

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE CHIEF JUDGE OF ENUGU STATE HON. JUSTICE INNOCENT A. UMEZULIKE (OFR), FCA.ARB. ON THE OCASSION OF THE OFFICIAL COMMISSIONING OF THE JUDICIARY RESEARCH CENTRE ENUGU HELD AT STATE JUDICIARY HEADQUARTERS ENUGU ON THE 25<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER,2010.**

Protocols

It is with great humility and immense pleasure that I welcome you all to this auspicious occasion of the commissioning ceremony of the **Enugu State Judiciary Research Centre**, a collaborative effort of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (**UNODC**) and the Enugu State ~~Judiciary~~ <sup>Government</sup>. I must however be very quick to point out that the Research Centre being commissioned today is not of the orthodox kind containing concrete books for research as we know it but of an IT Centre in a network of computers.

Towards the actualization of the dream of the Research Centre, I, as Chief Judge had constituted the Judiciary Research Centre Committee made up of Hon. Judges of the State High Court to see to the project working with the UNODC and it's consultants. Members of the committee are as follows:

1. **HON. JUSTICE V.N. NEBO - CHAIRMAN**
2. **HON. JUSTICE B.E. AGBATAH**
3. **HON. JUSTICE A.O. ANIDI - SECRETARY**
4. **HON. JUSTICE A.A. NWOBODO**
5. **HON. JUSTICE C.I. NWOBODO**

The committee for the past two years co-ordinated activities towards the achievements of the project. Today's commissioning is testimony of the hardwork and dedication shown to the project by the committee members. We owe members of this committee a debt of gratitude.

The **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** has for more than a decade now shown itself a veritable ally of the Nigerian Judiciary. It has become synonymous with capacity and integrity building for the Nation's judiciary in its activities and programmes. We will recall that in November 2007 at Protea Hotel Enugu, the UNODC in another collaborative effort with the National Judiciary Council assisted the Enugu State Judiciary in the drawing up of a Plan of Action for strengthening Justice Sector integrity and capacity. This Plan of Action was arrived at after extensive stakeholder inputs and consultations and remains relevant till today in identifying the needs of the justice sector in Enugu State and is a benchmark to assessing progress made in moving the sector forward in the state. That document identified improved IT Capacity of personnel and availability of working materials as an item in enhancing timeliness and quality of justice delivery in the State. It required the provision of computers and IT Equipment, IT training for judges, Magistrates and key Registry Staff and well equipped libraries for judicial Officers both in chambers and at their residences. With the commissioning of the **Enugu State Judicial Research Center** today the **UNODC** has not merely provided us with computers but has given the State Judiciary access to the global information super -highway; the internet. That is, that a click of a button, information hitherto unavailable and



unknown becomes accessible literary at our finger tips on all subject matter under the sun. Internet connectivity I have been made to understand is not only possible at the Centre but has been extended to judges chambers within the High Court Headquarters complex where the judges can work in comfort of their chambers.

The need for an IT Centre for the State Judiciary cannot be over emphasized. We live in a technologically driven fast-changing world with the consequent effects of globalization. The world is now a global village. It is of the utmost importance that we identify with our counterparts in this progress and keep abreast of developments in other parts of the world. Expected benefits to be derived from the research centre are in the expeditious and timely disposal of cases, enhanced capacity and professionalism of judicial officers; Judges and Magistrates and of Court Staff, better judgments delivered and generally improved service delivery to our teeming populace. These benefits will go a long way in increasing public confidence in the Nation's Judiciary as a whole and Enugu State Judiciary in particular and contribute in no small way to shoring up integrity within the Nation's judiciary.

In the context of reform, the Enugu State Judiciary has not rested on its oars. The Enugu State High Court now operates a new regime of rules; the **High Court Rules of Enugu State 2006** which came about as a result of the need to enthrone a more just, efficient and speedy dispensation of justice. The new Rules embodies the twin concepts of Front Loading and pre-trial Conferences/Scheduling which have revolutionarised the way business is being carried on in High

Court, leading to shortening of trial duration and expected reduction in backlog of cases in the High Court.

Upon the commissioning of the Enugu State Judiciary Research Centre we owe the UNODC supported by the European Union immense gratitude for this timely intervention. It is worthy to note that the UNODC provided the necessary equipment; computers, Vsat etc for the project. We are also very grateful to the Enugu State Government under the visionary and able leadership of His Excellency Barr. Sullivan I. Chime for the wonderful support given the project in putting forward the counterpart funding necessary for the project without which it would not have seen the light of day. We also appreciate the efforts of the firm of Consultants, Pyrie Global in bringing to concrete reality the project.

The establishment of the Research Centre is only but another step forward in our quest for excellence in Enugu State Judiciary. We now have our jobs cut out for us. In this regard, I call on my learned Colleagues on the Bench; Judges and Magistrates, and other stake -holders in the justice sector to maximally utilize the opportunities provided by the Research Centre to improve our performance. It is to be expected that we will all get computer literate and IT compliant in order to achieve the laudable objectives of increasing access to justice, improve timeliness and quality of the justice delivery, and ensure independence and integrity of justice sector institutions.

I thank you all.

**HON. JUSTICE I.A. UMEZULIKE (OFR) FCA, Arb.**  
**CHIEF JUDGE**