

**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE JUSTICE REFORM SUMMIT OF THE LAGOS STATE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE WITH THE THEME “ENHANCING THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, INVESTMENT PROTECTION AND SECURITY IN LAGOS STATE”, HELD AT THE MARRIOTT HOTEL, G.R.A. IKEJA, LAGOS STATE ON THE 27<sup>TH</sup> -28<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 2024.**

**1.0 PREAMBLE**

1.1 The summit is a pivotal event of the Ministry of Justice, to kick start the first year anniversary of the second term of Mr. Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, the Governor of Lagos State. A very basic foundation of any society is first and foremost to have justice, and where there is no justice there cannot be peace and where there is no peace there cannot be progress.

1.2 The dispensation of justice and the need to ensure an effective legal system is a paramount role that all stakeholders in the Justice system must strive to achieve to reach the desired development goals.

1.3 There is a dire need for effective and efficient justice system to improve economic activities, investment protection and security in Lagos State, all stakeholders in the justice sector must partner to improve and transform the justice system in the State to meet the needs of the people and restore public trust.

1.4 In pursuance of the imperative need for a more efficient, equitable and accessible justice system, the Lagos State Ministry of Justice convened a Justice Reform Summit under the esteemed leadership of the Honourable Attorney-General of Lagos State and Commissioner for Justice, with stakeholders from various sectors in attendance and keynote Speakers

from two countries. The summit was themed “**Enhancing the Administration of Justice for Economic Growth, Investment Protection and Security in Lagos State,**” deliberated on critical issues facing the justice system and charted a course for comprehensive reform.

2.0 After extensive discussions, debates and deliberations, the participants at the summit hereby issue the following communiqué:

The Conference had the following objectives amongst others:

1. **Improving Access to Justice:** Enhancing access to justice for all Lagos residents and investors, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnicity, or any other factor.
2. **Enhancing Judicial Efficiency:** Streamlining court processes and procedures to ensure swift and efficient dispensation of justice.
3. **Promoting Judicial Independence:** Safeguarding the independence of the judiciary to ensure fair and impartial adjudication of cases.
4. **Strengthening Legal Institutions:** Building the capacity of legal institutions, such as courts, law enforcement agencies, Ministry of Justice and legal aid organizations, to effectively fulfill their mandates.
5. **Fostering Public Trust and Confidence:** Enhancing public trust and confidence in the justice system through transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to the needs of citizens.
6. **Addressing Backlogs and Delays:** Implementing measures to reduce case backlogs and delays in the justice system.

7. **Upholding Rule of Law:** Upholding the rule of law and protecting human rights in accordance with national and international standards.
8. **Promoting Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR):** Encouraging the use of ADR mechanisms, such as mediation and arbitration, to resolve disputes in a timely and cost-effective manner.
9. **Capacity Building and Training:** Providing training and capacity-building programs for judges, lawyers, and other justice sector stakeholders to enhance their skills and knowledge.
10. **Economic Development:** A functioning justice system is vital for economic development. It provides a stable legal framework for investments and businesses, protects property rights, and ensures resolution of commercial disputes efficiently. A reformed justice system will attract investment, foster entrepreneurship, and contribute to overall economic growth.
11. **Engagement and Collaboration:** Facilitating dialogue and collaboration among key stakeholders, including government officials, legal practitioners, civil society organizations, and the private sector, to address challenges and identify solutions for justice reform.

3.0 After exhaustive discussions on the papers and extensive deliberations on Justice Reform in Lagos State, the workshop rose with the following observations and recommendations as its resolutions:

1. Leveraging of Public-Private partnerships to bridge the infrastructural deficit in the judiciary and recover costs through court services.

2. Implement third-party funding for costs awarded on an indemnity basis to reduce frivolous suits.
3. Create rules to prevent law enforcement agencies from settling civil disputes and encourage victims to approach Courts.
4. Address remuneration of lawyers in Ministry of Justice and the State generally to improve their commitment and reduce misconduct.
5. Screen legal processes before filing to avoid frivolous actions.
6. Award costs against lawyers, not litigants, for frivolous actions.
7. Promote substantial justice through judicial decisions.
8. Establish a research and development team in the judiciary for continuous technological improvements.
9. Resolve land matters within 18 months and undefended divorce petitions within three months.
10. The Lagos State Government must be ready and willing to ensure adequate funding of the Lagos State Judiciary.
11. The need to phase out double taxation
12. Differentiating between the administration of courts and administration of justice.
13. Business registration procedure must be made easy. There is a need to further explore the use of ADR to settle commercial disputes.
14. Government must make payment of taxes flexible fair and equal
15. Encourage citizen to pay their taxes for infrastructural development.

16. Encourage compliance of the environmental Laws and regulations to prevent a disaster and ensure a sustainable city. It is observed that respect for the environment is respect for neighborliness and humanity.
17. Simplification of land titling processes.
18. Digitalization of land titling to ease verification through the use of block chain technology to make it indefeasible.
19. Enactment of an efficient law on mortgages to deal especially with realization and foreclosure of mortgages.
20. Amendment of provisions of sections of the Mortgage law that sabotage the equity of redemption.
21. Simplification and tightening of foreclosure proceedings to make it user-friendly and effective while preventing non-parties from participating or re-opening its proceedings. The need for Lagos State to promulgate 'Foreclosure Law' to aid in recovery of mortgage.
22. The review and harmonization of the Lagos State Property Protection Law.
23. Entrenchment of stringent penalties for the breach of the LASBCA, 2019 provisions and stiff punishments for conspirators who breach its provisions.
24. Motivating and protecting the interests of members of the public to report corrupt practices and officials.
25. Review of the Tenancy Law to encourage and promote investment in rental sub sector of real estate development so as to significantly contribute to the housing deficit in the State.
26. Introduction of standard form agreement and mandatory requirement of engagement of Counsel in balancing the legitimate interests of landlord and tenant.

27. Simplification of the recovery of premises procedure to make it more efficient and effective.
28. Establishment of land Commission governed by statute and the template adopted by Singapore is recommended.
29. Enhance cooperation and information exchange among law enforcement agencies by holding regular inter-agency meetings.
30. Expand the use of technology throughout the criminal justice system. This includes extending the coverage of the Lagos Criminal Information System, Bail Information Management System, and Judicial Information System, as well as increasing the adoption of electronic case filing and management systems.
31. Encourage capacity building and training for criminal justice stakeholders.
32. Promote public awareness and engagement in criminal justice reforms.
33. The Bondsmen Scheme should be institutionalized.
34. Elimination of bias in the parade of lesser offenders as opposed to those syphoning huge funds.
35. The review of Section 374 of ACJL to allow judges deliver interlocutory rulings provided it does not stay the substantive proceedings.
36. Revision of the conditions for bail to be more flexible and obtainable as some are impracticable.
37. The Ministry of Justice should deploy more lawyers to the Directorate of Public Prosecutions to increase its efficiency.
38. The Ministry of Justice should also take charge and assist in decongestion of Correctional Centres.

39. The Lagos State Government should take over the existing Correctional Centres at Ikoyi and Apapa, to have administrative control over them and bolster the efficiency of the criminal justice system.
40. Alternatively, funding the establishment of new correctional centres can be tackled by relocating existing correctional centres from their present (prime) locations to remote areas and use the land to generate revenue.
41. The establishment of bail funds, criminal justice trust fund and pre-trial services to better supervise and monitor bail conditions.
42. The rehabilitation of offenders in non-custodial settings to reduce funding and expenditures on feeding and welfare of inmates.
43. The fundamental rights of offenders should remain protected in both custodial and non-custodial sentencing.
44. It is strongly recommended that the Justice Reform Summit be made an annual conference to review, discuss and promote justice reform in Lagos State.
45. Implementation strategy of the outcome of the Summit should include constant monitoring and evaluation by all stakeholders in the justice system.