

INTRODUCTION

The Quarterly Meeting of the President-in-Council (PIC); a body comprised of the National Executive Officers, Chairmen and Secretaries of the Branches, and Heads and Secretaries of the Directorates of CLASFON held at Enugu In Enugu State from the 11th and 12th March, 2021 to deliberate on issues concerning the CLASFON and the Nation.

The National President presided over the business sessions during which participants extolled the manifestation of a new zeal to actualize the vision of CLASFON which is to see 'A New Legal Profession Anchored on Christ'.

ISSUES

The meeting deliberated, among others, on the following issues:

1. STATE OF THE JUDICIARY
2. STATE OF INSECURITY IN NIGERIA / REGIONAL AGITATIONS
3. RULE OF LAW

COMMENTS AND RESOLUTIONS

1. STATE OF THE JUDICIARY
2. ELECTRONIC FILING (E-FILING): CLASFON commends the judiciary at all levels for the deployment of Information Technology (IT) especially with respect to the electronic filing of court processes. This step towards improving justice delivery in the country is highly commendable. Other courts that are yet to adopt this method are encouraged to do so, and lawyers are enjoined to improve their Information Technology skills in order to key into the new approach.
3. COMMENDATION OF GOVERNMENT OF CROSS RIVERS STATE

CLASFON commends Professor Ben Ayade, the Governor of Cross Rivers State, as well as the Cross River State House of Assembly for the resolution of the impasse in the State Judiciary which had hitherto and unnecessarily stalled the smooth running of the Cross Rivers State Judiciary due to the refusal of the State House of Assembly to confirm the most senior judge of the State, the Hon. Justice Akon Ekpeme as the substantive Chief Judge of

the State. The eventual confirmation of Hon. Justice Akon Ekpeme is laudable. However, CLASFON decries the situation in Gombe State where the Gombe State Governor and the State Judicial Service Commission have persistently refused to send the name of the most senior judge in that state i.e. Hon. Justice Beatrice Iliya to the National Judicial Council (NJC) for consideration of His Lordship's appointment as the substantive Chief Judge in the State. CLASFON, therefore, advises His Excellency, Governor Alhaji Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya of Gombe State to succumb to reason like his Cross Rivers State counterpart and do the right thing.

2. APPOINTMENT OF JUSTICES OF COURT OF APPEAL: CLASFON

CLASFON like most other concerned Nigerians observes with dismay, the controversy generated by the recent shortlisting of judicial officers for consideration for appointment as Justices of the Court of Appeal submitted to the National Judicial Council (NJC). Of particular interest is the concern expressed that of all the candidates shortlisted from the 19 Northern States of the Federation, no Judge of the Christian faith is included in the Priority List contrary to the spirit of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as Amended). CLASFON is worried that the independence of the Judiciary is likely to be compromised if the process of judicial appointments becomes a subject matter of public outcry and political interference and therefore calls on the appointing authority to ensure that merit, justice, and fairness is not compromised and that the provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 is strictly adhered to.

3. STATE OF INSECURITY IN NIGERIA AND REGIONAL AGITATIONS

CLASFON reiterates her position as contained in the communiqué issued on November 22, 2020, about the general state of insecurity in the nation. Since the last communiqué, the state of insecurity in the country has worsened. The recent kidnapping/abduction of students in Kankara in Katsina State, Kagara in Niger State, Jangebe in Zamfara State, and students of Federal College of Forestry, Mando, Kaduna State, is worrisome. The alarming increase in banditry, kidnapping, and communal clashes have occasioned unquantifiable

human and material losses and displacement of indigenous communities. The security apparatus of the state appears to be either overwhelmed or incapacitated to deal with these criminal activities which have emboldened criminals, thus making crime attractive to youths.

CLASFON, therefore, calls on the security agencies, especially the newly appointed Service Chiefs to rise to this situation immediately, halt the continuous upsurge in crime and criminalities in the country, and protect the lives and the livelihood of Nigerians.

CLASFON views the agitations for secession, the formation of regional security outfits, issuing of eviction orders to non-indigenes by some non-state actors, blockade of food supplies etc. coming from different regions of the country as the consequences of the general failure of good governance in the Country. The Federal Government must therefore rise to the occasion to ensure justice and fair play in all its dealings, to quell these agitations. Genuine concerns raised by these agitators should be looked into sincerely and addressed by the government. CLASFON also urges the agitators to sheath their swords and embrace dialogue.

4. RULE OF LAW

- i. Secularity of the Nigerian Constitution: CLASFON observes that even though the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 in Section 10 states categorically that Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as State Religion thereby affirming Nigeria to be a secular state, the realities on ground do not reflect this cardinal principle. The policies and appointments by the Federal Government have continued to favour a particular religion to the detriment of others. State Governments have formulated policies that directly promote one religion over and above others. The *Hijab* controversy currently going on in Kwara State is one clear instance of the arbitrary use of state policy to promote a particular religion. The indefinite closure of Christian Mission Schools in Kwara State over the *Hijab* controversy is unacceptable. CLASFON wonders why despite the pendency of an appeal before the Supreme Court on the issue of *Hijab*, the Kwara State Government would proceed to take steps that will appear to pre-empt the decision of the Apex Court and foist a *fait accompli* on the Apex Court in the appeal. CLASFON, therefore, calls on the

Kwara State government to reopen the affected schools, for the benefit of innocent students and to show respect for the rule of law.

- ii. CLASFON also observes with dismay, the bastardization of due process and violations of the laws of the Country by the Federal Government, in the unlawful elongation of the tenure of offices of the Accountant General of the Federation, the Inspector General of Police, and the Corps Marshall of the Federal Road Safety Corps, whose respective tenures of office had elapsed. We commend the courageous citizens of Nigeria who have gone to court to challenge this affront on the rule of law. CLASFON urges the Federal Government to as a matter of urgency retrace its steps, by allowing these retired officers to vacate their respective offices immediately.

AROME OKWORI
PRESIDENT

OLATUNJI OMOLE NATIONAL
NATIONAL SECRETARY