

ADDRESS BY THE ACTING GOVERNOR OF BENUE STATE, HIS EXCELLENCY, CHIEF STEVEN LAWANI, OFR, ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMMISSIONING OF THE JUDICIAL RESEARCH CENTRE (JRC) AT THE MAKURDI HIGH COURT COMPLEX ON FRIDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER, 2009

I am glad to be here and to address you on this occasion of the commissioning of the Judicial Research Centre (JRC) which has been provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in conjunction with the Benue State Judiciary. Let me very specially welcome the delegation of the UNODC to Makurdi, the Benue State Capital, and to commend them for making this occasion possible.

2. The long held traditional belief is that democracy best thrives under the rule of law. The efficient dispensation of Justice therefore becomes a very crucial parameter for the citizenry to evaluate or benefit from this age long belief.

3. Justice delayed is not only justice denied but the transparency of verdicts to sometimes called to question when these delays occur. Quite often, apart from technical delay, the materials and facilities at the disposal of our Judicial officers also play a part. The envisaged practical usefulness of the Research Centre to the High Court, Magistrate and Area court Judges as well as other Judicial Officers underscores the importance of this centre to the entire Justice system in the state.

4. I understand that Benue is among eight (8) other states that have been chosen in the Federation as pilot states by the UNODC to benefit from its manpower development programme and the provision of working implements for quick and effective dispensation of Justice. In addition to research, the centre would help to expose them to current trends in the development of law in other jurisdictions.

5. My Lords, ladies and gentlemen, we now live in a world where we can not afford to be indifferent to happenings in other lands. A cross fertilization of ideas on other spheres of human endeavour, is important to the development of law, which is an area that is eternally dynamic.

6. We must therefore move with the demands of the moment in response to the innovations in the field of technology and management systems or risk being left behind to wonder in abandoned intellectual homesteads. But as you will agree with

me, we can not afford to stay behind while the rest of the world moves on in seeking and adopting better means or ways of providing justice for the interest of society. And as you know, justice provides the cornerstone to build peace and order, and we can not afford to toy with it.

7. It is in the light of the foregoing, once again, that I commend the UNODC for equipping this centre and its untiring efforts in the capacity building of staff in the state Judiciary. I understand that the centre is the best in the North Central Zone and can match any research centre elsewhere. We commend, also, the Honourable Chief Judge for the initiative to partner with the UNODC in the provision of the centre even with the lean resources at his disposal.

8. My Lord, what you have been able to do with so little is indeed a challenge to the Executive to continue to contribute its own quota to complement your efforts and that of the UNODC. I wish to assure you that Government would strive to do its best in the training and retraining of staff in legal and judicial education as much as our resources can afford. This is because we know that those who dispense justice need to be adequately prepared intellectually, morally and otherwise to rise up to the challenges of their offices, especially now that your decisions could and do impact on the polity.

10. For as the great jurist Justinian correctly points out, the ignorance of the judge is the misfortune of the litigant. I must add that we are proud of the state's Judiciary hence we look forward to its continued growth from strength to strength.

11. On this note, my Lords, ladies and gentlemen, it is my honour and pleasure to officially commission the Judicial Research Centre for the promotion of a sound judicial system in the state.

12. Thank you and God bless.