



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Remarks at the

**Commissioning of the Judicial Research Centre (JRC) of the Benue State Judiciary
at the High Court Premises, Makurdi on Friday, 25 September 2009.**

By

*Mr. Alain NKOYOCK, Senior IT Coordinator, UNODC,
Project NGAS08: "Support to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and the
Nigerian Judiciary"*

Representing

*Ms. Dagmar Thomas,
The Representative, UNODC Nigeria.*

*Your Excellency, The ^{Acting} Deputy Governor of Benue State,
Your Lordship, the Chief Judge of Benue State
Chief Judges of the pilot states of this project
The Representative of the Administrator of the National Judicial Institute
My UNODC Colleagues here present*

Other protocols observed

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to be here today for the opening ceremony of the Judicial Research Centre (JRC) of the Benue State Judiciary. I am here as a Senior IT Coordinator of this project and also representing the UNODC Country Representative, Ms. Dagmar Thomas, who could not attend this ceremony due to a busy schedule. Mr. Claudi Ferrer-Savall, from the European Commission in Abuja also sent his apologies to you my Lord and the Benue State Judiciary as he also has a tight schedule. Anyway, they all sent their warm congratulations on your achievement today.



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has been supporting the development and implementation of good practices in judicial reform through its Global Action against Corruption since year 2000. This is because the implementation of all other rights ultimately depends on the proper, fair, and judicious administration of justice. A lack of judicial integrity threatens independence and fairness and undermines the rule of law – a key prerequisite for economic growth, democracy, and development. It is in this context that the European Union is supporting the UNODC to implement this project titled “Support to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and the Nigerian Judiciary”.

In year 2007, the state judiciary assembled stakeholders at an integrity meeting to forge a comprehensive plan of actions to improve access to justice, increase timeliness and quality of justice delivery, enhance the integrity, accountability and transparency of the courts, and to strengthen coordination and cooperation across the justice sector institutions.

Since then, much has happened under the leadership of the Honourable Chief Judge of the State, **Justice Iorhemen Hwande**, in partnership with the other



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

justice sector stakeholders. The project has continued to witness excellent improvements in several areas. The following are some of the achievements:

1. The enactment of the High Court Civil procedure rules, magistrate district court rules, and area court rules which has reduced the delays in the filing and determination of civil cases.
2. Training of judges on Alternative Dispute Resolution with a view to supporting the Mediation Centre at the ministry of Justice. This has led to the diversion of many small claims or minor civil disputes from the mainstream courts to alternative dispute resolution methods.
3. Provision of computers to all high court judges and management staff, and with the support of EU/UNODC the introduction of automation of court proceedings in two high court rooms.
4. Supporting NJI/UNODC to implement training for all categories of the court employees.
5. Deployment of the Judicial Research Centre (JRC).

These steps have yielded impressive results that Benue State Judiciary can be proud of.



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Today, we are witnessing the commissioning of the Benue Judicial Research Centre implemented together with our partners, the National Judicial Institute, the European Union, and the Benue State Government. This is one of the key achievements of the project.

But what is a Judicial Research Centre (JRC)?

A Judicial Research Centre is an IT facility which provides access to legal research tools, the Internet, and some specialized IT applications such as the Complaints Management System that helps to collect, analyze, and trace complaints. A Judicial Research Centre has three main components: a satellite dish, a server room of equipment, and a pool of computers, printers, and scanner. By deploying the Judicial Research Centre here at the Benue State Judiciary, we do hope that it will help to improve the performance and efficiency of judicial officers and court officials.

All of the above successes should not be a reason to sit back, as there is a need still for Benue State judiciary to continue to work towards ensuring the overall implementation of the Plan of Action for Strengthening Justice Sector Integrity and Capacity. It is therefore very important for the Government and Legislature of the State to come forward and lend their support. Both resources and leadership are required to ensure that the implementation of the Action Plan is fully seen



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

through, so that by the time of the next assessment of justice sector integrity and capacity in Benue State, already planned for year 2011, we will be able to witness great improvements against the assessment conducted in year 2007.

We salute the Chief Judge for his vision, wisdom, leadership, commitment, that of the Government of Benue State and the entire judiciary to the implementation of the action plan. We are greatly encouraged and confident that the vision of a justice system which provides easy access to courts and citizens, quick dispensation of justice, and one that lives up to the highest standards of integrity and professionalism will be achieved.

Thank you very much. God bless you and Benue State.