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**Remarks at the**

**Commissioning of the Judicial Research Centre of the Kaduna State Judiciary  
At the High Court Premises, Kaduna on Thursday 30 July 2009.**

*By*

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

*Your Excellency, The Governor of Kaduna state, Arch. Mohammed Namadi Sambo  
Your lordship the Chief Judge of Kaduna State  
Chief Judges of the pilot states of this project  
The administrator of the National judicial Institute,  
Your Excellency Mr. Denis Thieulin, Acting Head of Delegation of the EC*

*Other protocols observed*

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 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 2007, The state judiciary assembled stakeholders at an integrity meeting to forge a comprehensive plan of action to improve access to justice, increase



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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 R.H. Cudjoe OFR, the project has continued to witness astronomical improvements in several areas. The following are some of the achievements:

1. Hosting of several of the projects activities
2. Training for various category of judiciary staff on Judicial ethics and other areas.
3. Successful Conduct of Town Hall meetings at Kaduna
4. Construction and furnishing of the Judicial Research Centre (JRC).
5. Commencement of the implementation of the Kaduna state Plan of Action for strengthening Justice Sector Integrity and Capacity.

In an assessment of the justice sector in the ten pilot states carried out by the Legal Defence and Assistance Project (LEDAP), Kaduna justice sector recorded very good results when compared with the other nine states under the project. For example, Courts are largely perceived as accessible by the court users, as well as to prisoners awaiting trial. Lawyers, users and judges agreed that timeliness had improved greatly. Also all stakeholders rated independence of the judiciary high



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while corruption and other types of malpractices have been largely eradicated from the court system. Lawyers, court users as well as judges agree that timeliness has improved significantly.

These are achievements that Kaduna state judiciary can be proud of.

Today, we are witnessing the commissioning of the Kaduna Judicial Research Center implemented together with our partners, the National Judicial Institute, the European Union and the Kaduna state government. 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 successes should not be a reason to sit back. There is a need still for kaduna 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 through, so that by the time of the next assessment of justice sector



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integrity and capacity in Kaduna State, already planned for 2011, we all will be able to witness great improvements against the assessment conducted in 2007.

We salute the chief judge for her vision, wisdom and leadership as well her commitment and that of the Government of kaduna 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 to citizens, quick dispensation of justice, and lives up to the highest standards of integrity and professionalism will be achieved.

Thank you very much.