

OPENING SPEECH DELIVERED BY CHIEF LATEEF OLASUNKANMI FAGBEMI SAN, HON. ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE FEDERATION AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE AT THE 2024 NILA IMMIGRATION LAW & POLICY CONFERENCE.

Protocols:

The President and Chairman BOT of The Nigerian Immigration Lawyers Association.

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honored to be here today as a special guest at the Nigerian Immigration Lawyers Association's Conference. I would like to start by expressing my sincere gratitude to NILA for inviting me to this esteemed event. I thank you kindly for having me.

I commend NILA for organizing this conference, which serves as a vital platform for discussing and shaping the future of immigration law and policy in Nigeria. NILA's dedication to promoting justice, advocating for efficient immigration law and policy, and advancing the quality of immigration law and practice in Nigeria is truly commendable.

The themes and topics chosen for this conference demonstrate NILA's commitment to addressing the complex issues surrounding immigration. Your association's work in guiding individuals through the immigration process with personalized care and expertise is invaluable.

I would like to acknowledge the leadership of NILA, particularly HRM (Obi) Prof. Epiphany Azingo (SAN), Prince Ebere Nwokoro, FNILA, Dame Georgina Eheria - Arisa, Dr Roland Otaru SAN and Dr Sirajo Yakubu for their vision and tireless efforts in advancing the association's objectives. Your work is a testament to the power of collective action and commitment to the betterment of our nation.

The main theme for your conference "***New Realities in the Nigerian Immigration Law and Policy Stratosphere***," is timely and crucial. As we navigate the complexities of immigration, it is essential to recognize the global trend of cross-border movement. Nigeria, with its large market and natural resources, has become a hub for multinational corporations and international organizations, attracting highly skilled professionals.

It is pertinent to place on record that the Ministry of Interior and immigration authorities, in tandem with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's "Renewed Hope" mantra, have been outstanding in their efforts to enhance the country's immigration landscape.

Notable developments in this field include: The Nigeria Visa Policy 2020 which expanded the previous six classes of visas to 79 classes, including visa on arrival for African Union member states, and e-Visas; the Revised Handbook on Citizenship Administration which outlines the operational scope of the Department of Citizenship, and introduced three additional pathways to citizenship namely- Citizenship by Investment, Citizenship by Confirmation and Special Immigration Status for foreign men married to Nigerian women.

The Nigeria Immigration Service has also made significant strides in improving passport acquisition and enhancing border security. The current administration's efforts to change the narrative without compromising national security are indeed noteworthy. The launch of the Integrated Border Governance and the E-Verification Gates are notable initiatives aimed at enhancing national security.

Despite these great strides, there is no doubt that there are still areas for improvement. I believe that this conference will recommend reforms that will enhance the extant legislative framework. The Ministry of Justice will be happy to collaborate with NILA to develop our laws in this field. By working together, we can create a more comprehensive and effective immigration system that benefits all stakeholders.

Once again, I thank NILA for this invitation and commend you for your unwavering dedication to improving immigration law and policy in Nigeria. I look forward to continuing our collaboration and working together to address the complex immigration challenges facing our country.

Thank you.

Dated this 14th Day of November 2024

Chief Lateef O. Fagbemi, SAN
Hon. Attorney General of the Federation & Minister of Justice