



Remarks at the

**Commissioning of the Judicial Research Centre of the Katsina State Judiciary
At the High Court Premises, Katsina on Tuesday 28 July 2009.**

*By
Ms Dagmar Thomas,
UNODC Representative*

*Your Excellency, The Governor of Katsina state, Barr Ibrahim S.Shema,
Your lordship the Chief Judge of Katsina State Hon.Justice S.A.Mahuta ,OFR
Your Excellency Mr. Denis Thieulin, Acting Head of Delegation of the EC
Other protocols observed*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since 2000, 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. 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 its 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”. Katsina state has been a pilot state of the previous project which took place between 2001 and 2003 and is also benefiting from the ongoing project.



The first Katsina State Judiciary Action Plan for strengthening justice sector integrity and capacity was drawn up at the first Katsina State integrity meeting held on 18 and 19 June 2003 in Katsina . The state judiciary assembled stakeholders to forge a comprehensive and ambitious plan of action 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.

Again in early 2007, there were extensive stakeholder consultations followed by a comprehensive review of the action plan by members of the Katsina State implementation committee which resulted in the production of the updated version we have now.

Since then much has happened under the leadership of the Chief Judge of the State, Hon. Justice S.A. Mahuta, and his team which has taken the project to great heights . The following are some of the achievements:

1. Establishment of a functioning and effective public complaints committee to address court users concerns.
2. Sponsored publicity on court users rights through radio and television .
3. Establishment and support to legal Aid clinics at the High Court to enhance access the justice for the indigent court users.



4. Sponsored training for various category of judiciary staff on Judicial ethics and other areas.
5. Making effective use of two court recording machines supplied under the project.
6. Conducted two Town Hall meetings at Katsina and Daura
7. Construction and furnishing of the Judicial Research Centre(JRC).
8. Commenced the implementation of the Katsina state Plan of Action.

These achievements have translated into results that the katsina state judiciary can be proud of. In an assessment of the justice sector in the ten pilot states conducted by the Legal Defence and Assistance Project(LEDAP), Katsina state was rated the highest in many of the indices considered particularly in the satisfaction of court users with services rendered to them. To build further on this , the project will help the Katsina State judiciary provide better information to courts users through the publication of two additional court user guides on basic civil procedure and on useful contact addresses for court users.

These are laudable achievements – and let me emphasise this – much more is needed.



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* Today, the Katsina State judiciary with the support of its partners, in particular the National Judicial Institute, the European Union and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime come together for the opening of the second Judicial Research Centre (JRC) in Nigeria . This is one of the key achievements of the project. This facility will provide access to legal research tools, the World Wide Web, as well as some specialized IT applications which will help judicial officers and court officials alike to carry out their tasks more efficiently and with greater ease. *

However, all of the above will not be enough to ensure the overall implementation of the Plan of Action for Strengthening Justice Sector Integrity and Capacity in Katsina State. It is therefore of paramount importance for the Government and Legislature of Katsina 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 through, so that by the time of the next assessment of justice sector integrity and capacity in Katsina State, already planned for 2011, we all will be able to witness great improvements against the assessment conducted in 2007.

Having experienced the commitment of the katsina State judiciary to the implementation of the action plan, we are greatly encouraged and confident that



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the vision of a justice system which provides easy access to courts to citizens, quick dispensation of justice, and lives up to the highest standards of integrity and professionalism will be achieved.

Thank you very much.