



NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION | SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS OF OLUMIDE AKPATA'S 2020 TO 2022 SCORECARD AS NBA PRESIDENT

August 2022

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1. **Restoring NBA's voice and role on public interest matters:** our proactivity and efforts in restoring NBA's voice and role on matters of national interest is well-known. We actively provided legal support and defended human rights and the Rule of Law during the EndSARS protests; participated in the EndSARS panels set up across the country; worked actively on the reform of the Police Force in the wake of the EndSARS crisis; commenced at least five public interest lawsuits against the Federal Government of Nigeria challenging the legality or constitutionality of certain government actions; played an active advocacy role in the enactment of the extant Electoral Act; were active actors in the 2021 JUSUN strike intended to promote financial autonomy of the judiciary across States of the Federation; and through our interventions, we curbed executive interference and disregard for judiciary in a number of States and pushed for the payment of the emoluments of about 30 magistrates in Cross River State who had not been paid for over two years.
2. **Health programme for lawyers:** we designed and implemented a comprehensive health programme by deploying different approaches to cover the health needs of our members. In particular, we introduced the National Health Insurance Scheme (**NHIS**) for lawyers; paid the initial NHIS medial insurance subscription for 1,000 members across branches; and we re-launched the critical ailment insurance policy under which our members who are diagnosed with "critical illness" are entitled, at no extra cost to them, to receive N1 million as support towards the treatment of such critical illness.
3. **Life insurance cover:** working with Leadway Assurance, we increased the death benefit entitlement for our deceased members by 100% (from N1 million to N2 million) to ensure that their named beneficiaries get this amount from the NBA as support through their difficulties. During our tenure, we settled/successfully processed life insurance claims for about 207 members.
4. **Access to Finance:** we introduced and successfully implemented an Access to Finance Scheme which allows our members (most of whom operate as sole practitioners and small practices) to borrow at single digit interest rates from our partner banks for their capital expenditure and working capital purposes under a structure that is backstopped by the NBA.
5. **Administration of Justice:** we started a technology-driven monitoring process that would help address issues around the slow justice system, congestion of our courts, frequent adjournments and the delays in the court system, which result in slow

administration of justice. The test-run of this process was completed across a number of selected courts recently.

6. **NBA Stabilisation Fund:** we established the NBA Stabilisation Fund in which we have set aside a seed capital of N1.5 billion to enable the Association meet critical future needs within defined parameters.
7. **Free and discounted resource tools:** we paid the annual subscription for Law Pavilion on behalf of all our young lawyers; negotiated hugely discounted subscription fees for senior lawyers and offered two free packs of stamp and seal to all members upon payment of their Bar Practicing Fees.
8. **Continuing Legal Education:** we revitalized the NBA Institute of Continuing Legal Education (NBA-ICLE) which has in the last one year since its Governing Council was reconstituted, entered into several strategic local and international partnerships; organised over 60 free trainings, workshops and capacity building sessions in contemporary and emerging areas of law with a total of about 30,000 lawyers participating; and has been working in the area of mentoring, career development and job retention for our younger members through its Career Development Unit.
9. **Harassment of Lawyers:** we have constantly intervened in cases of harassment of our members by security agencies, an ugly trend which has significantly abated since we assumed office. This we achieved through building meaningful partnerships with the top brass of the security agencies, through high level engagements in deserving cases, and through utilisation of the Lawyers Defence Fund that we established.
10. **Remuneration and Scale of Charges:** we began a lawyers' remuneration or income-focused project that is aimed at (i) enabling lawyers to charge the right fees for their legal services; and (ii) ensuring that reasonable living wages and emoluments are paid to our members by their employers. For this, we have, after about a year of extensive engagements and consultations, put together a comprehensive report and action plan for achieving the desired objectives. This report which has been approved by the NBA National Executive Council (**NBA-NEC**) will enter full implementation upon the enactment of the relevant administrative and legislative instruments to finalise the process, while some aspects of the implementation are expected to begin by 1st January 2023, as per NBA-NEC approval.
11. **Additional Health Matters:** we negotiated an accidental medical expense cover that entitles our members to a reimbursement of their properly documented medical

expenses up to a capped amount to cover initial treatments for minor injuries; collaborated with Leadway Assurance for telemedicine access to licensed medical doctors; and established a N100 million NBA Medical Fund from which funds will be applied, from time to time, to support the medical needs of our members who do not qualify under other limbs of our health programme.

12. **The NBA Institutes Building:** as part of our efforts to properly reposition the NBA Institute of Continuing Education (NBA-ICLE) and the NBA Human Rights Institute (NBA-HRI) for efficient service delivery, we remodelled the former NBA Secretariat in Abuja, which had been abandoned for about six years. It is now properly equipped to provide an efficient operational base for these critical NBA Institutes. One wing of the twin-complex which is occupied by the NBA-ICLE was named after the matriarch of the legal profession in Nigeria - Chief Folake Solanke, SAN while the wing housing the NBA-HRI was named after Arakunrin Oluwarotimi O. Akeredolu SAN, in recognition of their significant contributions to the growth and development of legal profession in Nigeria.
13. **Reducing cost of governance:** through various constitutional amendments, we achieved a significant reduction in the cost of governing the NBA. For instance, we downsized the membership of the NBA-NEC by 125 members through abolishing the office of NEC Representatives and limiting branch representation to the Chairmen and Secretaries of Branches.
14. **The NBA Law Journal:** in addition to being a knowledge-based association, contributing to legal scholarship and pushing the boundaries of the global legal jurisprudence forms part of NBA's responsibilities. We recommenced the publication of a world class journal befitting of the NBA (the NBA Law Journal) after several years of abandonment, and successfully published two volumes (Volumes 11 and 12) during our term. We also had a successful partnership with Africa Journals Online (the world's largest and pre-eminent collection of peer-reviewed African published scholarly journals based in South Africa). This arrangement would help to export to a global audience the scholarly opinions of our members.
15. **A reformed electoral system:** Using the report of the Elections Reforms and Audit Committee that my administration set up as one of the first acts in office in 2020, we reformed the NBA electoral process and delivered the least acrimonious NBA National Elections since the introduction of electronic voting in NBA in 2016. Our effort not only reduced voter apathy given the geometric increase in the number of voters in the 2022 elections, but for the first time in the NBA electioneering process, we set up a formal forum, an Election Appeals Committee - for the determination of election petitions and appeals by aspirants and candidates. To enhance neutrality, we also provided dedicated

and exclusive permanent space for the ECNBA to reduce its reliance on the NBA and its resources.

16. **National Assembly:** we took over the NBA office at the National Assembly after years of abandonment and started a partnership with the House of Representatives under which the NBA provides specialist support on critical and systemically important laws coming out of the National Assembly. This helps ensure that those laws are well thought out and meet best standards.
17. **NBA Digitisation Programme:** we commenced and pursued the digitisation of the processes at the NBA including rebuilding our digital infrastructure; migrating our BPF payment to an online only platform; sanitising and digitising our database and working on a unified digital means of identifying our members, including through a partnership with the National Identity Management Commission.
18. **Legal Education Reforms:** we began the advocacy for the reform of the system of legal education in Nigeria to keep up with the realities or demands of today's market and the needs of the 21st century client. We had a successful Legal Education Summit in Ado-Ekiti with all stakeholders in the legal education system at every level. We also developed a bouquet of recommendations and action plan and started early-stage engagements for the implementation of these recommendations by the regulators of the legal education system in Nigeria.
19. **Sexual Harassment Policy:** for the first time and with the support of the NBA Women Forum, we prepared and launched a Sexual Harassment Policy for the Legal Profession in Nigeria. On the back of this policy, we have commenced investigations into some reported cases of sexual harassment including against some law firm employers and persons in authority.
20. **Reforms at the NBA Secretariat:** we began work on, and are at the final stages of, completing administrative reforms at the NBA Secretariat to streamline our processes for improved efficiency, preserve the institutional memory of the Association beyond two-year administrations, constitutionally protect the office of the Executive Director for NBA, ensure better customer service, enable effective branch and member liaison, achieve an efficient delivery of the projects undertaken by the NBA; and allow continuation of programmes of previous administrations.
21. **Establishment of critical fora and avenues for inclusiveness:** to ensure inclusiveness at the NBA, we established a Law Officers Forum with a mandate to deliberate and resolve issues that have continued to agitate law officers across the country; set up a

lawyers with disabilities forum; re-introduced and empanelled the Governing Council of the Corporate Counsel Forum to focus on our in-house colleagues, and reserved some statutory seats at the NBA-NEC for young lawyers and special interest groups within the NBA.

22. **Globalisation and Licence Exemptions:** as globalisation continues to impact the legal services industry, many of our members have sought to become licensed in foreign jurisdictions. We have leveraged available avenues to seek institutional exemptions from certain licensing requirements for Nigerian qualified lawyers who wish to qualify in some of the jurisdictions like the United Kingdom.

