measures.
28. Even where a court believes that counsel has misrepresented facts in an affidavit, written address, or any process filed before it, the appropriate step is to refer the matter to the LPDC for investigation and possible disciplinary action. Summary remand in such circumstances is disproportionate and amounts to a denial of fair hearing. The power to punish for contempt is an extraordinary jurisdiction that must be exercised sparingly and only in clear cases where the administration of justice is under immediate threat. The Judge, by virtue of office, is the more powerful actor in the courtroom. The use of contempt powers in circumstances that do not clearly amount to obstruction of justice creates an atmosphere of intimidation and amounts to judicial bullying.

The contempt jurisdiction exists to protect the court, not to silence counsel or penalise advocacy undertaken in the discharge of professional duty

NBA Iseyin Branch Inauguration and Development Milestones (March 29, 2026)

29. I attended the inauguration of the NBA Iseyin Branch, marking a significant milestone in the expansion of the Association's presence at the grassroots level. The event featured the foundation-laying ceremony for the Branch Bar House and the commissioning of a Branch bus, reflecting strong institutional development. I commended the leadership and members for their vision and dedication, noting that the establishment of new branches strengthens inclusion and deepens the reach of the Bar. I also expressed appreciation for the honour of having the Bar House named after me, describing it as a gesture received with humility.

Condemnation of Palm Sunday Killings in Jos (March 31, 2026)

30. The NBA strongly condemned the gruesome attacks carried out on innocent residents in Jos, Plateau State, on Palm Sunday, a day of profound religious significance. The killings, which resulted in multiple deaths and injuries, were described as both tragic and unacceptable, particularly as they targeted citizens engaged in peaceful religious observance. The Association expressed grave concern over the recurring pattern of violent attacks across the country and the apparent climate of impunity that allows perpetrators to evade justice. It emphasized that the protection of life and property remains the primary responsibility of the government and that the continued failure to safeguard citizens undermines public confidence in the State.

31. We called on security agencies to take immediate and decisive action to identify, apprehend, and prosecute those responsible, while also urging the Federal and State Governments to strengthen security architecture in vulnerable communities. The Association extended its condolences to the

families of the victims and reiterated that the right to life is sacrosanct and must be protected at all times.

Electoral Act Compliance and Protection of Democratic Integrity (April 10, 2026)

32. As Nigeria approaches the 2027 General Elections, the NBA intervened in response to troubling developments relating to the interpretation and application of the Electoral Act, 2026, particularly Section 83, which expressly excludes judicial intervention in the internal affairs of political parties. The Association expressed serious concern over the increasing trend of lawyers filing actions in clear violation of this provision, as well as courts granting interim and interlocutory orders in matters over which they lack jurisdiction. It warned that such practices undermine the rule of law, distort democratic processes, and risk transforming the judiciary into an arena for political contestation.
33. The NBA emphasized that lawyers must not abandon their role as Ministers in the Temple of Justice to become instruments of political manipulation. We declared that any legal practitioner found to be engaging in such conduct would face disciplinary proceedings before the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee. We also called on the judiciary to exercise restraint and adhere strictly to statutory provisions, urging the National Judicial Council to sanction judicial officers who knowingly assume jurisdiction in prohibited matters. It further urged the Independent National Electoral Commission to act with neutrality, independence, and fidelity to democratic principles, warning that the Bar will deploy all lawful mechanisms to prevent the misuse of judicial processes and protect Nigeria's democracy.

NBA Warri Branch Law Week - Call for Restoration of Public Trust in the Administration of Justice (April 22, 2026)

34. On April 22, 2026, we attended the NBA Warri Branch Law Week, where we delivered the opening remarks on the theme: “Public Trust in the Administration of Justice in Times of Economic and Security Challenges.” In our address, we commended the Branch for convening a timely and thought-provoking discourse, particularly in light of the prevailing economic and security challenges facing the nation, which continue to exert significant pressure on the justice system. We emphasized that the effective administration of justice is a collective responsibility, requiring the active and conscientious participation of judicial officers, legal practitioners, law enforcement agencies, and all relevant stakeholders. We noted that the system can only function optimally where each actor performs their role with integrity, diligence, and a firm sense of duty.
35. We further underscored the urgent need to strengthen public trust in the judiciary, describing confidence in the justice system as the bedrock of its legitimacy. We reiterated the enduring principle that justice must not only be done but must also be seen to be done, stressing that public perception remains central to sustaining faith in the administration of justice. We emphasized that the conduct of stakeholders, both in their actions and public engagements, as well as the quality, consistency, and clarity of judicial decisions, play a decisive role in either building or eroding public confidence. We therefore called for a renewed and collective commitment to transparency, professionalism, and strict adherence to the rule of law, urging all stakeholders to uphold the values that reinforce the credibility and integrity of the justice system, particularly in these challenging times.

NBA-YLF National Summit - Call for Purposeful Leadership Among Young Lawyers (April 23, 2026)

36. On April 23, 2026, I attended the National Summit of the Nigerian Bar Association Young Lawyers’ Forum (NBA-YLF), held in commemoration of the

20th Anniversary of the Forum, where I delivered remarks on the theme “Rising to Lead.” The Summit provided a significant platform to reflect on the journey of the YLF over the past two decades and its critical role in shaping the future of the legal profession in Nigeria. In my address, I commended the leadership and members of the Forum for sustaining a vibrant and impactful platform dedicated to the development, mentorship, and advancement of young lawyers across the country.

37. We emphasized that leadership within the legal profession must be intentional, value-driven, and anchored on competence, integrity, and service. We noted that the future of the Bar rests significantly on the shoulders of young lawyers, and that the transition from participation to leadership requires deliberate preparation, continuous learning, and a strong ethical foundation. We encouraged young lawyers to see leadership not as a position to be attained, but as a responsibility to be earned through discipline, consistency, and commitment to the ideals of the profession.
38. We further emphasized the importance of resilience, adaptability, and innovation in navigating the evolving landscape of legal practice, particularly in an era defined by technological advancement and shifting socio-economic realities. We urged members of the YLF to take advantage of opportunities for capacity building, mentorship, and professional exposure, while remaining committed to upholding the rule of law and contributing meaningfully to the administration of justice.
39. We concluded by calling on young lawyers to rise beyond limitations, embrace excellence, and actively position themselves as future leaders of the Bar and the nation. We reaffirmed the commitment of the NBA to continue supporting the growth and empowerment of the Young Lawyers’ Forum as a critical pillar in the sustainability and progress of the legal profession.

NBA Bwari Branch Law Week - Call for Transformational Leadership Beyond Rhetoric

40. During the period under review, we attended the Opening Ceremony of the NBA Bwari Branch Law Week, where I delivered an address on the theme: “The Leadership Challenge in Nigeria: The Way Forward Beyond Rhetoric.” In my remarks, we observed that across several NBA Branch Law Weeks attended in recent times, there has been a deliberate and commendable focus on themes addressing critical national issues. We particularly commended the Bwari Branch for choosing a theme that confronts the leadership deficit in Nigeria, describing it as both timely and necessary.
41. Drawing from Chinua Achebe’s well-known assertion that “the problem of Nigeria is leadership,” we emphasised that meaningful national progress will remain elusive unless the issue of leadership is decisively addressed. I referenced global examples, including the transformation of the United Arab Emirates, to illustrate how visionary and committed leadership can fundamentally alter a nation’s trajectory. We stressed that leadership must go beyond rhetoric and translate into tangible, measurable impact on governance and development.
42. We further urged Nigerians to rise above religious and ethnic divisions and to embrace a shared sense of responsibility in holding leaders accountable. I noted that sustainable development can only be achieved where citizens are united, intentional, and consistent in demanding good governance. We also emphasised that leadership is not limited to those in positions of authority but extends to all citizens, including members of the Bar, who must play active roles in shaping national outcomes.
43. In concluding my remarks, we expressed satisfaction with the growth and resilience of the Bwari Branch, which was established during my tenure as Chairman of the NBA Abuja Branch. We noted with pride that the Branch has

continued to justify its establishment and has remained a vibrant and impactful part of the Association. We formally declared the Law Week open and charged lawyers to renew their commitment to national development, not only as leaders but also as responsible and engaged followers, reiterating that the future of Nigeria depends more on our actions than our words.

NBA Jalingo Branch Law Week - Call for Innovation in Legal Practice

44. I delivered a goodwill message at the NBA Jalingo Branch Law Week 2026, where we urged legal practitioners to embrace innovation or risk becoming irrelevant in an increasingly dynamic and technology-driven world. We began by expressing deep appreciation to the Branch for the warm reception extended to me, noting that my engagements in Taraba State have fostered not only professional relationships but enduring bonds of collegiality and mutual respect. We also commended the presence of members of the judiciary at the event, describing it as a strong reflection of the enduring and productive Bar-Bench relationship in the State.
45. In our remarks, we reflected on the evolution of technology and its impact on legal practice, drawing from personal experience and broader global examples. We noted that while technology, such as laptops, was not integral to legal training in the past, it has now become indispensable. We further illustrated the consequences of failure to innovate by referencing how once-dominant companies lost relevance, while others that embraced innovation transformed entire industries. We emphasised that the legal profession must learn from these developments, as innovation is no longer optional but essential for survival and growth.
46. Aligning our remarks with the theme of the Law Week, “Raising the Bar: Equipping Lawyers for the Modern Legal Landscape,” we commended the Branch for its foresight in addressing contemporary challenges in legal practice. We stressed that both the Bar and the Bench share a collective responsibility to

ensure that lawyers are adequately equipped to meet present and future demands, particularly through the adoption of technology and modern legal tools.

47. We further acknowledged the consistent participation and commitment of the Jalingo Branch to national Bar activities, noting their loyalty and contribution to the unity and growth of the Association. In conclusion, we urged legal practitioners and judicial officers alike to proactively adapt to ongoing societal and technological changes, ensuring that the administration of justice remains efficient, accessible, and responsive to the needs of the public.

Condemnation of Extrajudicial Killing and Call for Accountability in Delta State

48. We issued a statement on behalf of the Association condemning a deeply disturbing incident involving the extrajudicial killing of a suspect by police officers in Delta State, which came to public attention through a widely circulated viral video. The incident raised serious concerns regarding the conduct of law enforcement officers and the persistent violations of the fundamental rights of citizens. We described the act as an arbitrary, unlawful, and egregious abuse of power that undermines the rule of law and erodes public confidence in the Nigeria Police Force.
49. In that statement, we reiterated the firm position of the Association that no law enforcement officer, regardless of rank or circumstance, has the authority to act as prosecutor, judge, and executioner. We emphasized that the Constitution guarantees the presumption of innocence and the right of every individual to a fair hearing before a court of competent jurisdiction. The summary execution of a suspect, particularly in a public setting, was condemned as a grave violation of the right to life and dignity of the human person. While acknowledging the initial steps taken by the Police to arrest the principal perpetrator, we stressed that accountability must not be selective.

We noted that the video evidence suggested the involvement or complicity of other officers and called for a thorough investigation and prosecution of all persons involved. We made it clear that any attempt to shield, delay, or dilute accountability would further undermine public trust in law enforcement institutions.

50. In furtherance of this position, we directed the Human Rights Committees of the NBA in Warri, Effurun, and Udu to actively monitor developments in the matter, while also mandating the NBA Human Rights Committee and Civil Liberties Committee to engage relevant authorities and take necessary steps to ensure that justice is diligently pursued. We also extended the condolences of the Association to the family of the deceased and reiterated the urgent need for comprehensive police reform, particularly in the areas of accountability, use of force, and respect for fundamental rights.

Call for Transition from Sole Practice to Sustainable Law Firm Structures

51. We emphasised the need for a structural shift in legal practice in Nigeria while engaging at a professional Masterclass focused on law firm development and sustainability. In our remarks, we highlighted a longstanding weakness within the profession, namely the prevalence of sole proprietorship models where the continuity of legal practice is directly tied to the life, capacity, or presence of the founding lawyer.
52. We noted that many law firms in Nigeria struggle to survive beyond their founders, thereby limiting institutional growth, mentorship opportunities, and the long-term stability of legal practice. We stressed that the legal profession must begin to evolve from individual-driven practice models to structured, enduring legal businesses capable of outliving their founders. This, we observed, is essential not only for preserving professional legacy but also for building stronger and more resilient institutions within the Bar.

53. We further encouraged practitioners to adopt modern law firm management principles, including succession planning, institutional governance structures, knowledge transfer systems, and collaborative practice models. We emphasised the need to build firms that are scalable, resilient, and capable of adapting to changing economic and technological realities.
54. In conclusion, we urged legal practitioners to begin to see their practices not merely as personal ventures, but as institutions that can grow, endure, and contribute meaningfully to the development of the profession over time. We reaffirmed the commitment of the Association to continue supporting initiatives that promote professional development, capacity building, and the transformation of legal practice in Nigeria.

Introduction of the NBA Smart Identity Card Initiative

55. We are pleased to introduce the NBA Smart Identity Card, a forward-looking initiative aimed at redefining professional identification within the legal profession. This initiative is designed to provide members with a secure, modern, and verifiable means of identification, thereby strengthening the credibility and professional standing of Nigerian lawyers across courts, institutions, and official engagements.
56. The Smart ID Card goes beyond conventional identification tools by incorporating features that enhance security, prevent impersonation, and facilitate seamless verification of lawyers in professional settings. It reflects the Association's commitment to promoting a unified identity for its members, improving ease of recognition, and aligning the Nigerian legal profession with global best practices in identity management and professional authentication.
57. As part of efforts to support inclusiveness and encourage usage, the Association has made special provision for young lawyers within 0-7 years post-call to benefit from the initiative at no cost, while other members are

required to pay a modest processing fee to the designated service provider. This approach is intended to ensure broad participation while supporting early-career practitioners.

58. Members have been encouraged to apply through the designated online platform, with provisions made for applicants who experienced technical issues during the initial application phase to reconfirm their submissions. The introduction of the Smart ID Card represents a significant step toward a more secure, efficient, and digitally enabled Bar.
59. The National Executive Council is invited to note this development and support the continued rollout and adoption of the NBA Smart Identity Card as part of the Association's broader digital transformation agenda.

STATE OF THE BAR

60. **Litigation Against the NBA Arising from the Constitution of the ECNBA:** I consider it necessary to formally notify the National Executive Council that, since our last NEC meeting in Maiduguri, some suits have been instituted against the Nigerian Bar Association and its leadership in relation to the constitution of the Electoral Committee of the Nigerian Bar Association (ECNBA) for the 2026 National Officers' Elections. This being the first NEC meeting since the filing of these actions, Council must be fully apprised of the background, scope, and current status of these actions.

Egbe Amofin's Case Against the NBA

61. One of the actions instituted against the Association is Suit No. I/205/2026: Incorporated Trustees of Egbe Amofin O'odua v. Incorporated Trustees of the Nigerian Bar Association & 5 Ors, filed at the High Court of Oyo State, Ibadan Judicial Division. The Claimant challenges the constitutionality of the process relating to the emergence of candidates for the office of President of the

Nigerian Bar Association in the 2026 elections, particularly as it concerns the zoning provisions under the NBA Constitution (as amended in 2025). The gravamen of the Claimant's case is that under Section 10(5) and Paragraphs 1-5 of Part III of the Second Schedule to the NBA Constitution, the office of the President is subject to a rotational zoning arrangement. The Claimant contends that the office has been zoned to the Western Zone and asserts that it represents the sole recognised group within that zone entitled to present a candidate. On this basis, it claims a vested right to exclusively nominate a candidate for the presidency.

62. The originating summons raises key questions for determination, including whether the NBA and its organs are bound to strictly comply with the zoning arrangement and whether the Association can lawfully recognise any candidate other than the one presented by the Claimant. It further seeks judicial pronouncement on whether any deviation from the zoning framework constitutes a violation of the Claimant's alleged vested rights. The reliefs sought are extensive and include declarations affirming the Claimant's exclusive right to present a candidate for the presidency from the Western Zone, orders compelling the NBA to recognise only such candidate, and injunctive reliefs restraining the Association from accepting or recognising any other candidate. The implications of the suit are significant, particularly as they touch on issues of inclusiveness, eligibility, and the interpretation of the NBA Constitution.
63. The Association has taken steps to robustly defend the suit, with a view to preserving the integrity of its constitutional framework and electoral processes. NEC is invited to note the status of this matter and reaffirm its support for the defence of the Association.

Ibrahim Lawal, Esq. & Ors v. Incorporated Trustees of the NBA & 8 Ors

64. In Suit No. I/221/2026: Ibrahim Lawal, Esq. & 3 Ors v. Incorporated Trustees of the NBA & 8 Ors, pending before the High Court of Oyo State, the Claimants challenge the constitutionality of the procedure adopted in constituting the ECNBA. The case directly questions the powers exercised by the NBA President and the validity of the Electoral Committee. On March 4, 2026, the Honourable Court granted an interim injunction restraining the members of the ECNBA from acting in that capacity and restraining the President from taking further steps in relation to the electoral process pending the determination of interlocutory applications.
65. Dissatisfied with the ruling, we filed a Notice of Appeal before the Court of Appeal, Ibadan Judicial Division, challenging the jurisdiction of the trial court and the propriety of the interim orders. At the resumed proceedings on April 15, 2026, the Court invited arguments on whether to continue with the matter in light of the pending appeal. Counsel to the Claimants urged the Court to proceed, while counsel to the Defendants urged a stay of proceedings to preserve the res and avoid prejudicing the appeal. In its ruling, the Court held that, having regard to the fact that the appeal had been entered and transmitted, it would refrain from further proceedings and accordingly adjourned the matter sine die pending the determination of the appeal. The interim orders were noted to have lapsed by operation of law.
66. Distinguished members of NEC, it is important to place on record that the constitution of the Electoral Committee of the Nigerian Bar Association (ECNBA) was carried out strictly in accordance with the provisions of the NBA Constitution. By virtue of Section 14(m)(ii) of the Constitution, the National Executive Committee is specifically empowered to make recommendations to NEC on persons to be appointed into the ECNBA, while Section 14(3)(i) further provides that the Committee shall be constituted by the President, subject to ratification by the National Executive Council. In compliance with these

provisions, the recommendations of the National Executive Committee were presented before NEC at the Benin NEC Meeting held on 20th November 2025, where a motion for the appointment of the ECNBA members was duly moved by Chief Richard Ahonaruogho, SAN, seconded by Mr. Clever N. Owhor, Chairman of the Gwagwalada Branch, and overwhelmingly approved without any counter-motion.

67. Following the constitution of the ECNBA, the above two separate suits were instituted at the High Court of Oyo State, challenging different aspects of the electoral process and the constitution of the Committee.
68. In the Ibrahim Lawal matter, the trial Court granted interim orders restraining members of the ECNBA from carrying out their constitutional functions pending the hearing of interlocutory applications. In the Egbe Amofin suit, the Court similarly granted interim orders restraining the ECNBA from accepting nominations other than those allegedly submitted by the Plaintiff. Upon service of the respective processes, the Defendants filed robust responses, including Notices of Preliminary Objection challenging the competence and jurisdiction of the Court, applications to set aside the interim injunctions, and Notices of Appeal before the Court of Appeal challenging the propriety of the interim orders granted.
69. The ECNBA also filed applications for stay of proceedings before the Court of Appeal and proceeded to compile and transmit the Records of Appeal alongside its Briefs of Argument. When the matters subsequently came up before the trial Courts, the learned trial Judges, in recognition of the pending appeals and the appellate jurisdiction of the Court of Appeal, adjourned both suits sine die pending the determination of the appeals.
70. It is pertinent to note that by the provisions of Order 49 of the Oyo State High Court (Civil Procedure) Rules, 2022, an interim injunction granted ex parte automatically abates after seven (7) days unless extended, and any such

extension cannot exceed a further period of seven (7) days. At the time the suits were adjourned pending appeal, no valid subsisting order existed restraining the ECNBA from continuing with the electoral process. Consequently, there remains no legal impediment preventing the ECNBA from discharging its constitutional mandate in accordance with the NBA Constitution and applicable electoral guidelines.

71. The Association remains firmly committed to ensuring that the 2026 NBA National Officers' Elections are conducted in a free, fair, transparent, and constitutionally compliant manner. We shall continue to defend the integrity of the Association's constitutional structures and electoral processes through all lawful means while ensuring that members retain confidence in the independence and credibility of the ECNBA. NEC is therefore invited to note the status of these matters and reaffirm its confidence in the constitutional processes of the Association and the ongoing electoral process.

72. Maintaining Decorum and Preventing Misinformation in the NBA Electoral Process: May I also address concerns arising from various reports, commentaries, and interpretations following the Maiduguri NEC Meeting, particularly in relation to the presence of branded materials by aspirants for national offices. While the Local Organising Committee has clarified that all aspirants were given equal, non-discriminatory access to display campaign materials, it is necessary to address the broader issue of misinformation and mischaracterisation of events within the Association.

73. As we approach the 2026 NBA National Officers' Elections, I consider it important to reiterate that the Maiduguri NEC Meeting was not, and was never intended to be, a platform for endorsing any aspirant. The arrangements at the venue were open, uniform, and devoid of preferential treatment. The official materials provided by the organisers were neutral and not associated with any

candidate. Any narrative suggesting otherwise does not accurately reflect the facts and risks creating unnecessary division within the Bar.

74. I also wish to restate our position, as earlier expressed, that the increasing monetisation of NBA politics is a matter of serious concern. It undermines the values, dignity, and integrity of the Association. Accordingly, I have consistently called on the Electoral Committee of the Nigerian Bar Association (ECNBA) to strictly enforce the constitutional provisions prohibiting financial inducement and to issue clear guidelines that will safeguard the credibility of the electoral process. This responsibility extends to all stakeholders, including our colleagues, to ensure that no undue financial burden is placed on aspirants.
75. As leaders of the Association, we remain committed to neutrality in the electoral process. While the Constitution preserves the personal right of members to vote, it clearly prohibits open endorsement of candidates by the leadership of the NBA. This provision will be strictly observed. We will continue to act as impartial custodians of the process and as unifying figures for all aspirants and members of the Bar. In light of the foregoing, I urge all members of the Bar, aspirants, and commentators to exercise restraint, verify information before dissemination, and avoid narratives that may distort facts or inflame tensions within the Association. The strength of the Bar lies in its unity, discipline, and adherence to shared values.
76. **ECNBA AS AN INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL BODY:** may we remind us that the the NBA Constitution established an independent body to be known as the Electoral Committee of the Nigerian Bar Association (hereinafter called "the ECNBA") to conduct elections into National Offices of the Association and election of the representatives of the Association in the General Council of the Bar. The Committee shall consist of a Chairman and six (6) other members. The ECNBA shall be made up of a Chairman, a Secretary, and five (5) other members of the Association of proven integrity, who shall be appointed by the National

Executive Council of the Association on the recommendation of the National Executive Committee of the Association. The Constitution guarantees the independence of the ECNBA by insulating it from control and interference from the President and the National Executive Committee of the Association.

77. To ensure that each qualified lawyer has the right to vote during NAB elections, the Constitution stipulates that election into National Offices shall be by universal suffrage and electronic voting as set out in the Second Schedule to the NBA Constitution. The NBA Constitution protects the tenure of the members of the ECNBA by stipulating that they shall remain in office until a new ECNA is appointed in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution. The ECNBA shall, when necessary, have and work with its own personnel in the discharge of its duties.

78. **Constitution of the NBA Sections' Election Appeals Committee:** In furtherance of efforts to strengthen internal governance and dispute resolution within the Association, steps have been taken towards the establishment of an NBA Sections' Election Appeal Committee. The Committee is intended to serve as an internal appellate mechanism to review decisions arising from the activities and elections of NBA Sections. This initiative is aimed at enhancing transparency, accountability, and institutional confidence, while reducing the need for external litigation. The committee is constituted as follows: Babatunde Ogala, SAN - Chairman, Luka Haruna, SAN - Alternate Chairman, C. N. N. Nwagbara, Aisha Ado Abdulahi - Secretary, Dr. Egondur Ikeatu, Onimisi F. Umar, A. Tijani Aboki, Chinelo Okongwu, Dr. Hilda Ihekare, Nana Ganki, and Samira Attah. NEC is invited to consider and ratify the framework for its operation.

79. **Proposal for Creation of Akoko and Bida Branches and Reorganization of Existing Branches:** The National Executive Council is invited to consider applications received for the creation of two new Branches of the Nigerian Bar

Association, namely the Akoko Branch in Ondo State and the Bida Branch in Niger State. These applications arise from the continued growth in membership and the need to decentralise the Association's structures to ensure more effective participation, administration, and service delivery at the grassroots level. The proposed Oka-Akoko Branch is to be created from the existing Ikare-Akoko Branch and shall comprise the Oka Judicial Division.

80. The proposed Bida Branch is to be carved out of the Minna Branch and comprises Bida, Lapai, Kutigi, and Mokwa, judicial divisions. These requests are informed by geographical spread, increasing membership strength, and the desire to enhance accessibility and engagement of members within the affected areas. The creation of these Branches, if approved, will further strengthen the institutional presence of the Association, promote inclusiveness, and improve coordination of Bar activities across the affected regions. The National Executive Council is therefore invited to consider and approve the applications for the creation of the Akoko and Bida Branches, as well as the consequential renaming of the Ikare Akoko Branch.

81. Federal High Court Decision on NBA Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Requirements: The Federal High Court set aside certain provisions of the Mandatory Continuing Professional Development (MCPD) Rules 2025, particularly as they sought to tie compliance with CPD requirements to the renewal of practising licences and the right of legal practitioners to appear in court. Delivering judgment in Suit No. FHC/ABJ/CS/1238/2025: *Victor Ozioma Nwadike v. Nigerian Bar Association, the General Council of the Bar & the Attorney-General of the Federation*, Justice Mohammed Umar held that the NBA lacks the power to add to, vary, or alter statutory requirements governing a lawyer's right to practise law in Nigeria. The Court held that such provisions were inconsistent with extant legal frameworks governing the regulation of the legal profession

and could not validly restrict the right of a legal practitioner to practice law on the basis of CPD compliance.

82. While the objective of continuing professional development remains essential for maintaining competence, improving standards, and ensuring the relevance of practitioners in a dynamic legal environment, the Court held that enforcement mechanisms must align strictly with the law. Following the decision of the Court, we have taken steps to comply fully with the order by discontinuing any enforcement of CPD requirements in a manner inconsistent with the judgment. Notwithstanding the judgment, the NBA reiterates that continuing professional development remains a critical component of professional excellence and ethical responsibility. The Association will continue to promote CPD through lawful, structured, and incentive-based mechanisms that encourage professional growth, without infringing on the rights of practitioners.

83. NBA Suit on Upgrade of Lawyers in the Nigerian Police Force: The Association's suit before the National Industrial Court, Abuja, Suit No. NICN/ABJ/264/2025, seeking the upgrade of lawyers in the employment of the Nigeria Police Force to a specialist cadre, has been adjourned for judgment. The NBA's legal team adopted its processes, while the Defendants, including the Police Service Commission and the Nigeria Police Force, opposed the suit. The Honourable Attorney-General of the Federation also made submissions, noting that other professionals, such as doctors and engineers, are accorded specialist status within the Force. The matter raises important issues relating to professional recognition and career progression for lawyers within the Police Force. NEC is invited to note the development.

STATE OF THE NATION

84. Court Martial Proceedings Against Alleged Coup Plotters: I consider it necessary to bring to the attention of the National Executive Council, for its consideration, developments concerning the ongoing trial of thirty-six (36)

alleged coup plotters before a General Court Martial. The issue has attracted significant public discourse, including interventions by respected members of the Bar who have called for the proceedings to be discontinued. The concerns arising from this matter relate fundamentally to the legal propriety of subjecting the officers to trial before a military tribunal in circumstances where the allegations, by their nature, appear to raise serious constitutional and jurisdictional questions. It has been argued that offences of such gravity, particularly those bordering on treason and related civil offences, ought to be tried before courts of competent jurisdiction established under the Constitution, with full guarantees of fair hearing.

85. The resort to a court-martial in this context has therefore raised legitimate issues regarding adherence to due process, transparency, and the protection of the constitutional rights of the accused persons. There is also the broader institutional concern that the integrity of the justice system, military or civilian, must not only be preserved but must be seen to be preserved. In light of the foregoing, the NBA is demanding that the Federal Government discontinue the ongoing court martial proceedings and ensure that any further actions are conducted strictly in compliance with the Constitution and extant laws. The Honourable Attorney-General of the Federation, in his capacity as the Chief Law Officer of the Federation, must ensure that the rule of law is upheld and that any prosecutorial steps taken in the matter are consistent with constitutional safeguards and the proper administration of justice.

86. We hereby propose that NEC shall pass a resolution that no lawyer shall appear in lawyer's robes before the court-martial. **We** therefore present this matter before the National Executive Council for its consideration, deliberation, and appropriate resolution.

87. Threats by the FCT Minister to Seal Bank Premises Over Political Disputes:
May I also draw our attention to statements attributed to the Honourable

Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Mr. Nyesom Wike, in relation to internal disputes within the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). The Minister was threatened that any faction of the party which attempts to operate a separate secretariat or open bank accounts outside the recognised structure would have such premises sealed.

88. The statements have generated significant public concern, particularly regarding the scope of powers exercisable by public office holders and the constitutional limits of executive authority. While political disputes and questions relating to party administration may arise within political organisations, the resolution of such disputes must occur strictly within the framework of the law and through constitutionally recognised institutions and procedures.
89. It is important to state that no public official possesses unilateral powers to seal private premises, organisations, or institutions except in accordance with due process of law and pursuant to lawful authority exercised within clearly defined statutory limits. Any action affecting the rights of citizens, political associations, or corporate entities must be anchored on lawful procedures and subject to judicial oversight where necessary. Public pronouncements suggesting otherwise risk creating the impression of executive overreach and may undermine public confidence in constitutional governance.
90. NEC is invited to call on the Honourable Minister of the Federal Capital Territory and all public office holders to exercise restraint in public statements capable of conveying threats of extra-legal action or abuse of executive authority. Holders of public office must remain guided by the Constitution, the rule of law, and the principles of democratic accountability in both conduct and communication.
91. **Alleged Torture of a Minor by Police Officers in Kwara State:** The National Executive Council is invited to note disturbing reports concerning the alleged

torture and unlawful treatment of a 16-year-old girl by officers of the Nigeria Police Force in Kwara State. According to reports, the minor was allegedly subjected to physical abuse and intimidation by police officers who were reportedly attempting to arrest her elder brother, said to have fled upon sighting the officers. It was alleged that rather than pursue lawful investigative procedures, the officers turned their attention to the young girl, subjected her to degrading treatment, and threatened to detain and jail her despite her age and apparent lack of involvement in the alleged matter involving her brother.

92. The reports further suggest that the incident may have involved acts of assault, intimidation, and other forms of inhuman and degrading treatment contrary to the provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Child Rights Act, and other applicable human rights instruments. The alleged conduct of the officers, if established, represents a grave abuse of police powers and raises serious concerns regarding the treatment of minors and vulnerable persons by law enforcement authorities. The use of threats, coercion, or violence against a child in the course of law enforcement operations cannot be justified under any guise and undermines public confidence in policing institutions.
93. We reiterate that no citizen, particularly a minor, should be subjected to torture, intimidation, or degrading treatment by persons entrusted with enforcing the law. Law enforcement agencies are bound by constitutional and statutory safeguards and must conduct their operations within the limits of legality, professionalism, and respect for human dignity. The protection of children remains a fundamental obligation of the State and all its institutions.
94. In light of the seriousness of the allegations, the National Executive Council is also invited to mandate the NBA Human Rights Committee and the Civil Liberties Committee to immediately look into the incident, engage relevant authorities, monitor developments, and take all lawful and necessary steps to

ensure accountability, protection of the victim's rights, and compliance with constitutional safeguards. NEC may also consider calling on the Nigeria Police Force and relevant oversight bodies to conduct a thorough, transparent, and independent investigation into the incident and ensure that any officer found culpable is appropriately sanctioned in accordance with the law.

95. Federal High Court Judgment on Recording Police Officers and Other Law

Enforcement Officers: The Federal High Court, Warri Judicial Division, in *Maxwell Nosakhare Uwaifo v. Inspector-General of Police & Ors*, has affirmed the constitutional right of citizens to record police officers in the discharge of their duties in public spaces. In its decision, the Court held unequivocally that the act of recording, filming, or documenting police officers while performing their lawful duties in public is protected under the fundamental rights to freedom of expression and access to information as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended). The Court further clarified that no law in Nigeria criminalises such conduct, and that any attempt by law enforcement officers to harass, intimidate, arrest, or seize the devices of citizens solely on the basis that they are being recorded is unlawful and constitutes a violation of their fundamental rights. The Court also addressed the issue of police accountability, emphasizing that officers carrying out public duties are subject to public scrutiny and must operate within the bounds of legality and professionalism. It underscored the obligation of police officers to properly identify themselves, including the display of name tags and service numbers, and held that the conduct of stop-and-search operations or checkpoint duties without proper identification undermines transparency and is inconsistent with constitutional safeguards.

96. This judgment represents a critical milestone in advancing police accountability, transparency, and citizens' rights in Nigeria. It reinforces the principle that public institutions and officials must remain open to scrutiny in a

constitutional democracy. NEC is invited to consider the implications of this decision for ongoing advocacy by the Association, particularly in engaging law enforcement agencies to ensure compliance with the judgment and to promote a rights-respecting policing culture across the country.

97. Welfare and Remuneration of Judicial Officers: May I also draw NEC's attention to recent reports highlighting the deplorable welfare conditions of judicial officers in certain parts of the country, including an incident in Ondo State involving the President of a Customary Court who, reportedly due to inadequate welfare provisions, resorted to the use of commercial transportation and was subsequently involved in an accident. The situation has once again brought to the fore the broader and longstanding issue of poor remuneration and welfare of judicial officers in Nigeria.

98. I consider this development deeply troubling, as it underscores systemic challenges that have continued to undermine the dignity, independence, and effectiveness of the judiciary. Judicial officers occupy a critical position in the administration of justice and are expected to discharge their duties with the highest level of integrity, impartiality, and independence. However, these expectations cannot be sustained in an environment where their welfare, security, and working conditions fall below acceptable standards. The NBA reiterates that adequate remuneration and welfare for judicial officers are not matters of privilege but constitutional imperatives necessary for safeguarding judicial independence and promoting the rule of law. Poor welfare conditions not only expose judicial officers to undue hardship but also create vulnerabilities that may erode public confidence in the justice system.

99. In light of the foregoing, the National Executive Council may once again call on relevant State Governments, including the Ondo State Government, as well as the appropriate authorities at the federal level, to prioritise the welfare of judicial officers by ensuring improved remuneration, provision of adequate

working conditions, and implementation of policies that uphold the dignity of the judiciary. The Association stands ready to engage constructively with stakeholders to address these concerns sustainably and systemically. The Nigerian Bar Association must continue to stand firm as a defender of the rule of law, a promoter of professional excellence, and a voice for justice in society.

100. Allegations of Human Rights Violations by Police Tactical Unit in Owerri

(“Tiger Base”): We consider it necessary to draw the attention of the National Executive Council to recent reports by credible human rights organisations detailing allegations of gross and systemic human rights violations and allied infractions against the anti-kidnapping unit of the Imo State Police Command, ‘Tiger Base’ continues to resonate. These reports allege that operatives of the unit have been involved in acts including extrajudicial executions, torture, extortion, and arbitrary detention of citizens. In one of such reports, Amnesty International stated that “Tiger Base has become synonymous with the police operating outside of the law and abusing their power to enrich themselves through extortion. Those arrested and detained by the unit are subjected to torture and ill-treatment; they never come out intact. Many are traumatised forever”.

101. Several calls to urgently intervene, investigate, and disband the anti-kidnapping unit for alleged rights abuses have so far not been heeded by relevant authorities. The allegations, if proven, represent grave violations of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, particularly the rights to life, dignity of the human person, personal liberty, and fair hearing. Such conduct, allegedly carried out by agents of the State entrusted with enforcing the law, raises profound concerns about accountability, oversight, and adherence to the rule of law within law enforcement institutions.

102. We reiterate that the Nigerian Bar Association has consistently maintained that no agency of government or security outfit operates above the law. The

persistence of reports of abuse by security agencies underscores the urgent need for comprehensive reforms, including stricter oversight mechanisms, improved training on human rights standards, and the enforcement of accountability for erring officers. In light of these developments, we call on the relevant authorities, including the Nigeria Police Force and oversight institutions, to conduct a thorough, transparent, and independent investigation into these allegations, with a view to identifying and prosecuting all persons found culpable. Justice must be not only done but seen to be done in order to restore public confidence in law enforcement institutions.

103. **“Xenophobic Attacks in South Africa”**: The recent reports of xenophobic attacks against Nigerians and other foreign nationals in the Republic of South Africa are deeply concerning. These incidents, which include harassment, violence, destruction of businesses, and threats to lives and livelihoods, have once again brought to the fore concerns about the safety and protection of Nigerians and other foreign nationals residing in South Africa. Considering these developments, I consider it necessary to address this issue and to unequivocally condemn all forms of xenophobic violence. Such acts constitute grave violations of fundamental human rights and are inconsistent with the principles of human dignity, African unity, and mutual respect among nations. The targeting of individuals based on nationality is unacceptable and must not be tolerated in any society governed by the rule of law.

104. We urge the Nigerian Government to take proactive and decisive steps to ensure the safety and protection of Nigerian citizens residing in South Africa. This includes sustained diplomatic engagement with South African authorities, provision of consular support, and the adoption of measures aimed at safeguarding the rights and welfare of affected Nigerians. We also call on the Government of South Africa to take urgent and concrete action to end xenophobic attacks, ensure the protection of all persons within its jurisdiction,

and hold perpetrators accountable. Law enforcement agencies must act decisively to prevent further violence and restore confidence in the safety of foreign nationals.

105. Misuse of Criminal Process in Civil and Defamation Matters: May we also bring to the attention of the National Executive Council a recent incident involving the arrest of three individuals over a viral social media publication alleging that a prominent business figure, Mr. Tony Elumelu, had divorced his wife. The claim, which circulated widely online, was subsequently denied and described as false and defamatory by the United Bank for Africa (UBA). Following the spread of the publication, law enforcement authorities reportedly arrested the individuals alleged to be responsible for originating or disseminating the content. The incident generated significant public reaction, including commentary by civil rights advocates who questioned the propriety of deploying criminal law enforcement mechanisms in a matter fundamentally rooted in defamation and reputational injury. It has been argued that such disputes, being civil in nature, ought properly to be addressed through civil proceedings rather than through arrest and detention.

106. This development raises important concerns regarding the increasing tendency to invoke criminal processes in the resolution of disputes that are essentially civil. The use of arrest and detention in matters relating to publication, defamation, or personal reputation risks undermining constitutional safeguards, particularly the rights to personal liberty, freedom of expression, and fair hearing. While false and damaging publications may have legal consequences, such matters must be addressed within the appropriate legal framework. Civil remedies, including actions for defamation, provide adequate avenues for redress without resorting to coercive state power. The criminalisation of such disputes, except where clearly justified by law, creates

the impression of abuse of police powers of arrest and may have a chilling effect on lawful expression.

107. While the Nigerian Police Force has the authority to investigate crimes, this power must be exercised within the confines of the law and in respect of offenses recognized under Nigerian law. We therefore demand the immediate release of any person arrested for such publication. In light of the foregoing, we urge law enforcement agencies to exercise restraint and ensure that their powers are not deployed in a manner that blurs the distinction between civil wrongs and criminal offences. We also call on relevant authorities to uphold the principles of legality, proportionality, and respect for fundamental rights in handling such matters.

108. Arrest and Prosecution of Justice Crack Arising from Viral Military Video: We have also witnessed reports of the arrest and subsequent remand of a social media content creator popularly known as “Justice Crack”, following the circulation of a viral video depicting alleged poor feeding conditions for soldiers within a military facility. The individual was reportedly arrested by military authorities and subsequently arraigned before the Federal High Court in Abuja, where he was remanded in custody pending further proceedings. The charges against him were said to be connected to the publication of the video, which had generated widespread public attention and sparked debate on the welfare of military personnel. The case has since raised important questions regarding the propriety of resorting to criminal prosecution in matters involving the dissemination of information of public interest.

109. The development highlights the delicate balance between national security considerations and citizens' constitutional rights, particularly freedom of expression, personal liberty, and access to information. While it is recognised that the Armed Forces operate within a structured command system and that certain categories of information may be sensitive, it remains essential that

any response to such disclosures is grounded in law and consistent with due process. The use of arrest, detention, and criminal prosecution in such circumstances must be carefully scrutinized to ensure that it does not amount to suppression of lawful expression or the intimidation of citizens. The Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of expression, subject only to limitations that are reasonably justifiable in a democratic society. We urge relevant authorities to ensure that all actions taken in respect of this matter comply strictly with constitutional safeguards and due process requirements. NEC is invited to consider this development and its implications for civil liberties, institutional accountability, and the need to maintain a proper balance between national security and fundamental rights.

110. Federal High Court Judgement on Recording Police Officers: The Federal High Court, Warri Judicial Division, in *Maxwell Nosakhare Uwaifo v. Inspector-General of Police & Ors*, has affirmed the constitutional right of citizens to record police officers in the discharge of their duties in public spaces. In its decision, the Court held unequivocally that the act of recording, filming, or documenting police officers while performing their lawful duties in public is protected under the fundamental rights to freedom of expression and access to information as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended). The Court further clarified that no law in Nigeria criminalises such conduct, and that any attempt by law enforcement officers to harass, intimidate, arrest, or seize the devices of citizens solely on the basis that they are being recorded is unlawful and constitutes a violation of their fundamental rights.

111. The Court also addressed the issue of police accountability, emphasizing that officers carrying out public duties are subject to public scrutiny and must operate within the bounds of legality and professionalism. It underscored the obligation of police officers to properly identify themselves, including the

display of name tags and service numbers, and held that the conduct of stop-and-search operations or checkpoint duties without proper identification undermines transparency and is inconsistent with constitutional safeguards. This judgment represents a critical milestone in advancing police accountability, transparency, and citizens' rights in Nigeria. It reinforces the principle that public institutions and officials must remain open to scrutiny in a constitutional democracy. NEC is invited to consider the implications of this decision for ongoing advocacy by the Association, particularly in engaging law enforcement agencies to ensure compliance with the judgment and to promote a rights-respecting policing culture across the country.

112. Welfare and Remuneration of Judicial Officers: May I also draw NEC's attention to recent reports highlighting the deplorable welfare conditions of judicial officers in certain parts of the country, including an incident in Ondo State involving the President of a Customary Court who, reportedly due to inadequate welfare provisions, resorted to the use of commercial transportation and was subsequently involved in an accident. The situation has once again brought to the fore the broader and longstanding issue of poor remuneration and welfare of judicial officers in Nigeria. We consider this development deeply troubling, as it underscores systemic challenges that have continued to undermine the dignity, independence, and effectiveness of the judiciary. Judicial officers occupy a critical position in the administration of justice and are expected to discharge their duties with the highest level of integrity, impartiality, and independence. However, these expectations cannot be sustained in an environment where their welfare, security, and working conditions fall below acceptable standards.

113. The NBA reiterates that adequate remuneration and welfare for judicial officers are not matters of privilege but constitutional imperatives necessary for safeguarding judicial independence and promoting the rule of law. Poor

welfare conditions not only expose judicial officers to undue hardship but also create vulnerabilities that may erode public confidence in the justice system. In light of the foregoing, the National Executive Council may once again call on relevant State Governments, including the Ondo State Government, as well as the appropriate authorities at the federal level, to prioritise the welfare of judicial officers by ensuring improved remuneration, provision of adequate working conditions, and implementation of policies that uphold the dignity of the judiciary. The Association stands ready to engage constructively with stakeholders to address these concerns sustainably and systemically.

114. Consideration and Endorsement of AccessJustice.Global (JUSTICE-AI) for NBA Collaboration: _The global and national access to justice landscape continues to present significant challenges, with a large proportion of citizens unable to obtain timely, affordable, and effective legal services. This gap persists despite the presence of qualified legal practitioners, largely due to barriers such as cost, limited access to legal information, and systemic inefficiencies. In response to these challenges, **AccessJustice.Global (JUSTICE-AI)**, an AI-powered legal technology platform developed by Service Management Consultancy Nigeria Ltd (SMCN) in collaboration with the Somkene Odabi Foundation, has been introduced as an innovative solution aimed at expanding access to justice while strengthening the legal profession.

115. The National Executive Committee (NEC) is invited to consider the strategic collaboration between the NBA and AccessJustice.Global, including the possible endorsement and structured engagement of the platform for the benefit of members and the broader justice ecosystem. This initiative presents a unique opportunity to: Enhance the economic and professional capacity of NBA members through access to new legal service channels; Position Nigerian lawyers within a global digital legal marketplace; Promote innovation in legal practice, aligning the NBA with emerging global trends in AI and legal

technology; Strengthen the NBA's role in advancing access to justice and the rule of law.

116. Benefits to NBA Members: Increased access to verified legal cases (local and international); Enhanced income opportunities through digital engagement; Improved efficiency and productivity via AI-powered tools; Expanded visibility and professional reach; Participation in social-impact legal services with guaranteed compensation.

117. Proposed Areas of Collaboration: Nationwide sensitization and awareness for members; Joint capacity-building programmes on AI in legal practice; Development of a framework for onboarding and participation of lawyers; Collaboration on ethical and regulatory guidance. NBA NEC is respectfully requested to approve the strategic engagement between the NBA and AccessJustice.Global mandate the NBA Secretariat to develop a collaboration framework with SMCN, authorize sensitization and capacity-building initiatives for members, and provide guidance on ethical, professional, and regulatory considerations.

118. Conclusively, distinguished colleagues, this NEC meeting in Awka represents a defining moment in the life of this administration as we approach the conclusion of our tenure. We urge members of Council to engage constructively in our deliberations and remain committed to the ideals that define our noble profession. Together, we must ensure that the legacy of this administration is one of integrity, courage, and meaningful impact.

Thank you.

Mazi Afam Osigwe, SAN

President, Nigerian Bar Association

May 7, 2026