



NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT: Plot 1102, Muhammed Buhari Way, Cadastral Zone A00, Central Business District, Abuja Nigerian Tel: +234 800 333 1111
www.nigerianbar.org.ng

STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION, MR YAKUBU CHONOKO MAIKYAU, OON, SAN, IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 2023 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

8 March 2023

The Nigerian Bar Association is delighted to join the rest of the global community to commemorate this year's International Women's Day. 8 March every year is set aside to celebrate our women and their outstanding achievements and contributions to the society. This year's event is no different, and as an association we are taking the time to celebrate all the female members of the legal profession who have done their bit for the advancement of the legal profession and the betterment of our world.

The NBA has consistently maintained the position that, for us to achieve transformative change in the world, issues relating to gender equality and empowerment must be prioritized and addressed head-on. We are, therefore, happy to identify with the theme of this year's event: **DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality**. This year's theme, which focuses on innovation, has given the world a veritable platform to assess and re-assess how to maximise the use of digital technology to bridge the gender gap. The next global agenda should therefore put in place developmental policies and pragmatic mechanism to accelerate equality and equity with the aid of technology.

If there were cultural, historical, and anthropological excuses for placing issues of women on the backburner in the past centuries, such excuses are no longer tenable in the light of giant strides and advances in technology. It has been shown that there is no empirical basis for the assumed limited capacity and capability of women. The on-going global technological disruption will have maximum positive impact if, and only when, there is unrestricted access to all, the legal profession being no exception.

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria prohibits discrimination against persons on the basis of sex, amongst other things, thus granting everyone equal status before the law. The NBA, the umbrella body of legal practitioners called to the Nigerian Bar, is committed to working with relevant stakeholders to ensure that innovative policies and practices are adopted for the advancement of women. We will continue to work with government to ensure that our laws and policies reflect gender equality and equity. We will also partner with national and international developmental agencies to guard against the exploitation of our women and guarantee their continued participation in society; playing pivotal and not just subsidiary roles.

We note with concern that, out of the 193 candidates who have contested the Presidency of this country since her return to democracy in 1999, only four of them are women. In the just concluded presidential election of 25 February 2023, only one female aspirant appeared on the ballot against 17 male candidates. It is our firm belief that, with proactive policies and innovative solutions, more women will continue to find their voice in the society. Consequently, we will continue to stand up for not just equal opportunities for all, but also for gender equity.

NATIONAL OFFICERS:

Yakubu Chonoko Maikyau, OON, SAN President

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In celebrating this year's International Women's Day, we wish to acknowledge and celebrate specially the female pioneers in the legal profession. These women blazed the trail for others to follow and shattered glass ceilings to reach for the stars in a hitherto male-dominated sphere. In this regard, we celebrate:

- 1) the first female lawyer in Nigeria - Mrs Stella Marke [1935]
- 2) the first female Attorney General - Mrs. Victoria Ayodele Onejeme [1965]
- 3) the first female Senior Advocate of Nigeria - Chief [Mrs] Folake Solanke, OON, CON, SAN
- 4) the first female Professor of Law, Prof. Jadesola Debo-Akande;
- 5) the first female judge in Nigeria, Justice Modupe Omo Eboh [1976];
- 6) the first female Attorney General of Lagos State - Mrs Hairat Balogun, OON [1984];
- 7) the first female Senior Advocate of Nigeria in Eastern Nigeria - Chief (Mrs.) Anayo Justina Offiah, SAN [2003];
- 8) the first female Justice of the Supreme Court and first female Chief Justice of Nigeria - Hon. Justice Aloma Mariam Mukhtar, GCON [2005/2012]
- 9) the first female President of the Nigerian Bar Association - Dame Priscilla Kuye [1991-1992]

As an Association, we believe that by virtue of our privileged position as members of the legal profession in Nigeria, this is another area in which we must provide leadership to other professions and to the entire country.

Finally, and considering the above, the NBA is proud to be supporting the International Bar Association (IBA) and LexisNexis Rule of Law Foundation's '50:50 by 2030' Gender Project (the 'Gender Project'). The Gender Project is designed in an effort towards achieving SDG 5. It is an innovative and unprecedented project through which the legal profession looks inwards; to study the available data and understand the primary causes of gender disparity at all levels of seniority within the legal profession with a view addressing same.

So far, the Gender Project has surveyed and produced reports on England and Wales, Uganda and Spain. The Gender Report on Nigeria is next and will be published over the next few days. I thank all participating law firms, corporate organisations, public sector establishments and members of the judiciary who supported this project. I enjoin all our members to study the report when it is published, take the lessons from the data and become champions of the change we want to see in our nation, starting with the legal profession.

Wishing you all a Happy International Women's Day.



Yakubu Chonoko Maikyau, OON, SAN
PRESIDENT