



NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION

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NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION (“NBA”) 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE (“AGC”): UPDATE REPORT

1. I attended the meeting of the Technical Committee on Conference Planning (“TCCP”) yesterday, 12 May 2020, where it was decided, at my instance, that the NBA 2020 AGC will be held virtually, in the wake of the rampaging coronavirus pandemic (“COVID-19”). The decision to host the 2020 AGC was and is informed by the well-known and indisputable facts about COVID-19. First, we know that the disease is deadly and easily transmissible, and it is already ravaging our population. Second, we also know that no cure has so far been found against this pernicious disease and the earliest we may have a vaccine against it, according to medical scientists, would be in 2021. Based on these facts, countries the world over, including Nigeria, have essentially deployed containment measures to stem the spread of the virus and these include social/physical distancing and not having gatherings of more than 20 persons.

2. In furtherance of these containment measures, governments have placed bans and restrictions on gatherings generally, including cultural, religious, business and social gatherings such as burials, celebration parties, general meetings of companies, conferences etc. As it relates to our 2020 AGC, the prognosis does not suggest that COVID-19 would abate by August 2020 when we are scheduled to hold the Conference and there is therefore no basis to believe or expect that these restrictions, which, we must remember, are for our communal life-saving benefits, would or should be lifted by then. We must also remember that our AGCs are always large gatherings of lawyers, judicial officers, justice sector stakeholders and indeed the general public. The 2019 AGC had a record attendance of over 12,000 delegates and we were expecting to have a higher number for the 2020 Conference given the fact that 2020 not only marks 60 years of Nigeria’s independence but also 60 years of the

NATIONAL OFFICERS:

Paul Usoro, SAN President;

Jonathan Gunu Taidi, General Secretary; Imo Stanley Chidozie, 1st Vice President; Dr. Dada Foluke Olayemi, 2nd Vice President; Igba Theophilus, 3rd Vice President; Banke Victoria Olagbegi-Oloba, Treasurer; Anosike Elias Emeka, Financial Secretary; Eze Nnamdi Innocent, Legal Adviser; Edun Olukunle, Publicity Secretary; Usman Joshua Enemali, Welfare Secretary; Ewenode William Onoriode, 1st Assistant Secretary; Obasi Chinyere Gladys, 2nd Assistant Secretary; Pepple Iniobong Irene, Assistant Financial Secretary; Lawal Akorede Habeeb, Assistant Publicity Secretary

NBA Annual General Conference. Even though we still expect record numbers for the 2020 AGC, our present COVID-19 circumstance does not recommend the physical congregation of such a multitude in a single conference location.

3. Nevertheless, canceling the Conference was not and is not an option. That would be defeatist. It would amount to rolling over and submitting to COVID-19. We, as Nigerians, and in particular, Nigerian lawyers, are not known to be that resigned and easily cowed or defeated by challenges. We are resilient, tough, inventive and resourceful even in the face of daunting odds and challenges. And that is precisely what we resolved to do in regard to our 2020 AGC: put on our thinking caps and come up with creative and ingenious ways of hosting our traditional and much-cherished annual Conference, taking account of COVID-19 while not submitting or resigning ourselves to it. It was in that circumstance that the decision was made to host the Conference virtually or remotely while still working towards a conference that would, in content and aesthetics, surpass any that we have had in previous years.

4. I feel privileged to be leading this pioneering effort as the President of our beloved Association and it is rather interesting, albeit, coincidental that, on the same day that we decided, at the TCCP meeting, to host a virtual 2020 AGC, the International Bar Association (“IBA”) also announced its decision to host the 2020 IBA Conference coming up in November virtually as well. The world is indeed moving in that direction and we may actually be the pioneers in the circle of Law Societies and Bar Associations. During my almost 2-hour meeting with the TCCP members, which, by the way, was hosted virtually, I was delighted to see, feel and hear the palpable excitement and buzz of ideas amongst the Committee members. Rising from that meeting, they were all determined and are already thinking of how to make this the most exciting Conference of all times that would hold and sustain the attention and interest of our members while addressing practical everyday issues that face the rule of law, our profession, and Nigerians generally. The details of the Conference – including a Help Desk where all your questions would be addressed in the build-up to the AGC – would be unveiled presently by the TCCP led by our indomitable and forward-looking Professor Konyinsola Ajayi, SAN.

5. I am personally excited by and with the prospects and look forward to sharing our customary communion at the 2020 AGC, albeit, virtually. I am also counting on the consistent support of all our members to make this work. Please, participate and be part of history at the virtual hosting of the NBA 2020 AGC. Meanwhile, I urge all

of us to continue to keep hope alive while staying safe and well. Please ensure that you comply with COVID-19 containment measures as published respectively by the Federal and State Governments, the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control and the World Health Organization.



Paul Usoro, SAN
NBA President