

**Welcome Remarks by Prof. Yemi Akinseye-George, SAN, President Centre for Socio-Legal Studies at the Training Workshop on the ACJA Organised by the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies in collaboration with the Nigeria Police Force on 12th July 2017 at the Merit House Auditorium, Maitama Abuja.**

It gives me pleasure to welcome you to this Training Workshop on the Administration of Criminal Justice Act 2015.

The Act which was passed into law in 2015 introduces a uniform criminal procedure system applicable throughout the entire Federal Republic of Nigeria. As the Supreme Court has held in the case of Saraki v. FRN, the Act has replaced the Criminal Procedure Act (CPA) and the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC). In a recent address delivered by the Chief Justice of Nigeria, his Lordship the Hon. Justice Walter Onnoghen, GCON, at the Induction Ceremony organized for newly appointed Judges and Khadis, directed the judges to ensure that they give effect to the provisions of the ACJA. His Lordship also urged the states which have not domesticated the ACJA to do so.

We salute his Lordship for the progressive attitude he has taken in support of the ACJA. This will go a long way in enhancing the realization of the objectives of the ACJA which are to bring about improvements in the administration of justice and maintenance of law and order in the country as well as protecting the society from crime while ensuring that the rights and interests of victims and defendants are not trampled upon.

This Training workshop which is organised in collaboration with the Nigeria Police Force signals that the ACJA equally enjoys the highest level of support from the foremost law enforcement agency in the

country, the Nigeria Police. The personal attendance by the Inspector-General of Police Mr. Ibrahim Kpotum Idris, Mni, along with several D.I.Gs and other highly placed officers of the Nigerian Police Force is a clear indication that the Force not only shares the concern of the Administration about the shortcomings of the criminal justice system but also places utmost importance on building the capacity of their personnel to ensure compliance with the Constitution and other relevant laws of the land.

We at the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies are proud of our collaboration with the Nigerian Police Force to organize this Workshop. Hopefully, it is only the first in the series of collaborative workshops between our Centre and the Nigeria Police.

We are proud to be associated with the proactive and innovative measures being implemented by the Inspector-General of Police to turn around the police and bring the Force in line with global best practices in democratic policing. We applaud the Complaints Response Unit, the Community Policing Project and other reform initiatives which are aimed at repositioning the Force.

The Nigerian Police is present in all nooks and crannies of this country. One of the fastest ways to bring about any meaningful change in the country is to strengthen the police and transform them into a powerful agent of change. We therefore appeal to the present administration which was elected on the promise of change to pay more attention to the Nigeria police. There is need to recruit more personnel and increase the resources available to the police to perform their duties. The National Assembly is enjoined to pass the National Police Trust Fund Bill into law as soon as possible. The Police Act equally requires updating in line with several other laws and international standards of policing. Our

organization is willing to collaborate with the Nigeria Police towards the development of a modern Police Act just as we facilitated the processes that led to the passage of the ACJ Act, the Evidence Act and some other laws.

Given the necessary attention and resources, there is no doubt that the police can help to overcome the twin monsters of corruption and insecurity which constitute serious barriers to our country's economic development.

It is gratifying that the Economic Reform and Growth Programme (ERGP) of this Administration has rightly identified the strengthening of the Nigerian Police as one of the major pillars of the Administration's change strategy.

There is no doubt that the Nigeria Police is central to the effective implementation of the ACJA. Several provisions of the Act depend entirely on the Police. For example, the establishment of the Central Criminal Records Registry (CCRR) which is an electronic and manual platform for storing criminal justice data, the deployment of video recording and other modern gadgets for modern law enforcement, the observance of arrest protocols and the new guidelines for remand proceedings depend heavily on the police. We therefore enjoin the authorities to provide the necessary resources for the police. The image and working conditions of the police must be such that the best brains will be competing to join the force. The major work of fighting systemic and endemic corruption including electoral fraud is actually that of the police. All other anti-corruption bodies are merely off-shoots of the police. Without a good and effective police there can be no meaningful economic and social progress. A situation in which the ordinary policemen have to spend part of their meagre salaries to perform official

functions or even depend on handouts from complainants to be able to investigate or apprehend offenders is nothing to write home about. All right-thinking Nigerians must raise their voices in support of the Nigerian Police as they continue to risk their lives to protect us all.

This is why our organization is proud to collaborate with the Police in organizing this Workshop. It is our humble contribution towards the gallant efforts of the Inspector-General to turn around the Force. It is an indication of our fervent belief that without a good and great police Nigeria cannot achieve the dreams of economic recovery and change.

In closing, let me thank their Lordships and other eminent persons who have come to throw their weight behind this Workshop. We thank the President of the Court of Appeal, Hon. Justice Zainab Adamu Bulkachuwa, OFR,CFR; Alhaji Mohammed Bello, Minister of the FCT, Hon. Justice Ibrahim Auta, OFR; Chief Judge of the Federal High Court, Hon. Justice Ishaq Bello, Chief Judge Federal Capital Territory; Mr. Ade Ipaye, Deputy Chief of Staff to the President; Professor Bolaji Owasanonye, Executive Secretary of the Presidential Advisory Commission against Corruption (PACAC) and U.E. Mohammed, Esq., Director of Public Prosecutions of the Federation.

We also thank the Inspector-General of Police, his able DIGs and other senior officers who have created time out of their extremely tight schedule to be with us today.

We welcome and congratulate the officers and other participants who have been chosen to participate in this CSLS/NPF workshop on the ACJA.

**We wish us very fruitful deliberations.**

**Thank you all for your attention.**