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Remarks at the

Commissioning of the Judicial Research Centre (JRC) of the Enugu State Judiciary
at the High Court Premises, Enugu on Monday, 25 October 2010

By

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

Representing

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

*Your Excellency, Barrister Sullivan Chime, ^{Executive} Governor of Enugu State
Your Lordship, the Chief Judge of Enugu State
Chief Judges of the pilot states of this project
The Representative of the Administrator of the National Judicial Institute, Abuja
My UNODC Colleagues here present
Other protocols observed*

*Represented by
The Deputy Governor,
Mr. Sunday Onyebuchi
Represented by Dr. Ajah C. Ogbue*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to be here today for the opening ceremony of the Judicial Research Centre (JRC) of the Enugu 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. The Representatives of the European Commission in Abuja also sent their apologies to you my Lord and the Enugu State Judiciary as they also have a tight schedule. Anyway, they all sent their warm congratulations on your achievement today.



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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 I. A. Umezulike, OFR, FCI Arb, in partnership with the other justice sector stakeholders. The project has continued to witness excellent improvements in several areas. The following are some of the achievements:

- 1. Establishment of Citizens Rights and Mediation Center**
- 2. Coordination of Town Hall Meetings**
- 3. Presentation of regular jail delivery exercises in conjunction with NGOs and other justice sector institutions**



- 4. Designation of family courts**
- 5. Created awareness of right to bail to prisoners awaiting trial**
- 6. Deployment of the Judicial Research Centre (JRC)**

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

Today, we are witnessing the commissioning of the Enugu Judicial Research Centre implemented together with our partners, the National Judicial Institute, the European Union, and the Enugu 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. A Judicial Research Centre has three (3) main components: a satellite dish, a server room of equipment, a pool of computers, printers, and scanner. By deploying the Judicial Research Centre here at the Enugu 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 Enugu 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



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required to ensure that the implementation of the Action Plan is fully seen through, so that by the time of the next assessment of justice sector integrity and capacity in Enugu 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, the commitment of the Enugu State Government and the entire judiciary for and 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 Enugu State.