

NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION

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COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUED AT THE END OF THE 65TH ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION HELD FROM 22ND TO 29TH AUGUST 2025, AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE, ENUGU, NIGERIA

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The 65th Annual General Conference (AGC) of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), with the theme "Stand Out, Stand Tall", was held at the International Conference Centre (ICC), Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria, from 22nd to 29th August 2025.
- 1.2 The AGC, the flagship gathering of the NBA, brought together leaders of the Bar and Bench, captains of industry, political leaders, international partners, and civil society to deliberate on the growth of the legal profession and its role in addressing Nigeria's and Africa's most pressing challenges.
- 1.3 The Conference commenced with Jumat Prayers on Friday, 22nd August 2025, a Health Walk and the NEC Meeting on Saturday, 23rd August 2025, followed by a Church Service and the Opening Ceremony on Sunday, 24th August 2025.
- 1.4 The Opening Ceremony was chaired by His Eminence, Alhaji Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar III, CFR, the Sultan of Sokoto, who, in his remarks, underscored the centrality of law as the foundation of societal order, justice, and peace. He called on lawyers to champion reforms in law, social justice, and access to justice for the vulnerable, noting that justice remains the bedrock of governance and peace.

- 1.5 In his Keynote Address, Hon. Julius Malema, MP, South African legislator and leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), set the tone for the Conference with a stirring call for African lawyers to decolonize legal systems, dismantle oppressive structures, and build frameworks rooted in African cultural identity, dignity, and pride. He challenged the African Bar to reject being mere enforcers of outdated colonial laws, and instead become innovators who drive transformation in justice, governance, and economic emancipation.
- 1.6 Declaring the Conference open, the Governor of Enugu State, His Excellency Dr. Peter Ndubuisi Mbah, welcomed delegates to the state and assured them of security and hospitality. He emphasized the place of the legal profession in stabilizing democracy, strengthening institutions, and guiding national reforms. The Governor commended the NBA for choosing Enugu as the host city and pledged his government's continued support for initiatives that advance justice and development.
- 1.7 With these powerful addresses, the Conference was set on a course of deep reflection, bold dialogue, and practical resolutions for Nigeria, Africa, and the global legal community.

2.0 OBSERVATIONS

- 2.1 There is a growing divide between the affluent and the underprivileged in Nigerian society.
- 2.2 Many Nigerian laws are outdated and do not reflect contemporary societal realities.
- 2.3 The poor are often denied legal recourse due to financial constraints and other systemic barriers.
- 2.4 There is a need for the legal professions to guide society in the direction of legal reform, social justice and the rule of law.

- 2.5 Oppressive systems are entrenched by unjust foreign laws.
- 2.6 Restriction of movement within African countries by Africa impedes economic development and trust.
- 2.7 Over-dependence by Africans on foreign content and systems stunts African industrial growth.
- 2.8 Africans do not have laws that reflect their uniqueness and cultural pride/heritage.
- 2.9 African lawyers are mainly mere enforcers of outdated systems and practices.
- 2.10 There is an urgent need for collaboration amongst African nations.
- 2.11 The hallmark of an effective lawyer is not talent alone but discipline, foresight, and deliberate preparation.
- 2.12 Resilience and mentorship were highlighted as critical pillars for personal and professional growth.
- 2.13 Mentorship is indispensable for grooming disciplined, competent, and visionary lawyers.
- 2.14 Professional excellence requires diligence, integrity, consistency, and preparedness, which remain central regardless of technological or legal reforms.
- 2.15 Nigeria's economy remains weak due to inflationary pressures, poorly sequenced reforms, and the collapse of purchasing power across all social classes.
- 2.16 Subsidy removal and exchange rate unification were introduced without adequate cushioning measures, thereby worsening hardship for ordinary Nigerians.
- 2.17 Weak institutions, reckless political spending, and failure to enforce minimum wage policies continue to undermine accountability, erode public trust, and entrench inequality, leaving many workers in extreme hardship while the political class enjoys disproportionate benefits.

- 2.18 Artificial Intelligence has come to stay and is rapidly altering legal practice.
- 2.19 The legal profession must adapt to global changes by integrating emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence.
- 2.20 Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as both an opportunity and a challenge for the legal profession
- 2.21 All AI hallucinates, including Claude and ChatGPT and can generate inaccurate or fabricated information.
- 2.22 No AI has all the information in the world.
- 2.23 Younger legal professionals leverage AI tools to enhance productivity, research speed and professional growth.
- 2.24 Any infrastructure which does not satisfy end users is a wasted resource.
- 2.25 Funding alone is not enough in infrastructure delivery; without governance reforms, transparency, and maintenance culture, more money leads to more waste.
- 2.26 Dirty money thrives when lawyers are passive in the face of economic corruption.
- 2.27 The idea of "re-litigating", alternative dispute resolution (ADR), as the topic suggests, is a presumption that fundamentally misrepresents the essential nature of what makes arbitration distinct from court proceedings.
- 2.28 ADR is a private, consensual mechanism for dispute resolution meant to avoid the pitfalls of litigation, particularly the time lag and penchant for technicalities.
- 2.29 There is an urgent need to repeal or amend outdated Nigerian laws that no longer reflect present-day realities.
- 2.30 Adoption of innovative technology is fundamental to an effective and efficient justice delivery system.
- 2.31 The ongoing tax reforms are reshaping fiscal policies, tightening enforcement, and restructuring tax institutions.

- 2.32 These reforms boost government revenue but create uncertainty for businesses and individuals navigating new compliance requirements.
- 2.33 Women have made notable strides in politics, law, and education, but structural barriers continue to hinder their full participation.
- 2.34 Gender-based discrimination, cultural stereotypes, and weak enforcement of gender-sensitive laws remain pervasive challenges.
- 2.35 Women's rights movements and advocacy have been central to progress since Beijing, but a lack of unity and mentorship among women slows collective advancement.
- 2.36 Women's inclusion is essential for sustainable national growth.
- 2.37 Despite notable achievements, women remain underrepresented in governance, business, and the judiciary.
- 2.38 Lawyers have a duty to exercise due diligence in their financial dealings and report suspicious financial activities of their clients.
- 2.39 Globalization demands strength, not weakness, and we should not allow our quest for globalization to lead to recolonization.
- 2.40 Workplace safety and compensation are human rights critical to economic development and sustainability.
- 2.41 The sports and entertainment industries are multi-billion-dollar sectors of equal importance to traditional sectors like oil and gas.
- 2.42 There are emerging areas in the sport and entertainment industry that lawyers need to safeguard.
- 2.43 There is tension between prosecutorial independence and the principles of accountability in a democracy.
- 2.44 The provisions of Sections 174 and 211 of the Constitution of the FRN 1999, which empower the Attorney General of the Federation and the state, respectively, to enter *nolle prosequi* in public criminal prosecution, have been abused and now clog the wheel of democracy.

- 2.45 There is a trust deficit between the citizens and the security agencies due to a lack of transparency and accountability.
- 2.46 Persistent allegations of arbitrary arrests, torture, extrajudicial killings, and misuse of "national security" to mask "government security" violate citizens' rights and discredit security agencies.
- 2.47 The slow pace of adjudicating politically sensitive security cases undermines public trust in the judiciary as an institution of justice.
- 2.48 Failure of oversight by both the judiciary and professional bodies has allowed harmful practices in policing and unchecked detention facilities to continue.
- 2.49 The COVID-19 pandemic exposed children to increased risks, including unlawful detention, family violence, online exploitation.
- 2.50 Despite the Child Rights Act (2003), weak enforcement, inadequate facilities, and insufficient specialized personnel continue to undermine children's rights.
- 2.51 Many children in detention underscore the absence of effective diversion programs and alternatives to custodial sentencing.
- 2.52 Neither the NBA nor government institutions have fully deployed their mandates to ensure compliance, advocacy, and monitoring of children's rights protection across Nigeria.
- 2.53 Most Nigerian law firms remain heavily dependent on individual founders and lack systems to sustain themselves without the principal lawyer, limiting growth and longevity.
- 2.54 Despite having a large bar, Nigerian law firms earn significantly less than their counterparts in South Africa, the US, or the UK, with few firms ranked internationally.
- 2.55 Legal education focuses on theory but pays little attention to entrepreneurship, specialization, and the global business of law, leaving young lawyers ill-prepared for competitive practice.

- 2.56 Poor compensation discourages talent retention, while the erosion of structured mentorship and pupillage culture undermines professional growth and succession planning.
- 2.57 There are no clear framework or criteria to determine which political disputes are justiciable, resulting in inconsistent rulings, uncertainty among party members, and occasional accusations of judicial bias, which undermine public confidence in the judiciary.
- 2.58 Unchecked discretion—especially in leadership selection, candidate nominations, or disciplinary processes threatens democratic principles, disenfranchises members, and creates conflicts that impact the general public.
- 2.59 Financial policies without effective regulatory oversight lead to systemic risks, exploitation, or financial crises.
- 2.60 The financial sector presents significant opportunities for lawyers which require specialized legal skills.
- 2.61 Many young lawyers migrate abroad due to poor working conditions, non-implementation of the NBA Remuneration Order, and inadequate earnings that fail to match the prestige and expectations attached to the profession.
- 2.62 There is a major disconnect between theory and practice in the legal profession. Moots and externships remain insufficient without structured internships and practical case exposure.
- 2.63 Proper mentorship in Nigeria is lacking. Young lawyers often enter practice without adequate guidance, which contributes to disillusionment, mistakes, and weak career progression.
- 2.64 Many law firms lack transparent succession planning and inclusive cultures that encourage growth.

3.0 RESOLUTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Opening Ceremony

- I. The NBA is called upon to lead the charge in modernizing the legal system to enhance the delivery of justice and align with international best practices.
- II. Deliberate steps must be taken to dismantle systemic barriers that prevent the poor and vulnerable from accessing legal redress. Strategies to include promoting affordable litigation, expanding Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms, and strengthening legal aid services.
- III. The financial autonomy granted to the judiciary in Enugu State should be replicated by all state governments.
- IV. Agreed that there is a need for lawyers to uphold the highest standards of professional ethics, innovation, and service.
- V. There is a need for the removal of intra-African barriers and allowing Visafree movement across Africa to enhance development.
- VI. The NBA is to create legal frameworks and institutions that reflect African's peculiar realities.
- VII. There is a need for Africans to protect their industries by patronizing local content and reducing reliance on foreign systems.
- VIII. African unity and cultural pride require self-respect, cultural confidence and solidarity across borders.
 - IX. Lawyers should demonstrate courage in confronting corruption, impunity, and injustice within and outside the profession.

X. The legal profession should champion the cause of equity, fairness, and inclusivity to bridge the widening gap between the privileged and the underprivileged.

3.2 Set forth at dawn

- XI. The legal profession must adapt to a rapidly changing economy where multidisciplinary knowledge, innovation, and entrepreneurship are vital.
- XII. The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), in collaboration with stakeholders, should urgently review and modernize the Legal Practitioners Act and the Rules of Professional Conduct to align with global best practices

3.3 Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Future of Legal Practice

- XIII. The NBA should lead structured engagement with AI by establishing ethical and professional guidelines for AI usage to prevent abuse while maximizing its benefits.
- XIV. The development of Nigeria-specific AI legal models, trained on local statutes and case law, to improve accuracy and enhance access to justice is fundamental.
- XV. The NBA should roll out continuous professional training to ensure that legal practitioners are equipped to integrate AI responsibly into their practice.
- XVI. The NBA should institutionalize a national mentorship framework where senior lawyers are formally paired with younger practitioners, complemented by regular ethics training, continuing professional development, and initiatives that reinforce the discipline, sacrifice, and service that define the nobility of the legal profession.
- XVII. Lawyers and institutions should develop clear visions and act early to shape outcomes, influence governance, and strengthen the justice system.

- XVIII. The NBA should prioritize continuous training and mentorship structures that instill discipline, resilience, and long-term planning.
 - XIX. Timeliness, diligence, and intentionality should become defining values of the Nigerian legal profession.
 - XX. In embracing Artificial Intelligence, lawyers must maintain ethical safeguards and professional oversight. Technology should be leveraged to improve efficiency, but never at the expense of accuracy, accountability, or ethical standards.

3.4 State of the Nation Economy – Is the Economy, Stupid!

- XXI. Nigeria must prioritize institutional reforms to curb reckless political spending, enforce transparency in public finance, and hold leaders accountable for mismanagement.
- XXII. The NBA should champion advocacy for legal reforms and monitoring compliance with fiscal and governance laws.
- XXIII. Policy changes should be carefully sequenced, preceded by socioeconomic impact assessments, and supported with targeted cushioning measures to protect vulnerable citizens.
- XXIV. The national minimum wage must be urgently reviewed to reflect inflation realities, indexed for periodic adjustments, and legally enforced across all states.
- XXV. Public-private partnerships should be deepened to create jobs and attract investor confidence.
- XXVI. A value-addition strategy must be adopted to ensure minerals are processed locally, creating jobs and boosting revenues rather than relying on raw exports.

3.5 Leadership for Transformation

- XXVII. Leadership must be visionary, courageous, and rooted in values of integrity, justice, and inclusivity.
- XXVIII. Sustainable reforms must be secured through robust legal frameworks that outlast political cycles. Strong institutions are essential for justice, accountability, and long-term stability.
- XXIX. Nigeria must prioritize a modern, skills-driven education system that emphasizes critical thinking, digital literacy, creativity, and technical skills.
- XXX. Transformation requires a secure environment, a diversified economy, and institutionalized collaboration. Al-driven and intelligence-led security models should be expanded nationwide.

3.6 Disruptive Artificial Intelligence

- XXXI. There is a need to integrate AI literacy, ethics, and data protection modules into law school curricula and continuing professional education.
- XXXII. Regulatory frameworks that align with the Nigerian Data Protection Act 2023 must be developed to guide responsible AI use, ensuring accountability and professional standards.
- XXXIII. There is a need for regular training for judges, lawyers and court staff on responsible use of AI and other digital tools.
- XXXIV. Continuous human oversight to avoid errors and ethical breaches.

3.7 Unbundling Tax Reforms

XXXV. The government should simplify tax procedures and harmonize policies across federal, state, and local levels to reduce duplication and confusion.

- XXXVI. Tax reforms should prioritize equity, ensuring that SMEs and vulnerable groups are not disproportionately burdened.
- XXXVII. Tax authorities must strengthen enforcement mechanisms through digitalization, transparency, and accountability.
- XXXVIII. Sustained stakeholder engagement with businesses, professional associations, and civil society is essential to foster compliance, trust, and shared ownership of reforms.

3.8 Thirty Years after Beijing

- XXXIX. Governments and professional bodies should prioritize the enforcement of gender equality laws and adopt affirmative action policies.
 - XL. Institutional reforms should create enabling environments for women's participation in leadership, business, and governance.
 - XLI. Civil society, academia, and professional groups should deepen advocacy efforts through campaigns, mentorship programs, and collaborative platforms.

3.9 Women in Leadership

- XLII. The NBA, in collaboration with lawmakers, should champion the enactment and enforcement of gender-sensitive laws and policies.
- XLIII. The NBA and other professional bodies should mainstream gender inclusion within their leadership structures. Changing institutional practices and societal attitudes is key to dismantling entrenched patriarchal barriers.
- XLIV. Structured mentorship and leadership development programs should be institutionalized to equip young women with the skills and confidence to assume leadership roles.

3.10 Infrastructural Deficit, funding, development and vandalization

- XLV. Nigeria needs tougher legislation that aligns with international best practices, as infrastructure deficit hinders economic growth and development.
- XLVI. There is a need for institutional reforms, stronger anti-vandalism measures and a national infrastructure master plan that will prioritize maintenance, transparency/accountability, and community engagement.
- XLVII. There is a need to adopt innovative technology for monitoring and evaluating regional priorities to meet present-day realities.
- XLVIII. Maintenance culture and lifecycle funding should be embedded for all projects.

3.11 Dirty Money

- XLIX. Nigerians and their leaders should stand tall and stand out against dirty money by boldly standing against the economic corruption prevalent in our country.
 - L. The scourge of dirty money is a pressing concern globally, with financial crimes such as money laundering, terrorism financing, and corruption posing significant threats to the integrity of financial systems and the rule of law.
 - LI. Lawyers have a duty to exercise due diligence in their financial dealings and report suspicious financial activities of their clients.

3.12 Legal Ethics and Globalization

LII. There is a need for the globalization of Nigerian universities, including the Nigerian Law School, to ensure our policies fit into the global best practices.

LIII. The mandatory continuous legal education trains lawyers on global legal ethics, and lawyers should embrace it wholly.

3.13 Owning in a Changing Environment

- LIV. Land registries should embrace technology for an efficient land documentation system that will protect the citizens.
- LV. A fundamental review of land registration procedures is required.

 Registration should be automatic upon payment of due fees and taxes,
 provided there is no clear conflict of title.
- LVI. There is a need to launch public awareness campaigns on the importance of ethical land ownership and the enforceable rights of all citizens, including women, under the Constitution.
- LVII. The need has arisen for the establishment of specialized land tribunals/Courts to ensure swift and expert determination of land disputes.

3.14 Relitigating Alternative Dispute Resolution in Nigeria

- LVIII. Arbitration must have time limits to conclude a case.
 - LIX. The Court of Appeal should be the final court for Judicial Review of Arbitration matters.
 - LX. Posting mandatory bonds as security for costs in challenges to arbitral awards will deter frivolous challenges to arbitral awards.
 - LXI. Professional competence amongst arbitrators and proper knowledge of the case are key to avoiding frivolous challenges on awards.

3.15 Effective Workplace Compensation

LXII. Workplace-related accidents must be adequately compensated

- LXIII. Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) must take a health and safety audit which it owed all its employees.
- LXIV. Law firms shall subscribe and comply with the Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) scheme.

3.16 Expounding Sports and Entertainment Law

- LXV. There is a need to advocate for policies that formally recognize and incentivize the sports and entertainment industry for economic diversification and gross domestic product growth.
- LXVI. There is a need for the establishment of a specialized National sports and copyright tribunal, which will provide an affordable and speedy justice delivery system.

3.17 AI and Professional Misconduct: Avoiding Pitfalls in a Tech-Driven Practice

- LXVII. The legal profession must embrace technological tools to augment legal work, but caution must be exercised to prevent breaches of confidentiality and violations of ethical standards.
- LXVIII. AI should serve as a tool, not as a replacement; lawyers must exercise reasonable caution to verify correctness and compliance.
 - LXIX. Lawyers must equip themselves to understand, evaluate, and ethically deploy AI tools.
 - LXX. Mandatory AI courses and digital literacy should be integrated into law school curricula.

3.18 Trailblazing Without Borders

- LXXI. Lawyers should gain general practice experience for about 3-4 years before specializing in a chosen field.
- LXXII. The NBA should develop structured mentorship programs that emphasize accountability, peer learning, and measurable outcomes.
- LXXIII. Lawyers should use podcasts, social media, and online platforms to build visibility, network, and cross-border collaborations.
- LXXIV. Lawyers should invest in continuous learning, niche development, and cross-sector collaboration to remain competitive.
- LXXV. Lawyers should build professional networks across borders and industries to create new opportunities and partnerships.

3.19 Prosecutorial Discretion and Accountability – Striking A Balance in A Democratic Society

- LXXVI. The immunity which the attorney general enjoys while exercising his powers of prosecutorial discretion as provided in Sections 174 and 211 of the Constitution of the FRN 1999 as amended, impacts negatively on the practice of justice and equity.
- LXXVII. There is a need for a constitutional review of Sections 174 and 211 to include the power of judicial oversight or review.
- LXXVIII. The Attorney Generals should imbibe integrity, justice and fairness in exercising their discretion under Sections 174 and 211 to avoid injustice.

3.20 Citizens' Rights & Security Concerns

- LXXIX. Government and security institutions must implement clear policies to restore citizens' confidence.
- LXXX. Dedicated funding streams should be allocated to security agencies, and capacity-building programmes should be co-designed with the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) to train security officers in rights-respecting enforcement.
- LXXXI. National security should be broadened, and the misuse of national security as a shield for political security must be decisively curbed.
- LXXXII. The judiciary must fast-track politically sensitive cases.
- LXXXIII. The NBA should establish liaison committees with security agencies to ensure compliance with laws and eliminate illegal practices.

3.21 Reimagining justice for children in Nigeria: Upholding Rights, Restoring Dignity.

- LXXXIV. The NBA should strengthen free legal aid clinics, pro bono panels, and child rights compliance desks to guarantee representation for every child in conflict with the law.
- LXXXV. Adoption of clear policies on diversion, alternatives to detention, and child-friendly courts should be made mandatory and consistently monitored.
- LXXXVI. Regular prison and detention visits by magistrates and robust advocacy campaigns with UNICEF should ensure transparency, accountability, and sustained enforcement of child protection laws.

3.22 Building the Future Firm

- LXXXVII. Nigerian firms should develop governance frameworks, succession plans, and financial models that ensure sustainability beyond individual practitioners.
- LXXXVIII. Lawyers to pursue specialization, engage in international networks, publish scholarly works, and leverage online platforms to enhance global recognition.
 - LXXXIX. There is a need to revise Law faculties and the Nigerian Law School curricula to incorporate entrepreneurship, practice management, and structured internships.
 - XC. The NBA should enforce fair remuneration standards, revive pupillage, and promote mentorship schemes that prepare young lawyers for long-term careers in a competitive global market.

3.23 Rethinking "Political Questions"

- XCI. The judiciary should develop definitive criteria to distinguish between nonjusticiable political matters and disputes that warrant intervention.
- XCII. Specialized training in party governance, constitutional law, democratic theory, and conflict resolution for Judges presiding over political question cases.
- XCIII. Political parties should institutionalize transparent mechanisms for leadership selection, dispute resolution, and membership protection.

3.24 Value vs. Money

XCIV. The NBA members should undertake continuous professional development in financial law, corporate governance, fintech, and regulatory compliance.

- XCV. Universities and law schools should also integrate economic law modules to prepare lawyers for practice in financial sectors.
- XCVI. Lawyers should be actively engaged in financial policy formulation.

3.25 Catch them Young

- XCVII. The NBA and law faculties should establish formal mentorship frameworks to bridge the gap between academics and real-world practice.
- XCVIII. Legal training should integrate compulsory internships across courts, corporate organizations, and public institutions.
 - XCIX. Pupilage should be remunerated fairly.
 - C. The NBA must ensure implementation of its Remuneration Order.
 - CI. Law firms should cultivate transparent succession systems, workplace cultures that respect junior lawyers, and policies that protect young practitioners from harassment while reinforcing professional ethics.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 At the close of its 65th Annual General Conference, the Nigerian Bar Association reaffirmed its historic role as the conscience of the nation and the vanguard of the legal profession in Africa.
- 4.2 Delegates resolved that the Bar must not only regulate and strengthen the profession, but also inspire national rebirth, promote justice without fear or favour, and defend the dignity of all citizens.
- 4.3 The Conference underscored that the future of Nigeria and indeed Africa depends on strong institutions, ethical leadership, an independent judiciary, and a legal profession that is innovative, resilient, and people-focused.

4.4 The NBA pledged to champion reforms that uphold equity, inclusivity, and accountability, while ensuring that technology and globalization are harnessed responsibly for the advancement of justice.

4.5 Beyond Nigeria, the NBA committed to deepening continental solidarity by working with sister Bar associations across Africa to dismantle barriers to trade, strengthen cross-border legal frameworks, and ensure that Africa speaks with one voice in the global community.

4.6 The Association therefore calls on government at all levels, the judiciary, the legislature, the private sector, civil society, and the international community to partner with it in building a just, prosperous, and peaceful society.

4.7 In this resolve, the Nigerian Bar Association stands out and stands tall not only as a regulator of legal practice, but as a beacon of hope, a guardian of democracy, and a driver of transformation for Nigeria, Africa, and the world at large.

Dated this 29th August, 2025

MAZI AFAM OSIGWE, SAN

President

DR. MOBOLAJI OJIBARAGeneral Secretary