

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION AT THE 2026 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE.

Protocol

1. Distinguished Colleagues, I warmly welcome you all to this Annual General Meeting of our great Association, holding here in the beautiful city of Port Harcourt. It is with profound gratitude to Almighty God and a deep sense of fulfilment that I present this Annual Report of the activities of the Nigerian Bar Association and its organs pursuant to Section 12(3)(a) of the Constitution of the Nigerian Bar Association, which mandates National Officers to furnish reports of the activities of the Association at the Annual General Meeting. This report presents an account of our stewardship over the last year and, more importantly, provides a comprehensive reflection on the work accomplished during the two years of this administration.
2. This Annual General Meeting occupies a unique place in the life of our Association. It is the highest policy-making organ of the Nigerian Bar Association. It is where we account to our members, review our collective journey, evaluate our successes and shortcomings, and chart the course for the future. Today's meeting, however, bears an even greater significance. It marks the conclusion of the tenure entrusted to this administration in August 2024. It is therefore both an occasion for accountability and an opportunity to reflect on the legacy we have collectively built.
3. Two years ago, we accepted the responsibility of leading this Association with humility, courage, and an unwavering commitment to service. We pledged to build a Bar that would be united, technologically driven, professionally relevant, financially responsible, and fearless in defending the rule of law. We promised to strengthen our institutions, improve the welfare of our members, modernise the administration of the Association, deepen engagement with our branches, and ensure that the Nigerian Bar Association remained the foremost voice for constitutional democracy, justice, and good governance in Nigeria.
4. Today, as we approach the conclusion of this administration, we can confidently state that while much work remains for future leadership, we have made substantial progress in laying stronger institutional foundations for the continued growth of our Association. Throughout these two years, our administration remained guided by six fundamental pillars: the defence of the rule of law and constitutional democracy; prudent financial management

and institutional stewardship; institutional reform and professional regulation; lawyer welfare and economic empowerment; legal education, innovation and capacity building; and the modernisation and strengthening of the Nigerian Bar Association. These guiding principles informed every major decision, reform, policy intervention, and programme undertaken during our tenure.

5. When we assumed office, the Association was confronted with significant institutional and professional challenges. Delays in the production and distribution of NBA Stamps and Seals had become a recurring source of frustration for members. Many of our regulatory and administrative processes remained largely manual and inefficient. There was a pressing need to strengthen professional regulation, modernise legal education, improve lawyer welfare, enhance digital service delivery, deepen engagement with branches, and reposition the Association to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving legal profession. Equally important was the expectation that the NBA would continue to serve as the conscience of the nation by defending constitutional democracy, judicial independence, human rights, and the rule of law without fear or favour.
6. We resolved from the outset that this administration would not merely manage the affairs of the Association. Our objective was to build enduring institutions rather than transient achievements. We therefore embarked upon comprehensive reforms designed to modernise the NBA, strengthen its governance structures, improve its financial sustainability, enhance service delivery to members, embrace technological innovation, and position the Association for the future. Every initiative undertaken during this administration was intended not simply to address immediate challenges but to create systems capable of serving generations of lawyers yet unborn.
7. Throughout our tenure, we remained faithful to the constitutional mandate of the Nigerian Bar Association as the guardian of the rule of law and defender of democratic governance. We spoke whenever constitutional principles were threatened. We intervened whenever the independence of the judiciary came under attack. We defended lawyers who were harassed in the course of their professional duties. We stood with vulnerable citizens whose rights were violated. We challenged executive excesses, advocated judicial reforms, promoted access to justice, strengthened professional regulation, and consistently demonstrated that the Nigerian Bar Association remains an independent institution whose loyalty is owed only to the Constitution, the rule of law, and the Nigerian people.

A LEGACY OF INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

8. Distinguished colleagues, one of the defining features of this administration has been its deliberate commitment to institutional reform. We recognised early that sustainable progress could only be achieved through strong institutions supported by efficient systems and sound governance structures. Consequently, we embarked on one of the most ambitious modernisation programmes in the history of the Association. We introduced the Digital Annual Practice Licence, digitised the issuance of Letters of Good Standing, established the NBA National Executive Council Digital Portal, launched the NBA Smart Identity Card, introduced the NBA Digital Signature Studio, relaunched the NBA Digital Seal, strengthened our digital infrastructure, and significantly expanded the use of technology in the administration of the Association. These reforms have fundamentally transformed the manner in which the NBA delivers services to its members and have positioned our Association to compete favourably with leading professional bodies across the world.
9. We equally remained committed to strengthening the legal profession through reforms in legal education, continuing professional development, professional regulation, constitutional governance, and institutional accountability. During this administration, we championed the amendment of the Legal Practitioners Act, introduced the Mandatory Continuing Professional Development Framework, successfully amended the NBA Constitution, convened the historic NBA Legal Education Summit, and developed comprehensive standards designed to improve legal education and professional competence across Nigeria. These reforms represent significant investments in the future of the legal profession and will continue to benefit generations of lawyers long after this administration has concluded its work.

A STRONGER ASSOCIATION

10. We also recognised that the strength of any professional association depends upon its financial stability, institutional credibility, and the confidence of its members. Accordingly, we adopted prudent financial management as a central pillar of this administration. Through disciplined fiscal management, strategic investment of resources, improved asset utilisation, and greater transparency, we have strengthened the financial position of the Association. We leave behind stronger institutional reserves, sustainable welfare

structures, new revenue streams, and a financially healthier Association than the one we inherited.

11. Beyond financial prudence, this administration has remained deeply committed to the welfare of lawyers. We strengthened the NBA Life Assurance Scheme, established a sustainable Welfare and Life Assurance Fund, vigorously enforced the Legal Practitioners' Remuneration Order, created the Kanu Agabi, SAN Young Lawyers Co-Working Space, expanded professional development opportunities, and implemented policies designed to improve both the professional and economic well-being of members. Our conviction has always been that a stronger Bar begins with stronger lawyers.
12. Distinguished colleagues, the report that follows is not merely an account of activities undertaken during the past year. It is a reflection of a collective journey; a record of institutional reforms, courageous advocacy, professional innovation, and dedicated service. It demonstrates what can be achieved when leadership is anchored on integrity, accountability, innovation, inclusion, and an unwavering commitment to the ideals upon which the Nigerian Bar Association was founded.
13. With profound gratitude to Almighty God, sincere appreciation to every member of the Association, and great confidence in the future of our noble profession, I now present this Final Annual Report of the activities of this administration.

DEFENCE OF THE RULE OF LAW, CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY AND PUBLIC INTEREST ADVOCACY

14. Distinguished Colleagues, the Nigerian Bar Association has, throughout its history, remained the conscience of the nation and the foremost institutional defender of constitutional democracy, the rule of law, judicial independence, and fundamental human rights. This administration recognised from the outset that the strength and credibility of the Association would not be measured merely by its internal achievements but by its willingness to speak boldly whenever constitutional governance, democratic institutions, or the administration of justice came under threat. Consequently, we adopted an approach that combined principled advocacy with practical institutional action. We consistently engaged public authorities, initiated strategic litigation, convened stakeholder consultations, undertook fact-finding missions, and deployed the full institutional weight of the Association in defence of constitutionalism and the rule of law.

15. During the past two years, the NBA remained unwavering in resisting executive excesses, unconstitutional actions, abuse of power, and all forms of conduct capable of undermining democratic governance. We consistently reminded public office holders that constitutional authority is exercised subject to the Constitution and that no individual or institution is above the law. Whenever constitutional boundaries were threatened, the Association responded firmly, independently, and without fear or favour, guided solely by its constitutional mandate and its duty to protect the integrity of Nigeria's democratic institutions.
16. One of the defining moments of this administration was the principled position taken following the declaration of a State of Emergency in Rivers State and the suspension of democratically elected institutions. After extensive consultations and a careful review of the constitutional implications of those developments, the Association unequivocally maintained that political disagreements, legislative disputes, and executive-legislative conflicts do not constitute sufficient constitutional grounds for the suspension of elected governments or the displacement of democratic institutions. We made it abundantly clear that constitutional democracy cannot be preserved through executive fiat, and that disagreements within the political process must always be resolved through constitutionally recognised institutions and legal mechanisms rather than extraordinary executive intervention.
17. Consistent with this position, the National Executive Council resolved to relocate the 2025 Annual General Conference from Port Harcourt to Enugu. That decision was not motivated by convenience but by principle. It represented one of the clearest demonstrations in the history of the Association that the Nigerian Bar Association would never compromise its constitutional convictions for administrative or financial considerations. By relocating its flagship conference, the Association reaffirmed that it would always stand on the side of constitutional democracy, regardless of the consequences.
18. Another defining moment in the defence of the institutional independence of the Nigerian Bar Association arose during the 2026 electoral process of the Association. The 2026 electoral process of the Nigerian Bar Association was subjected to significant legal challenges, including proceedings before the Oyo State High Court seeking to restrain the Electoral Committee of the Nigerian Bar Association (ECNBA) from conducting the national officers' elections. In March 2026, the Oyo State High Court had issued an ex parte

interim order restraining the NBA from undertaking activities relating to the elections, among other orders. Dissatisfied with the decision, we appealed against the proceedings on the ground, among others, that the Oyo State High Court lacked jurisdiction to entertain the suit.

19. On 14 July 2026, only days before the scheduled national officers' election, the Court of Appeal, Ibadan Division, unanimously upheld our appeal and held that the Oyo State High Court lacked jurisdiction to entertain the suit. The Court consequently set aside the proceedings of the lower court, including the ex parte interim order which had restrained the ECNBA from conducting the election. The decision effectively cleared the way for the ECNBA to proceed with the national officers' election as scheduled for 18 July 2026.
20. The decision was particularly significant against the backdrop of the broader controversies surrounding the 2026 electoral process, including challenges to the composition of the ECNBA, the appointment of the election service provider and the conduct of the election. It also came shortly after the administration had publicly rejected purported directives attributed to the Attorney-General of the Federation seeking to postpone the election, insisting that only the NBA's National Executive Council possessed the constitutional authority to take such a decision and reaffirming the independence of the ECNBA in conducting the electoral process.
21. In furtherance of its commitment to transparency and confidence in the electoral process, the Association also invited domestic and international observer missions, including representatives of the European Union, United States Embassy, British High Commission, Yiaga Africa and the Transition Monitoring Group, among others, to observe the electronic voting process from the Central Election Control Room in Abuja. The presence of independent observers was intended to promote transparency, strengthen public confidence and provide an independent assessment of the credibility of the electoral process.
22. Distinguished Colleagues, the Court of Appeal's decision represented an important affirmation of the need for the internal affairs and democratic processes of the Nigerian Bar Association to be governed in accordance with its Constitution and the rule of law. This administration remained committed throughout the electoral process to protecting the institutional autonomy of the Association, ensuring that disputes were resolved through lawful processes, and preserving the integrity of the constitutional mechanisms established for the election of the Association's National Officers.

23. The election of National Officers to pilot the affairs the NBA took place on July 20, 2026. The Nigerian Bar Association (ECNBA) Electoral Committee announced Oyinkansola Badejo-Okusanya as the 33rd president of the law association. Announcing the results at the NBA national secretariat in Abuja after the conclusion of the election on Sunday, Aham Ejelam, chairman of the ECNBA, said Badejo-Okusanya polled 12,317 votes, representing 47.18 percent of the total votes cast, to defeat her closest challenger, Lateef Akangbe, who secured 7,934 votes, representing 30.39 percent. Olumuyiwa Akinboro, the third presidential candidate, polled 5,855 votes, representing 22.43 percent of the total votes. The poll recorded 26,106 votes from 82,172 registered voters, representing a 31.86 percent participation rate, according to the ECNBA. Also elected were Oghenero Okoro, who polled 11,024 votes to emerge first vice-president; Afam Okeke, who secured 8,478 votes to become general secretary; Aghogho Gladys, who won the assistant general secretary position with 14,312 votes; and Chinelo Ofoegbunam, who was elected welfare secretary after polling 14,911 votes.
24. Speaking after the announcement of the results, we noted that the election withstood attempts to undermine the process, including a cyberattack that forced the ECNBA to rebuild and migrate its ICT Continued from page 1 infrastructure to a more secure server. Continuing, I said “Our colleagues planned to truncate the election, but we stood firm. Every effort to derail this process failed. This is a trying time for the Bar. In the build-up to this election, many went to great lengths to rubbish the association” I then urged the newly-elected national officers to be gracious in victory and called on those who lost the election to rally behind the incoming leadership.
25. I equally advised those who won to be magnanimous in victory; those who lost, that there is always another day. The cyber-attack shows that we must do more in data protection. Let us collectively acceptably do things. Someday, the story will be told of how this election was almost sabotaged. We must be able to promote the rule of law, and the NBA, made up of lawyers, should be able to determine the course of its electoral process. Where we made mistakes, I believe my successor will correct them.
26. Prior to the election, a letter purporting to be issued by the Honourable Attorney General of the Federation (HAGF) directing the NBA to disband the ECNBA and suspend the 2026 national officers’ election. The Directive was said to be based on a report of a sub-committee constituted during a meeting convened by the AGF. The report allegedly recommended the disbandment of

the Electoral Committee of the Nigerian Bar Association (ECNBA), postponement of the 2026 national officers' election, replacement of the current election service provider, establishment of a caretaker committee to conduct the polls, incorporation of National Identification Number (NIN) verification into the voter database, and a review of the NBA Constitution to alter its universal suffrage system.

27. We rejected the purported directive, describing the purported directive as unconstitutional, beyond the powers of the AGF, and an attempt to interfere with the independence of the legal profession's umbrella body. In doing so, we insisted that only the NBA's constitutionally recognised organs have the authority to determine the conduct or postponement of the exercise. We noted that the Nigerian Bar Association is an independent body not under the control of the Honourable Attorney General of the Federation," and added that the powers of the AGF to intervene in the affairs of the NBA are limited by the provisions of the Legal Practitioners Act.
28. We maintained that the AGF could not issue binding directives on matters arising from ongoing litigation, arguing that the meeting convened by the AGF was only intended to facilitate an amicable resolution of disputes involving cases filed by Egbe Amofin. We insisted that a proposed resolution from such a mediation process could only become binding upon acceptance by all parties involved and could not be imposed as a directive. We also faulted the composition and findings of the sub-committee that produced the disputed report, alleging that its chairman could not have presided over the process because of his involvement in the legal matters that led to the mediation. Thankfully, the Court of Appeal agreed with our above position on the power of the HAGF to issue such a directive in the circumstance of the case.
29. **Osun Gubernatorial Election, 2026:** I led a high-powered delegation to secure firm commitments towards the conduct of a free, fair, credible and peaceful election. The NBA delegation first paid a courtesy visit to Mrs. Oluwatoyin O. Babalola, the historic first female Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Osun State. Congratulating her on her pioneering appointment, the NBA President urged Mrs. Babalola to remain a worthy ambassador of the legal profession by faithfully discharging her constitutional responsibilities with integrity, impartiality and courage.
30. In response, the REC assured the delegation that INEC was fully prepared for the election, revealing that extensive training had been conducted for

election personnel to minimise human error and ensure the integrity of the electoral process. Addressing concerns about the security situation, Mrs. Babalola explained that recent disturbances in parts of the state were largely attributable to cult-related clashes rather than politically motivated violence. She also highlighted INEC's sustained voter education campaigns and engagements with student bodies and other stakeholders to promote peaceful participation in the electoral process. She gave Nigerians further confidence by assuring that "every single vote will count."

31. The NBA delegation also visited the Osun State Commissioner of Police, where they met with the Deputy Inspector-General of Police, DIG Mohammed Ishaku, and other senior police officers overseeing election security. DIG Ishaku assured the delegation that the Nigeria Police Force had put in place comprehensive security arrangements to guarantee a peaceful and credible election. He disclosed that a massive deployment of police personnel had commenced across the state, with additional officers expected to arrive before election day to ensure adequate security coverage.
32. The stakeholder engagements culminated in a press conference at the NBA Osogbo Bar Centre, where I addressed the media alongside the Chairmen and Secretaries of all NBA branches in Osun State. I called on all institutions and individuals involved in the electoral process—including electoral officials, security agencies, political actors and public office holders, to remain strictly neutral and refrain from deploying their offices, powers or influence in favour of any candidate or political party. We stressed that the only acceptable outcome of the election must be one that genuinely reflects the freely expressed will of the people of Osun State.
33. I equally appealed to all political actors to place the interest of the state above partisan considerations, warning that Osun must not be allowed to go up in flames and that no life should be lost in the pursuit of political power. He urged all stakeholders to reject violence, intimidation and electoral malpractice, emphasizing that democracy can only thrive where peace, justice and respect for the rule of law prevail. While later addressing members of the legal profession, we encouraged lawyers serving as election observers to remain steadfast in defending democracy, uphold the truth at all times, and discharge their responsibilities with courage, professionalism and impartiality, while taking every necessary precaution to ensure their personal safety throughout the exercise.

34. As Osun headed to the polls, the NBA reaffirmed its commitment to safeguarding the integrity of Nigeria's democracy and expressed optimism that the election will be conducted in a manner that is peaceful, credible and reflective of the sovereign will of the people.
35. **The Abrogation of Direct Appeal from LDPC to Supreme Court:** The Supreme Court in a judgment delivered on Friday, June 26, 2026, in **SC/481/2018, Ben Mene-Ejegi Esq. v. Nigerian Bar Association & Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee**, by a panel comprising Justices Tijjani Abubakar, Emmanuel Akomaye Agim, Obande Festus Ogbuinya, Habeeb Adewale O. Abiru and Mohammed Baba Idris, JSC, with the lead judgment delivered by Justice Mohammed Baba Idris, JSC, held by a majority decision that Section 12(7) of the Legal Practitioners Act which empowers a person to whom a direction under the section relates may, at any time within 28 days from the date of service on him of the directive, appeal against the directive to the Supreme Court, is void.
36. According to the Court, the power conferred on the National Assembly by Item 49 of the Exclusive Legislative List to regulate professional occupations as wide as they may appear, are not at large and does not extend to a purported exercise of power to confer a right of direct appeal from the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee to the Supreme Court. This, the Court held, Section 12(7) of the Legal Practitioners Act is, by virtue of Section 1(3) of the Constitution, is null and void to the extent of its inconsistency. \
37. In departing from its earlier decision in **Okike v. LPDC (2005) 3-4 SC 49**, which had recognised such a right of direct appeal, the Court noted Per Idris, JSC that the panel in that case had itself observed that Section 233(1) contains no provision equivalent to Section 232(2) permitting legislative expansion yet nonetheless assumed jurisdiction. Continuing His Lordship held that: "With profound respect to the eminent Justices who constituted the panel in *Okike v. LPDC*, the constitutional implications of Sections 233(1) and 240 of the Constitution were not examined against the backdrop of the settled principles governing constitutional interpretation. The constitutional architecture regulating appeals to this Court was not construed as a whole. Had the relevant provisions been considered together and in accordance with the established canons of constitutional interpretation, the conclusion reached may well have been different," the Court held. The Law Is Not a Fossil Preserved in the Museum of Antiquity"

38. Consequent upon the decision, we requested the intervention of the HAGF in interfacing with the National Assembly to propose an adjustment to the provision of the Legal Practitioners' Amendment Bill, 2025 as regards appeal from the decision of the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee. It is therefore our humble request that your esteemed office once leads the engagement with the National Assembly to effect a further review of the Section 18(5) of the Bill which provides that “(5) The person to whom a direction under this section relates may, at any time within 28 days from the date of service on him of the directive, appeal against the directive to the Supreme Court...”, as it is obvious that the Section if passed in its current form will be null and void in the light of the Supreme Court decision under reference.
39. We proposed that Section 18(5) of the Bill be revised as follows: “(5) The person to whom a direction under this section relates may, at any time within 28 days from the date of service on him of the directive, appeal against the directive to the Court of Appeal;”. This is because in its decision the Supreme Court noted that a careful and dispassionate reading of Section 233 alongside Section 240 of the 1999 Constitution, which governs the appellate jurisdiction of the Court of Appeal, leaves no room for doubt that the appellate jurisdiction of the Court is confined, strictly and exclusively, to appeals emanating from the Court of Appeal. It then held that no other court, tribunal, or body is contemplated by the Constitution as a source of appeals directly to the apex Court.
40. To justify that the right of appeal from the LPDC could be lawfully exercised to the Court of Appeal, permit me to refer to the decision of the apex Court in the appeal under reference. “While the appellate jurisdiction of the Court of Appeal is expressly made subject to the provisions of the Constitution and extends to appeals from the courts and tribunals specifically enumerated therein, as well as such other courts or tribunals as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly, the provision relating to the Supreme Court is distinctly and more restrictively couched,”
41. “The Constitution clearly contemplates a broader and more flexible appellate jurisdiction for the Court of Appeal, capable of statutory expansion, whereas the appellate jurisdiction of this Court is rigidly confined to appeals emanating from the Court of Appeal alone, with no corresponding

constitutional allowance for enlargement by legislative intervention,” it stated.

42. The Association equally remained resolute in protecting the independence of the Judiciary. Throughout the tenure of this administration, we consistently condemned every attempt by any arm of government or external actor to intimidate judicial officers, interfere with judicial proceedings, or undermine public confidence in the administration of justice. We spoke against unconstitutional attempts to remove judicial officers, condemned attacks on courts and judicial personnel, advocated greater institutional and financial autonomy for the Judiciary, and continued to insist that only an independent Judiciary can guarantee justice, preserve constitutional governance, and sustain democracy.
43. We also maintained sustained engagement with judicial institutions on broader justice sector reforms. The Association consistently advocated improvements in judicial administration, case management systems, access to justice, constitutional amendments, judicial appointments, and institutional accountability. We continued to encourage reforms capable of strengthening public confidence in the administration of justice while preserving the independence and integrity of the courts.
44. The administration equally intensified advocacy against prolonged pre-trial detention, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detention, torture, and other violations of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act and corresponding State laws. We consistently reminded law enforcement agencies that constitutional rights do not become suspended merely because a citizen comes into contact with the criminal justice system. Every suspect remains entitled to dignity, due process, legal representation, and the presumption of innocence until proven guilty by a competent court of law.
45. We remained deeply concerned about the growing practice of imposing excessive, punitive, and unrealistic bail conditions by some courts. The Association consistently maintained that bail exists solely to secure the attendance of an accused person at trial and must never be transformed into an instrument of punishment or an indirect means of denying personal liberty. We therefore continued our nationwide advocacy for reasonable, proportionate, and constitutionally compliant bail conditions while encouraging judicial officers to remain faithful to the constitutional presumption of innocence.

46. During the tenure of this administration, the Association also intensified its campaign for meaningful police reforms and improved accountability within Nigeria's law enforcement architecture. We publicly condemned incidents of police brutality, extra-judicial killings, unlawful detention, torture, enforced disappearances, mob justice, and other abuses of fundamental rights. Beyond public statements, we deployed institutional mechanisms to ensure that victims received legal representation and that responsible authorities were called upon to account for their actions. Our position throughout remained that effective policing and respect for human rights are not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing pillars of constitutional democracy.
47. The Association further strengthened its public interest advocacy by actively supporting reforms aimed at enhancing transparency, accountability, and good governance across public institutions. We vigorously advocated the implementation of the landmark Supreme Court judgment affirming the financial autonomy of Local Government Councils and consistently called upon all relevant authorities to comply fully with the constitutional framework governing local government administration. We equally continued to promote constitutional reforms capable of strengthening democratic institutions, improving governance, and deepening accountability at every level of government.
48. In recognition of the increasingly global nature of financial regulation and professional responsibility, the Association also played a significant leadership role in Nigeria's efforts to exit the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Grey List. Through the NBA Anti-Corruption Committee and sustained collaboration with the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit, the Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering, the Federal Ministry of Justice, the Central Bank of Nigeria, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, and other relevant stakeholders, the Association contributed meaningfully to strengthening compliance with international anti-money laundering standards while ensuring that legal practitioners remained properly informed of their professional obligations. These engagements reinforced the NBA's reputation as a responsible institutional partner in advancing both national and international regulatory standards.
49. Throughout these interventions, our objective remained to preserve the independence of the Nigerian Bar Association, strengthen democratic governance, protect constitutional institutions, and reaffirm the Bar's historic role as the foremost defender of the rule of law. We understood that silence

in the face of constitutional violations would amount to abdication of our professional responsibility. Accordingly, this administration remained consistent in ensuring that the voice of the Nigerian Bar Association continued to command respect both nationally and internationally as an independent, principled, and courageous institution committed to justice, democracy, and the rule of law.

MODERNISING THE NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION: A DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AGENDA

50. Distinguished Colleagues, one of the most enduring legacies of this administration is the comprehensive digital transformation of the Nigerian Bar Association. We recognised early in our tenure that the future of professional regulation, legal practice, and institutional governance would increasingly depend on technology. Accordingly, we made a deliberate decision to reposition the Association as a modern, technology-driven professional body capable of meeting the demands of contemporary legal practice while improving efficiency, transparency, accountability, and service delivery to members.
51. For many years, members experienced unnecessary delays, cumbersome administrative procedures, and manual processes that often undermined confidence in the Association's capacity to deliver essential services. We considered it imperative to move beyond incremental improvements and instead undertake a fundamental transformation of the NBA's operational architecture. Our objective was not merely to digitise existing processes but to redesign the manner in which the Association interacts with its members and delivers professional services.
52. One of the landmark reforms of this administration was the introduction of the NBA Digital Annual Practice Licence. This innovation fundamentally transformed the licensing process by replacing the traditional paper-based system with a secure digital platform capable of providing real-time verification of a lawyer's practising status. Beyond improving convenience for members, the Digital Practice Licence has significantly enhanced regulatory compliance, strengthened institutional integrity, reduced opportunities for manipulation, and enabled courts, clients, regulatory agencies, and members of the public to verify a lawyer's practising status with confidence and ease. The introduction of this innovation represents a major milestone in the history

of the Association and aligns the NBA with global best practices in professional regulation.

53. We equally digitised the issuance of Letters of Good Standing, thereby eliminating one of the longest-standing administrative bottlenecks experienced by members of the profession. Under the previous system, lawyers seeking admission into foreign jurisdictions, international employment opportunities, postgraduate studies, or other professional engagements often encountered significant delays arising from manual processing procedures. By introducing a fully digital application and verification process, the Association has substantially reduced processing time, enhanced reliability, and ensured that Nigerian lawyers can access essential professional documentation promptly, irrespective of their location within or outside the country. This reform has further strengthened the international credibility of Nigerian legal practitioners and reinforced confidence in the Association's regulatory systems.
54. In furtherance of our commitment to institutional efficiency, we established the NBA National Executive Council Digital Portal, which has revolutionised the administration of meetings of the National Executive Council. The Portal now provides a secure digital platform for registration, accreditation, attendance management, communication, documentation, and record-keeping. It has significantly improved transparency in NEC proceedings, strengthened institutional memory, facilitated timely dissemination of information, and enhanced the overall efficiency of the governance processes of the Association. By embracing digital governance, we have created a more responsive, accountable, and inclusive decision-making framework capable of serving an Association of our size and complexity.
55. Another major innovation introduced during this administration is the NBA Smart Identity Card. Beyond serving as a secure means of professional identification, the Smart ID Card establishes the foundation for a more integrated digital ecosystem within the Association. It provides members with a modern and verifiable means of identification while creating opportunities for the future integration of additional professional services, member benefits, and digital authentication systems. It represents another important step towards building a technology-enabled Bar equipped for the future of legal practice.
56. We also strengthened the integrity of legal documentation through the relaunch and enhancement of the NBA Digital Seal and the establishment of

the NBA Digital Signature Studio. These innovations enable lawyers to securely execute legal documents electronically while maintaining the highest standards of authenticity, integrity, and professional accountability. As legal practice increasingly embraces digital transactions and remote service delivery, these reforms ensure that Nigerian lawyers remain fully equipped to participate effectively in an evolving global legal environment. They equally reinforce confidence in electronically executed legal documents and position the Association as a leader in the adoption of legal technology within Africa.

57. Beyond these flagship initiatives, this administration undertook a broader programme of technological modernisation across the operations of the Association. We expanded digital service delivery, strengthened communication platforms, improved electronic record management, enhanced data integrity, and integrated technology into several regulatory and administrative processes. These reforms have substantially reduced administrative bottlenecks, improved operational efficiency, promoted institutional transparency, and enhanced members' overall experience in accessing the services of the Association.
58. Recognising that technological advancement extends beyond institutional systems, we also consistently encouraged members of the profession to embrace innovation within legal practice itself. Through conferences, continuing professional development programmes, branch engagements, and policy initiatives, we promoted the adoption of legal technology, artificial intelligence, digital practice management tools, electronic legal research, and other emerging technologies that are reshaping legal practice globally. We firmly believe that the future competitiveness of Nigerian lawyers depends upon their ability to adapt to these evolving realities, and we therefore sought to ensure that the Association remained at the forefront of these conversations.
59. Distinguished colleagues, these initiatives collectively represent one of the most ambitious institutional modernisation programmes ever undertaken by the Nigerian Bar Association. They are not merely technological upgrades; they constitute a fundamental transformation in the governance, administration, and regulation of the legal profession in Nigeria. By embracing innovation, strengthening digital infrastructure, and modernising service delivery, this administration has laid a durable technological foundation upon which future leadership can continue to build. We are confident that these

reforms will continue to enhance efficiency, transparency, accessibility, and professionalism within the Association for many years to come.

LEGAL EDUCATION, PROFESSIONAL REGULATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

60. Distinguished Colleagues, no profession can remain relevant if it fails to invest in its own development. The quality of legal services rendered to society depends fundamentally on the competence, integrity, ethical standards, and continuous learning of those privileged to practise law. It was against this background that this administration placed legal education, professional regulation, and capacity building at the very centre of its reform agenda. Our objective was clear: to build a legal profession that is knowledge-driven, ethically grounded, technologically prepared, and globally competitive.
61. We recognised that the legal profession is evolving at an unprecedented pace. Emerging technologies, cross-border legal practice, artificial intelligence, digital commerce, data protection, climate change, international arbitration, and specialised fields of practice are redefining the skills required of the modern lawyer. These developments demanded that the Nigerian Bar Association move beyond its traditional regulatory role and assume greater responsibility for preparing lawyers to meet contemporary professional realities.
62. Consequently, this administration actively engaged with the National Assembly, the Council of Legal Education, the Body of Benchers, the General Council of the Bar, the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee, the Nigerian Law School, legal academics, the judiciary, and other stakeholders to pursue comprehensive reforms capable of strengthening legal education and improving the regulatory framework governing the profession. Throughout these engagements, our guiding principle remained that a stronger legal profession requires stronger institutions supported by clear laws, effective regulation, and continuous professional development.
63. One of the major policy priorities of this administration was the ongoing review and amendment of the Legal Practitioners Act. We actively participated in the reform process to modernise the legal framework governing the profession and ensure it reflects present-day realities. Particular emphasis was placed on strengthening the statutory recognition of the Nigerian Bar Association, enhancing the Association's regulatory responsibilities, and improving the institutional framework for the

administration of legal practice in Nigeria. These reforms, when fully implemented, will significantly improve the governance, independence, and effectiveness of the legal profession.

64. We also intensified efforts to strengthen professional discipline and improve access to disciplinary processes by championing reforms aimed at decentralising the proceedings of the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee (LPDC). The concentration of disciplinary proceedings in a single location had for many years contributed to delays, increased costs, and reduced accessibility. Our advocacy for decentralisation was therefore designed to improve efficiency, promote timely resolution of complaints, and ensure that professional discipline remains both effective and accessible to members across the Federation.
65. Perhaps one of the most far-reaching reforms undertaken during this administration was the introduction and implementation of the Mandatory Continuing Professional Development (MCPD) Framework. We firmly believe that admission to the Bar should mark the beginning, not the end of a lawyer's education. Legal practice requires continuous learning, adaptation, and intellectual growth. The MCPD Framework therefore institutionalises continuing legal education as an essential component of professional practice, ensuring that every legal practitioner remains abreast of developments in law, ethics, technology, and emerging areas of practice. By making continuing professional development an integral part of professional regulation, we have taken an important step towards strengthening the quality and competitiveness of the Nigerian legal profession.
66. Conscious of the need to ensure that these reforms remained accessible to all members, the administration simultaneously established a structured accreditation framework for Continuing Professional Development providers. NBA Branches, Sections, Institutes, recognised academic institutions, and accredited organisations were empowered to provide high-quality professional training under the supervision of the NBA Institute of Continuing Legal Education. This decentralised approach has significantly expanded access to continuing education while ensuring that lawyers across the country are able to meet professional development requirements without undue financial or geographical constraints. Thousands of lawyers also benefited from free and subsidised training programmes organised through the NBA-ICLE during the tenure of this administration.

67. Another landmark achievement of this administration was the successful amendment of the Constitution of the Nigerian Bar Association. The constitutional amendment process was undertaken after extensive consultation with members, branches, and stakeholders across the country. The reforms introduced through this process were carefully designed to strengthen the governance framework of the Association, improve institutional accountability, and address several constitutional gaps that had become apparent over the years. Among the major reforms introduced were the operationalisation of the remittance of twenty per cent of Bar Practice Fees to NBA Branches, alignment of elections into the offices of President and General Secretary with the General Council of the Bar, regulation of campaign financing in NBA elections, establishment of formal dispute resolution mechanisms among elected National Officers, and several other amendments designed to improve governance and institutional stability. These constitutional reforms will continue to strengthen the Association long after the expiration of this administration.
68. In furtherance of our commitment to the future of legal education, this administration convened the historic 2026 NBA Legal Education Summit, bringing together representatives of the Council of Legal Education, the Nigerian Law School, the Judiciary, the Body of Benchers, legal academics, regulators, practitioners, students, and development partners to undertake what was arguably the most comprehensive national conversation on legal education in recent years. The Summit provided an invaluable platform for critical reflection on the challenges confronting legal education and generated practical recommendations for institutional reform.
69. Flowing from the deliberations at the Summit, the Association developed and unveiled the 2026 NBA Legal Education Standards, providing a strategic framework for improving legal training, practical skills acquisition, ethical orientation, professional competence, and collaboration among institutions responsible for legal education. These Standards reflect our conviction that the future of the legal profession depends upon the quality of those entering it and the systems responsible for preparing them.
70. Throughout our tenure, we equally promoted informed conversations on the future of legal practice by encouraging lawyers to embrace emerging areas of practice, including artificial intelligence, legal technology, data protection, environmental law, fintech, sports law, energy transition, arbitration, and other specialised fields that continue to reshape the global legal profession.

We believe that the Nigerian lawyer must not merely respond to change but should actively participate in shaping the future of legal services within Nigeria and beyond.

71. Distinguished colleagues, these reforms collectively represent one of the most comprehensive investments in the future of the Nigerian legal profession undertaken by any administration of the Association. They are founded on the belief that professional excellence is not achieved through regulation alone but through continuous learning, institutional collaboration, ethical leadership, and a shared commitment to raising standards. By strengthening legal education, modernising professional regulation, expanding opportunities for continuing education, and encouraging innovation, this administration has sought to lay a durable foundation for a legal profession that remains respected, competitive, and fully equipped to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

LAWYER WELFARE AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

72. Distinguished Colleagues, no professional association can truly fulfil its mandate unless it remains attentive to the welfare of its members. Throughout our tenure, we remained firmly convinced that the NBA must move beyond expressions of concern to the implementation of practical, sustainable, and measurable initiatives capable of improving the professional, economic, and personal well-being of lawyers. We therefore approached lawyer welfare not as an isolated programme but as a central pillar of institutional development, recognising that a stronger Bar can only be built by empowering the lawyers who constitute it.
73. The economic realities confronting legal practitioners in recent years have been particularly challenging. Rising operational costs, inflationary pressures, declining purchasing power, and the persistent undervaluation of legal services have placed enormous strain on practitioners, especially young lawyers and those in small and medium-sized practices. We therefore considered it imperative to develop welfare initiatives capable of providing meaningful institutional support while promoting the long-term sustainability of legal practice in Nigeria.
74. One of the most significant welfare reforms undertaken during this administration was the restructuring of the NBA Life Assurance Scheme. Shortly after assuming office, we were confronted with the proposed increase in insurance premiums by the Association's insurance provider, a development

that threatened the sustainability of the existing welfare arrangement. Rather than transferring the increased financial burden to members or exposing the Association to unsustainable recurring liabilities, this administration adopted a more prudent and innovative approach.

75. Following the approval of the National Executive Council, we established a dedicated ₦500 Million Welfare and Life Assurance Fund, invested in a fixed deposit to provide a sustainable mechanism for meeting the Association's obligations to the families of deceased members. Within a relatively short period, prudent financial management resulted in the appreciation of the Fund to over ₦527 Million, thereby strengthening the Association's capacity to provide timely death benefits while preserving the long-term viability of the welfare scheme. This reform represents an important shift from dependence on recurring insurance premiums to a more sustainable, institutionally controlled welfare architecture capable of serving members well into the future.
76. Consistent with its commitment to members' welfare, the administration strengthened the Association's welfare support system by ensuring the prompt processing and direct payment of death benefits from the NBA's accounts. During the tenure of this administration, over ₦140 million was disbursed as death benefits to deceased members' beneficiaries across various branches of the Association, providing timely financial support to bereaved families and reinforcing members' confidence in the Association's welfare framework.
77. The administration also expanded financial support for members facing critical medical challenges. A total sum of approximately ₦24,288,718.00 was approved and disbursed as medical financial assistance to members requiring urgent medical intervention. This initiative underscores the administration's resolve to ensure that the Association remains responsive to the welfare needs of its members during periods of personal hardship.
78. Closely related to this initiative was our determination to ensure that the families of deceased colleagues received greater institutional support during periods of bereavement. Accordingly, we strengthened the administrative processes governing the Life Assurance Scheme to improve efficiency in the processing of claims and ensure that beneficiaries receive prompt attention. We remain convinced that the responsibility of the Association to its members does not end with their lifetime but extends to providing meaningful support to the families they leave behind.

79. Conscious of the unique challenges confronting young lawyers, this administration established the Kanu Agabi, SAN Young Lawyers Co-Working Space at the National Secretariat. The facility provides modern office accommodation, internet connectivity, meeting rooms, and a professional working environment designed to support collaboration, mentorship, innovation, and career development. Beyond providing physical infrastructure, the initiative reflects our broader commitment to creating opportunities that enable young lawyers to develop sustainable legal practices within an increasingly competitive professional environment. We believe that investment in young lawyers is ultimately an investment in the future of the legal profession itself.
80. Perhaps no issue occupied our attention in the area of lawyer welfare more than the implementation of the Legal Practitioners' Remuneration Order 2023. For far too long, the chronic underpricing of legal services has undermined the dignity of the profession, weakened the economic viability of legal practice, and discouraged many talented practitioners from realising the full value of their professional expertise. We therefore made the nationwide enforcement of the Remuneration Order one of the flagship priorities of this administration.
81. Through sustained engagement with Heads of Courts, Chief Judges, Attorneys-General, Ministries, Departments and Agencies, corporate organisations, NBA Branches, and other stakeholders, the Association actively promoted compliance with the mandatory scale of professional fees prescribed under the Remuneration Order. We equally encouraged every Branch of the Association to establish active Remuneration Committees responsible for monitoring compliance, investigating violations, educating members and clients, and promoting adherence to the prescribed professional charges within their respective jurisdictions.
82. We are particularly encouraged by the positive outcomes already recorded through these efforts. The implementation and enforcement of the Remuneration Order across several jurisdictions have resulted in the recovery and generation of substantial professional fees running into billions of naira for legal practitioners. More importantly, these interventions have helped restore confidence in the proper valuation of legal services and reinforced the principle that professional competence deserves fair and adequate remuneration. While much work remains to be done, this administration has

laid a solid institutional foundation for the continued enforcement of the Remuneration Order nationwide.

83. Throughout our tenure, we consistently advocated against the culture of underpricing legal services and encouraged lawyers to uphold the dignity of the profession by insisting on proper professional fees. The long-term sustainability of legal practice depends not merely upon increasing the number of lawyers but upon ensuring that practitioners are able to earn a decent livelihood through honest professional service. We therefore remained steadfast in promoting a culture that recognises legal expertise as a valuable professional service deserving of appropriate remuneration.
84. Beyond these flagship initiatives, this administration continued to support programmes aimed at expanding professional opportunities, promoting mentorship, encouraging continuing legal education, and creating a more enabling environment for lawyers at every stage of their careers. We recognised that lawyer welfare encompasses not only financial support but also access to professional development, institutional protection, technological innovation, and opportunities for career advancement.
85. Distinguished colleagues, the welfare initiatives undertaken during this administration reflect a broader philosophy of leadership founded upon service to members. Our objective has been to reposition lawyer welfare from a reactive support mechanism to a comprehensive programme of economic empowerment, institutional protection, and sustainable professional development. We are confident that the structures established during this tenure will continue to strengthen the welfare of members and enhance the dignity of legal practice long after this administration has concluded its service to the Association.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL STEWARDSHIP

86. Distinguished Colleagues, every enduring institution is built upon a foundation of prudent financial management, transparency, accountability, and responsible stewardship. From the very first day of this administration, we recognised that the resources entrusted to the Nigerian Bar Association belong to its members and must therefore be managed with the highest degree of integrity, discipline, and accountability. We resolved that every financial decision would be guided not by expediency, but by the principles of sustainability, transparency, and long-term institutional growth.

87. We assumed office at a period of significant economic uncertainty characterised by rising inflation, increasing operational costs, exchange rate volatility, and mounting financial pressures affecting both individuals and institutions across the country. These realities demanded a leadership that was fiscally disciplined, innovative, and capable of preserving the financial stability of the Association while simultaneously delivering on its ambitious programme of reforms. We therefore adopted a prudent financial management strategy that balanced institutional growth with responsible expenditure and strategic investment.
88. During the period under review, a total sum of ₦4,154,264,620.00 (Four Billion, One Hundred and Fifty-Four Million, Two Hundred and Sixty-Four Thousand, Six Hundred and Twenty Naira) was invested in fixed-income instruments with reputable financial institutions. These investments were deliberately structured to preserve the Association's principal capital while generating steady investment income to strengthen the NBA's financial position and ensure sustainable funding for its programmes.
89. Through prudent investment management, the Association generated sufficient income to secure the payment of staff salaries for a period of eighteen (18) months without recourse to the principal investment. This achievement significantly enhanced the financial stability of the National Secretariat, guaranteed continuity in staff remuneration, and positioned the Association to meet its employment obligations while preserving its capital base for future generations.
90. In fulfilment of its commitment to strengthen the financial capacity of NBA Branches, this administration commenced the implementation of the 20% Branch Practising Fee (BPF) remittance to branches in accordance with the provisions of the NBA Constitution and the Association's financial policies. This initiative has enhanced the financial autonomy of branches, improved accountability in the management of practising fee revenues, and provided additional resources to support branch programmes, member services, and institutional development across the Federation.
91. Throughout our tenure, we maintained strict budgetary discipline, strengthened financial oversight mechanisms, improved internal accountability systems, and ensured that the affairs of the Association were conducted in accordance with accepted standards of financial governance. We were guided by the conviction that financial prudence is not an obstacle

to institutional development but rather the indispensable foundation upon which meaningful reforms are built.

92. One of the most visible demonstrations of this philosophy was the successful organisation of the 2025 Nigerian Bar Association Annual General Conference. Despite prevailing economic challenges, the Conference was delivered to the highest professional standards through careful planning, prudent expenditure, and effective financial management. More significantly, the Conference recorded an unprecedented financial outcome, generating and preserving over One Billion Naira in savings and surplus for the Association. This remarkable achievement established a new benchmark for financial stewardship within the NBA and demonstrated that excellence in programme delivery can coexist with fiscal discipline and accountability.
93. The financial success of the Conference strengthened the Association's institutional reserves and substantially improved its financial resilience. Rather than treating the surplus as an opportunity for increased expenditure, this administration deliberately adopted policies aimed at preserving and strategically deploying these resources to secure the long-term financial future of the Association. Our objective has always been to leave behind a stronger institution than the one we inherited, one capable of meeting its obligations while continuing to invest in programmes that directly benefit members.
94. In furtherance of this objective, we introduced deliberate measures to diversify the Association's sources of revenue and reduce dependence on traditional income streams. We recognised that financial sustainability requires institutions to maximise the productive utilisation of their existing assets. Accordingly, following the approval of the National Executive Council, we implemented a strategic asset management policy that has begun generating sustainable non-subscription revenue for the Association.
95. Pursuant to this policy, the two wings of the NBA National Secretariat located at Oro-Ago Crescent, Garki, Abuja, were successfully leased to reputable tenants at an annual rental value of Twenty Million Naira per wing, thereby creating a stable and recurring source of income for the Association. This initiative demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that the Association's assets are utilised efficiently for the benefit of its members rather than remaining underutilised.
96. The administration also secured the approval of the National Executive Council for the commercial leasing of the three vacant floors of NBA House,

Muhammadu Buhari Way, Central Business District, Abuja. Although the process of securing suitable tenants remains ongoing, the necessary institutional framework has now been established to enable future administrations to maximise the commercial potential of this important national asset. We are confident that this initiative will further strengthen the Association's financial independence and provide additional revenue to support its programmes and activities.

97. The administration also made significant progress in regularising the title documentation of the Association's landed assets, recognising that secure and properly perfected title documents are essential for protecting the NBA's proprietary interests and enhancing the long-term value of its assets. During the period under review, the title perfection process for the Association's property situated at Plot 1415, Oro-Ago Crescent, Garki II, Abuja, was successfully concluded at the Abuja Geographic Information Systems (AGIS). The Deed of Assignment was duly registered, and the registered title document has been issued to and is now securely in the custody of the Association for its permanent records.
98. With respect to the Association's National Secretariat Building situated at Plot 1101, Muhammadu Buhari Way, Central Business District, Abuja, substantial progress has also been made towards the completion of the title perfection process. Following engagements with officials of the Abuja Geographic Information Systems (AGIS), the Association was advised to defer payment pending the determination of the exact penalty that accrued from the delay in processing the transaction. Upon confirmation of the applicable penalty and statutory fees, the Association will proceed with payment, obtain the requisite official receipts, register the Deed of Assignment, and conclude the perfection process. The incoming administration is encouraged to sustain engagement with AGIS to ensure the early completion of this process and the full regularisation of the title documents relating to the National Secretariat property.
99. Beyond revenue generation, this administration strengthened financial governance within the National Secretariat by enhancing internal control mechanisms, improving administrative efficiency, and promoting greater accountability in the management of the Association's resources. We encouraged careful planning, value-for-money procurement, prudent deployment of funds, and continuous monitoring of expenditure to ensure

that every naira entrusted to the Association was utilised responsibly and in furtherance of its constitutional objectives.

100. These reforms have significantly improved the operational efficiency of the National Secretariat and enhanced public confidence in the financial management of the Association. We have demonstrated that responsible stewardship requires not merely the generation of income but also the disciplined management of expenditure, effective supervision of institutional processes, and continuous investment in systems capable of sustaining organisational growth.

101. Distinguished colleagues, we are particularly proud that despite increasing operational costs and the implementation of numerous institutional reforms, the Association remained financially stable throughout the tenure of this administration. We successfully funded major technological innovations, welfare initiatives, legal education reforms, professional development programmes, public interest advocacy, and branch engagements without compromising the financial integrity of the Association. This balance between ambitious programme delivery and fiscal prudence has been one of the defining characteristics of our stewardship.

102. The financial position in which this administration now hands over the affairs of the Nigerian Bar Association reflects the cumulative effect of these deliberate policy choices. We leave behind stronger institutional reserves, sustainable welfare structures, diversified revenue streams, improved asset management, enhanced financial accountability, and a more resilient financial foundation upon which future administrations can confidently build. More importantly, we leave behind a culture of responsible stewardship that demonstrates that prudent financial management remains indispensable to the long-term growth, credibility, and independence of our great Association.

PROTECTION OF LAWYERS AND THE DEFENCE OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION

103. Distinguished Colleagues, the independence of the legal profession is one of the indispensable pillars upon which every democratic society rests. A lawyer cannot effectively defend the rights of citizens, uphold the Constitution, or promote the administration of justice where he or she is constantly subjected to intimidation, harassment, unlawful arrest, detention, assault, or other forms of interference. Throughout our tenure, we remained unwavering in our conviction that the Nigerian Bar Association must not only

speak against such abuses but must also establish effective institutional mechanisms capable of providing immediate support and protection to every lawyer whose professional independence comes under threat.

104. We were deeply concerned by the increasing incidents of harassment and intimidation of legal practitioners by law enforcement agencies and other public authorities. In many instances, lawyers performing their professional duties were unlawfully arrested, assaulted, denied access to clients, threatened, or otherwise obstructed in the lawful discharge of their responsibilities. These developments posed a direct threat not only to individual practitioners but also to the administration of justice itself. We therefore resolved that the Association would adopt a more proactive and coordinated approach in defending the rights of its members.
105. It was in furtherance of this commitment that this administration established the NBA National Litigation Committee, with operational structures across the six geopolitical zones of the Federation. The Committee was specifically designed to provide rapid institutional response whenever lawyers become victims of unlawful actions arising from the discharge of their professional responsibilities. Beyond responding to individual cases, the Committee was also mandated to undertake strategic litigation on issues affecting the legal profession and to defend the institutional independence of the Bar whenever necessary.
106. The establishment of the National Litigation Committee has significantly strengthened the Association's capacity to respond promptly to violations of the rights of legal practitioners. Through close collaboration with NBA Branches and other relevant committees, the Committee has coordinated legal representation, monitored sensitive matters, engaged public authorities, and ensured that lawyers subjected to harassment or intimidation received immediate institutional support. This coordinated national response has greatly enhanced members' confidence that the Association will stand firmly behind them whenever their professional independence is threatened.
107. During the tenure of this administration, the Association intervened in numerous cases involving the unlawful arrest, detention, harassment, intimidation, and assault of legal practitioners across the country. In each instance, our intervention was guided not merely by concern for the affected lawyer but by our broader responsibility to protect the independence of the legal profession itself. We consistently maintained that no lawyer should

suffer victimisation simply for performing his or her constitutional duty of representing a client within the bounds of the law.

108. Among the matters that received sustained institutional attention was the case involving Mr. Chinedu Agu, Esq. Following concerns regarding his detention in Owerri, the Association immediately engaged the relevant authorities while working closely with the NBA Owerri Branch to ensure that his constitutional rights were protected and that due process was observed throughout the proceedings. Our intervention demonstrated the Association's readiness to act swiftly whenever the rights of any member come under threat.
109. Similarly, we closely monitored the appeal proceedings involving Mr. Bright Ngene, Esq., following widespread concerns regarding the prolonged delay in hearing his appeal. Through sustained engagement with the appropriate judicial authorities, the Association advocated for the timely hearing of the matter, which was eventually listed for hearing. This intervention reinforced our commitment to ensuring that members of the profession receive fair treatment within the justice system and that unnecessary delays do not undermine confidence in the administration of justice.
110. The Association also publicly condemned the remand of Ms. Lovinah Ugbana Benjamin, Esq., under circumstances that generated widespread concern within the legal profession. We engaged the relevant judicial authorities and consistently advocated adherence to due process, judicial restraint, and respect for the dignity of legal practitioners. Throughout this matter, our position remained that judicial authority must always be exercised in accordance with constitutional principles, fairness, and the highest standards of judicial responsibility.
111. Beyond individual cases, this administration consistently challenged every attempt to misuse judicial or executive authority in a manner capable of intimidating lawyers or discouraging them from fearlessly representing their clients. We repeatedly emphasised that the administration of justice depends upon lawyers being able to discharge their professional responsibilities independently, courageously, and without fear of retaliation. Any action designed to undermine that independence ultimately weakens the rule of law and threatens the constitutional rights of all citizens.
112. Throughout our tenure, the Association issued numerous public statements condemning attacks on lawyers and reaffirming the principle that legal practitioners must remain free to represent clients regardless of the nature of the case or the identity of the parties involved. We consistently reminded

public authorities that disagreement with a client's cause can never justify hostility towards the lawyer representing that client. The independence of legal representation remains one of the defining characteristics of every civilised legal system and must be protected at all times.

113. We equally intensified advocacy for stronger legal and institutional safeguards protecting legal practitioners. The Association consistently promoted respect for legal professional privilege, adherence to constitutional guarantees of fair hearing and access to counsel, and full recognition of the essential role of lawyers within the administration of justice. We continued to engage relevant authorities on the need to strengthen institutional protections for legal practitioners in accordance with both domestic law and internationally recognised principles governing the independence of the legal profession.

114. Distinguished Colleagues, throughout these two years, this administration remained guided by a simple but fundamental principle that an attack on one lawyer is an attack on the entire legal profession. The institutional mechanisms established during this tenure, particularly the National Litigation Committee and its coordinated nationwide response framework, represent enduring reforms that will continue to strengthen the protection of lawyers long after this administration has concluded its service. We remain confident that these structures will preserve the dignity, independence, and security of legal practitioners while reinforcing the central role of the Nigerian Bar Association as the foremost defender of the legal profession in Nigeria.

BRANCH ENGAGEMENT, THE ONE BAR POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL INCLUSION

115. One of the guiding convictions of this administration has been that the true strength of the Nigerian Bar Association lies in its branches. While the National Secretariat provides strategic direction, it is within our branches that the life of the Association is most visibly expressed. The branches remain the primary point of engagement between the Association and its members, serving as centres of professional development, collegiality, advocacy, and service. We therefore considered it imperative to strengthen the relationship between the National Body and our branches by fostering greater collaboration, inclusion, and shared ownership of the affairs of the Association.

116. From the commencement of this administration, we deliberately adopted a leadership style that was accessible, consultative, and inclusive. We resolved

that the leadership of the Nigerian Bar Association would not be confined to Abuja but would be present wherever members gathered to advance the objectives of the profession. This informed our extensive programme of official visits to branches across the six geopolitical zones of the Federation, making this administration one of the most visible and accessible in the history of the Association. Through these engagements, we interacted directly with members, listened to their concerns, shared ideas on the future of the profession, and ensured that national policies reflected the realities experienced at the grassroots.

117. During the course of our tenure, we participated in numerous Branch Law Weeks, Annual Lectures, Bar Dinners, Conferences, Continuing Legal Education programmes, anniversary celebrations, and other important branch activities. These engagements provided valuable opportunities to discuss issues affecting legal practice, lawyer welfare, professional regulation, judicial reforms, legal education, technological innovation, and the future direction of the Association. They also enabled us to appreciate the remarkable innovations being introduced by branches in response to local challenges and to encourage the exchange of best practices across the Federation.
118. We equally strengthened communication and collaboration between the National Officers and Branch Leadership through regular consultations, stakeholder engagements, and continuous interaction with Branch Chairmen and Executive Committees. Rather than imposing policies from the centre, this administration consistently sought the views of branch leaders on major institutional reforms, constitutional amendments, professional regulation, and matters affecting the governance of the Association. This consultative approach enhanced confidence in the leadership of the Association and ensured that the voices of members at the grassroots were reflected in national decision-making.
119. In furtherance of the administration's commitment to strengthening the institutional capacity, professionalism, and welfare of the NBA Secretariat, the administration has revised the Nigerian Bar Association Employee Handbook and Standards of Work to provide a structured and uniform framework governing the employment, welfare, responsibilities, and professional conduct of employees of the Association. The Handbook is

designed as a central reference document for members of staff and sets out the policies, procedures, standards and conditions applicable to employment within the NBA Secretariat.

120. The revised Handbook provides a comprehensive framework covering recruitment and employment, employment agreements and records, staff training and development, performance appraisal, staff welfare, remuneration, salary increments, end-of-year benefits, death-in-service support, annual and compassionate leave, study and sick leave, maternity leave, housing and out-station allowances, medical insurance, pension and statutory payments, as well as other employment-related benefits. It thereby provides greater clarity and consistency in the administration of staff affairs and establishes a more structured approach to employee management.
121. The Handbook also establishes clear standards of conduct and accountability for employees, including obligations relating to confidentiality, protection of NBA property and records, avoidance of conflicts of interest, responsible handling of Association resources, professional appearance and conduct, restrictions on unauthorised external employment, and compliance with applicable workplace rules. It further provides a framework for addressing misconduct through established disciplinary procedures, thereby promoting accountability while ensuring that employees understand the standards expected of them.
122. Importantly, the Handbook provides for institutional mechanisms for addressing staff grievances, disciplinary matters, retirement, performance management and other employment-related issues, thereby reducing uncertainty and ensuring that staff matters are handled within a defined administrative framework. It also emphasises continuous training and development of employees, recognising that a professional and efficient

Secretariat requires investment in the knowledge, skills and capacity of its personnel.

123. The revision of the Employee Handbook represents a significant step towards professionalising the administration of the NBA Secretariat and strengthening the Association's human-resource management systems. It provides a common framework for both Management and employees, promotes fairness, transparency, accountability and professionalism, and establishes clearer expectations concerning the rights, responsibilities and obligations of staff. The Handbook will also provide an important institutional reference for successive administrations in managing the Association's workforce and preserving continuity in the administration of the National Secretariat. This initiative is particularly significant because the NBA's ability to deliver effectively on its mandate depends substantially on the efficiency, professionalism, and commitment of its Secretariat.
124. One of the hallmarks of this administration was the deliberate inclusion of branches in policy formulation and institutional development. Throughout the constitutional amendment process, the implementation of professional reforms, the introduction of technological innovations, and the development of continuing professional education programmes, branches played an active role in shaping the direction of the Association. Their recommendations, observations, and practical experiences significantly enriched the quality of our policies and strengthened the legitimacy of the reforms introduced during this administration.
125. Conscious of the important role played by branches in nurturing the next generation of legal practitioners, we encouraged them to adopt innovative approaches to lawyer welfare, continuing legal education, digital transformation, and institutional governance. We consistently promoted the sharing of successful initiatives among branches and encouraged the adoption of programmes capable of improving service delivery to members. This exchange of ideas has contributed to stronger branch administration and greater institutional capacity across the Federation.
126. This administration also devoted particular attention to strengthening engagement with the NBA Young Lawyers Forum, both at the national and

branch levels. We recognised that young lawyers constitute the future leadership of the profession and that their active participation in the governance of the Association is essential to its continued relevance and growth. We therefore encouraged greater inclusion of young lawyers in branch activities, supported initiatives aimed at their professional development, and promoted programmes that created opportunities for mentorship, leadership, and career advancement. Our engagement with the Young Lawyers Forum reflected our broader commitment to building an Association that remains responsive to the aspirations of every generation of lawyers.

127. Throughout our tenure, we remained steadfast in promoting the philosophy of One Bar. We consistently emphasised that the Nigerian Bar Association derives its greatest strength from its unity and that our diversity of geography, ethnicity, religion, language, age, and areas of practice should serve as a source of enrichment rather than division. We therefore resisted every tendency capable of undermining the cohesion of the Association and continued to encourage mutual respect, inclusiveness, and constructive engagement among members across the country. The One Bar philosophy remained a guiding principle in every aspect of our leadership and informed our interactions with branches, Sections, Fora, and Committees of the Association.
128. We also strengthened institutional relationships between the National Body, NBA Branches, Sections, Fora, and Committees through sustained collaboration on programmes, policy development, and professional initiatives. This approach enhanced coordination within the Association, encouraged the sharing of resources and expertise, and reinforced the collective responsibility of all organs of the NBA in advancing the objectives of the profession. It equally fostered a stronger sense of ownership among members and promoted greater institutional cohesion.
129. Distinguished Colleagues, the extensive engagement undertaken during this administration has significantly narrowed the distance between the National Leadership and the branches. It has strengthened confidence in the Association, promoted greater participation in its governance, reinforced the philosophy of One Bar, and contributed to the emergence of a more connected, inclusive, and responsive Nigerian Bar Association. We are confident that the relationships built during these two years will continue to strengthen the unity of our Association and provide a solid foundation for future administrations to deepen engagement with members across every branch of the Federation.

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENTS AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

130. Distinguished Colleagues, in an increasingly interconnected world, no professional association can afford to operate in isolation. The legal profession is continually shaped by developments in international law, comparative jurisprudence, technological innovation, global trade, human rights, climate governance, and cross-border regulation. Conscious of these realities, this administration deliberately pursued a policy of strengthening the international profile of the Nigerian Bar Association while expanding strategic partnerships capable of enriching legal practice, strengthening our institutions, and creating greater opportunities for our members.
131. Throughout our tenure, the Nigerian Bar Association remained actively engaged with leading international legal organisations and justice-sector institutions. These engagements enabled the Association to contribute to important global conversations on the rule of law, judicial independence, constitutional governance, legal education, professional regulation, and access to justice, while also providing opportunities to learn from comparative experiences across different jurisdictions.
132. During the course of this administration, the Association participated in several high-level international conferences and professional engagements, including the Commonwealth Lawyers Association Conference, the International Bar Association Conferences, the Justice Matters Conference in The Hague, the Opening of the March 2026 Term of the Supreme Court of Liberia, and engagements with the ECOWAS Court of Justice. These platforms allowed the Association to present Nigeria's perspectives on issues affecting the legal profession, deepen professional relationships with counterpart Bar Associations, and reinforce the NBA's standing as one of Africa's foremost professional legal organisations.
133. Beyond participation in international conferences, this administration placed considerable emphasis on building enduring institutional partnerships with international organisations and development partners whose work aligns with the objectives of the Nigerian Bar Association. We recognised that strategic collaboration provides access not only to technical expertise and institutional support but also to innovative ideas capable of strengthening justice-sector reforms and professional development within Nigeria.
134. In furtherance of this objective, we strengthened and expanded the Nigerian Bar Association's network of strategic partnerships with leading

international institutions and development partners, including agencies of the United Nations, UNICEF, the British High Commission, the United States Embassy, The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (HiIL), and numerous other development partners working within the justice sector. These partnerships enhanced the Association's capacity to undertake programmes relating to legal education, human rights, access to justice, judicial reforms, capacity building, child protection, alternative dispute resolution, innovation, and institutional strengthening.

135. Of particular significance was the successful execution of a landmark partnership between the Nigerian Bar Association and UNICEF, valued at approximately ₦120 million, to support programmes aimed at strengthening child protection, juvenile justice, legal aid, capacity building, and access to justice across Nigeria. This historic collaboration represents one of the most impactful institutional partnerships secured by the Association in recent years and demonstrates the confidence reposed in the NBA by international development partners as a credible institution for advancing justice sector reforms. Beyond UNICEF, the Association also strengthened collaboration with agencies of the United Nations, the British High Commission, the United States Embassy, The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (HiIL), and several other international organisations working to promote the rule of law, legal education, judicial reforms, human rights, innovation, and institutional development.

136. 110. These partnerships extended far beyond formal engagements and goodwill exchanges. They translated into tangible programmes and measurable outcomes that directly benefited the legal profession and the wider society. Through these collaborations, the Association facilitated specialised capacity-building programmes for lawyers and judicial officers, promoted child justice and protection initiatives, strengthened access to justice for vulnerable persons, supported legal education reforms, and expanded opportunities for Nigerian lawyers to participate in international conferences, policy dialogues, research initiatives, and professional exchanges. The UNICEF partnership, in particular, stands as a testament to the Association's growing institutional credibility and its ability to attract substantial international support for programmes that advance the public interest and strengthen the justice sector. These collaborations also created valuable opportunities for Nigerian lawyers to participate in international conferences, specialised training programmes, policy dialogues, research

initiatives, and professional exchanges. By strengthening relationships with leading international organisations, the Association has continued to expose its members to emerging global developments while promoting the exchange of ideas and best practices capable of improving legal practice and institutional governance within Nigeria.

137. Our engagement with international partners equally reinforced the NBA's role as a respected stakeholder in regional and global discussions concerning democracy, the rule of law, judicial independence, anti-corruption, human rights, legal education, and justice-sector reform. We consistently projected the Nigerian Bar Association as an institution committed to the highest standards of professional ethics, constitutional governance, and the administration of justice, thereby enhancing its reputation within the international legal community. We are confident that the relationships established and strengthened during this administration will continue to provide valuable opportunities for institutional collaboration, professional development, and justice-sector reform in the years ahead.

REFLECTIONS ON OUR STEWARDSHIP

138. Distinguished Learned Colleagues, as I conclude this Report, I do so with immense gratitude to Almighty God for granting us the privilege, wisdom, strength and grace to serve this great Association over the past two years. The office of the President of the Nigerian Bar Association is one of immense responsibility. It is an office that demands courage in moments of uncertainty, restraint in moments of provocation, conviction in moments of difficulty, and an unwavering commitment to the ideals upon which our Association was founded. I remain profoundly humbled by the confidence reposed in me by members of the Bar to lead this historic institution.
139. Looking back on the journey that commenced in August 2024, I am filled with a deep sense of fulfilment, not because every challenge confronting the profession has been resolved, but because together we have strengthened the institutional foundations of the Nigerian Bar Association and positioned it for an even brighter future. We inherited an Association confronted by significant institutional, professional and national challenges. Together, we responded with courage, innovation and determination. We modernised our systems, strengthened our institutions, enhanced the welfare of our members, defended the rule of law, promoted legal education, embraced technology, deepened engagement with our branches, expanded access to justice, and

preserved the financial stability of our Association. Above all, we ensured that the Nigerian Bar Association remained a fearless, principled and independent voice in defence of constitutional democracy and the administration of justice.

140. Throughout our tenure, we remained guided by the conviction that leadership is ultimately about service. Every reform introduced, every policy adopted, every intervention undertaken, and every position taken was motivated by our sincere desire to strengthen the Association and improve the experience of every member of the Nigerian Bar Association. While history will ultimately judge the impact of this administration, I am confident that we leave behind an Association that is stronger, more innovative, more financially stable, more technologically advanced, and more responsive to the needs of its members than it was at the commencement of our tenure.

141. We equally recognise that no administration, regardless of its achievements, can complete the work of institutional development. The Nigerian Bar Association is an enduring institution whose progress depends upon continuity, collective responsibility and the willingness of successive administrations to build upon the foundations laid by their predecessors. It is therefore my earnest hope that the reforms initiated during this administration will be consolidated and strengthened by those who assume the responsibility of leadership after us. Institutions become great not because of individual leaders but because every generation contributes its own quota towards their continuous development.

APPRECIATION

142. I owe a profound debt of gratitude to the National Officers of the Association whose dedication, professionalism and unwavering commitment made the work of this administration possible. Your counsel, loyalty, sacrifice and collective wisdom enriched our deliberations and strengthened every decision taken in the course of this administration.

143. I express my sincere appreciation to members of the National Executive Council for the confidence they reposed in this administration and for the robust debates, constructive criticisms, thoughtful contributions and unwavering support that characterised our engagements throughout these two years. The quality of deliberations within the National Executive Council has continued to demonstrate the depth of intellectual capacity that exists within our profession.

144. To our Branch Chairmen, Branch Executive Committees and every member of our one hundred and forty one branches, I offer my heartfelt appreciation. Your commitment to the ideals of the Association, your partnership in implementing national policies, and your unwavering support for the programmes of this administration have been indispensable to our collective success. The philosophy of One Bar remained alive because of your dedication and shared commitment to the unity of our profession.
145. I equally acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the leadership and members of our Sections, Fora, Committees and Institutes. Through your specialised expertise, innovative programmes and selfless service, you significantly expanded the reach and impact of the Nigerian Bar Association in virtually every area of professional life.
146. I extend profound appreciation to the Judiciary, the Body of Benchers, the Council of Legal Education, the General Council of the Bar, the Nigerian Law School, our distinguished Senior Advocates of Nigeria, past Presidents of the Association, and every stakeholder who worked collaboratively with us in advancing the administration of justice and strengthening the legal profession. Our shared commitment to the rule of law continues to inspire confidence in the future of our nation's justice sector.
147. I also acknowledge our development partners, international organisations, diplomatic missions, civil society organisations, corporate partners and friends of the Association whose collaboration enriched many of the programmes undertaken during this administration. Their support has further demonstrated the growing respect enjoyed by the Nigerian Bar Association within the international legal community.
148. To the Management and Staff of the National Secretariat, I express my sincere gratitude for your dedication, professionalism and tireless service. The successful implementation of the numerous reforms undertaken during this administration would not have been possible without your commitment to excellence and your willingness to embrace institutional change.
149. On a personal note, I remain profoundly grateful to my family for their understanding, patience and support throughout the demands of public service. Leadership often requires enormous personal sacrifice, and their encouragement provided the strength necessary to discharge the responsibilities entrusted to me.
150. Above all, I thank every member of our Association. The confidence you reposed in this administration, your constructive engagement, your criticisms

where necessary, your encouragement and your belief in our collective vision have been the greatest source of inspiration throughout this remarkable journey. Whatever successes have been recorded belong not to one individual but to every member of this great Association.

A CHARGE TO THE INCOMING ADMINISTRATION

151. As we prepare for the transition to a new administration, I urge the incoming leadership to continue building strong institutions, deepen the reforms already initiated, strengthen the independence of the Association, prioritise the welfare of our members, preserve prudent financial management, sustain our digital transformation agenda, and continue to defend the rule of law with courage and consistency. The Nigerian Bar Association has always been greater than any individual, and its continued progress depends upon our collective willingness to place institutional interest above personal ambition.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

152. Distinguished Learned Colleagues, as I take my leave of this great office, I do so with profound humility, immense gratitude and abiding optimism for the future of the Nigerian Bar Association. I leave with the comforting assurance that together we have contributed our modest quota to the continuing story of this noble Association. While much remains to be accomplished, I am confident that the foundations laid during the past two years will continue to support future generations of lawyers as they build an even stronger, more united and more influential Bar.

153. Let us continue to defend the Constitution without fear. Let us continue to protect the independence of the Judiciary. Let us continue to uphold the dignity of our profession. Let us continue to stand for justice, equity and the rule of law. Let us continue to preserve the unity of our Association under the enduring philosophy of One Bar.

154. It has been the greatest honour and privilege of my professional life to serve as the 32nd President of the Nigerian Bar Association. For this rare privilege, I shall remain eternally grateful.

May God continue to bless the Nigerian Bar Association!

May God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria!

Thank you, and God bless you all.

Mazi Afam Osigwe, SAN

President

29th August, 2026