

**THE ROLE OF THE NIGERIAN LAW SOCIETY (NLS) TO THE NIGERIAN
SOCIETY**

**BEING THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS PRESENTED AT THE 2ND NIGERIAN
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BY

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Protocol

Introduction

*“A lawyer lives for the direction of his people, and the advancement of
the cause of his country.”*

- **Christoper Alexander Sapara Williams**
First Indigenous Nigerian Lawyer

All human endeavours, whether they be great or small, are supposed to be targeted at positively giving back to the society which gave the enabling environment for carrying out the endeavours, and the Nigerian Law Society (NLS) which is not an exception, must strive in its role to enhance lives and achieve a better Nigerian society.

In the intricate world of law and justice, lawyers serve as pillars of society, safeguarding individual rights, ensuring fairness, and upholding the rule of law. However, behind every proficient lawyer in Nigeria, stands an institution vital to his/her professional development and ethical conduct: in this context, the NLS. The NLS plays a fundamental role in shaping the legal landscape, fostering camaraderie among legal professionals and safeguarding the integrity of the legal profession in a way that positively gives back to the Nigerian society.

The NLS, since its inception, has championed noble ideals of justice and excellence within the Nigerian legal ecosystem. The NLS plays a pivotal role in the on-going growth and advancement of the Nigerian society and its work has had profound positive impact on the Nigerian society.

The NLS has positioned itself as a veritable platform for legal practitioners across Nigeria to contribute their quota to the betterment of the profession and the Nigerian society at large.

This address examines the multifaceted role of the NLS in the Nigerian society and explores the invaluable contributions of the NLS to the development of the nation through its various laudable activities and initiatives.

This address is structured under the following headings:

- Introduction
- Overview of the Establishment and Growth of the Nigerian Law Society
- Uniqueness and Importance of the Nigerian Law Society
- The Nigerian Law Society and Its Impact on the Nigerian Society
 - ✓ Promotion of the Standards of the Legal Profession
 - ✓ Enhancement of Administration of Justice and Access to Justice
 - ✓ Advocacy for Human Rights
 - ✓ Facilitating Good Governance and Respect for the Rule of Law
 - ✓ Promotion of Welfare of Legal Practitioners
- Concluding Remarks

Overview of the Establishment and Growth of the Nigerian Law Society

The Nigerian Law Society (NLS) is a premier professional association for legal practitioners in Nigeria. It is a Society of Lawyers enrolled as Barristers and Solicitors of the Supreme Court under the Legal Practitioners Act of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The NLS is led by a Council of representatives from across the country. Its Council members are committed to upholding the highest standards of professionalism and integrity in the legal profession, and to promoting the interests of members and the wider legal community.¹

The NLS was established in 2023 and its maiden Annual General Conference was held on Friday, July 28, 2023 with the theme “Justice For All” under the distinguished

¹ ‘About Us’ (Nigerian Law Society) <<https://nls.org.ng/about>> accessed 9 December 2024.

Chairmanship of His Excellency, M. A. Abubakar, SAN, a former Governor of Bauchi State and pioneer Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the NLS. The Keynote Address was delivered by Chief Bolaji Ayorinde, OFR, SAN, a former Chairman of the Governing Board of the Legal Aid Council of Nigeria and now the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the NLS.

Since its establishment, the NLS has witnessed remarkable expansion in membership, with a growing community of legal practitioners joining its fold. Though the NLS was only recently established, it already has thirty-six (36) State Chapters and the Federal Capital Territory Chapter. This significant growth underscores the notable influence and impact of the NLS across the nation.

Uniqueness and Importance of the Nigerian Law Society

Law societies in Africa are a critical component of legal institutions across the continent. While the membership structure and size of these organisations differ, almost all are incorporated not-for-profit entities, guided by charters, led by elected officials, and composed entirely of legal professionals. These law societies are an integral part of public space and a critical component of any compendium of civil society organizations. In spite of the lofty ideals crafted into the objective of these law societies, legal guilds on the African continent operate in a different polity space compared to their peers elsewhere, as their status, skills and training impose a tripartite duty not just to provide professional legal services, but also to bear the social responsibility for strengthening public institutions, promotion of social equilibrium through the instrumentality of law and consolidating democratic governance.²

The objectives of law societies and umbrella law associations in general across the African continent can be grouped into three broad categories, and these are as follows:

- a) Firstly, they seek to promote and protect the interest of their members through skill development initiatives and enhancement of business opportunities.
- b) Secondly, they seek to promote the legal profession as a professional guild by creating frameworks and processes to regulate conduct as well as interaction among legal practitioners and protect the profession from unqualified service competition.

² Tosin Osasona, 'African National Bar Associations And The Promotion Of International Criminal Justice In Africa' (A Contario – International Criminal Law, 17 October 2014) <<https://acontrarioicl.com/2014/10/17/african-national-bar-associations-and-the-promotion-of-international-criminal-justice-in-africa/>> accessed 9 December 2024.

- c) Thirdly, they seek to protect the independence and credibility of legal institutions, advocacy for human rights and accountability as well as the rule of law.³

Law societies and umbrella law associations in general have a critical role to play when it comes to education about and working for the rule of law, including the ethical elements that are of particular importance in the legal profession. Many countries are plagued with corruption. This unethical and criminal activity is the worst enemy of the rule of law.⁴

In line with the above general functions of law societies, the NLS has streamlined its objectives as follows:

- a) To support the administration of justice and all related matters.
- b) To enhance the legal profession through continuing legal education and training.
- c) Engaging in advocacy for the reform of democracy and strengthening our nation's institutional framework.
- d) To develop and implement strategies for legislative advocacy in Nigeria.
- e) To collaborate and/or partner with individuals, regional, national, continental, and/or international organizations/institutions to achieve the aims of the society.⁵

However, though the NLS was established for a noble cause, it is surprising that the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) is opposed to the formation or continued existence of the NLS which is a professional association for lawyers in Nigeria. Nigeria, despite its large population, has over 200,000 (Two Hundred Thousand) lawyers,⁶ and it is fitting for well-meaning lawyers to form associations to enhance the practice of law and adherence to the rule of law in the country by all and sundry.

Driven by their desire to form a professional association of lawyers to promote noble ideals, some Nigerian lawyers sought to register a professional association of lawyers

³ Tosin Osasona, 'National Bar Associations In Sub-Saharan Africa And The Promotion Of International Criminal Justice' (Academia)

<https://www.academia.edu/23186148/NATIONAL_BAR_ASSOCIATIONS_IN_SUB_SAHARAN_AFRICA_AND_THE_PROMOTION_OF_INTERNATIONAL_CRIMINAL_JUSTICE_Tosin_Osasona1> accessed 9 December 2024.

⁴ Hans Corell, 'The Role of Bar Associations in Promoting the Rule of Law and Defending Human Rights' (5 June 2019) Page 104 <https://www.advokatsamfundet.se/globalassets/advokatsamfundet_sv/corell-role-of-bar-associations-ur-vanbok-anne-ramberg-2019.pdf> accessed 9 December 2024.

⁵ 'Objectives – About the NLS' (Nigerian Law Society) <<https://nls.org.ng/about#spbb-tab1-3>> accessed 9 December 2024.

⁶ Stanley Alieke, 'Over 200,000 Lawyers In Nigeria But The Sky Is Big Enough For Every Lawyer To Fly' (Tekedia, 2024) <<https://www.tekedia.com/over-200000-lawyers-in-nigeria-but-the-sky-is-big-enough-for-every-lawyer-to-fly/>> accessed 9 December 2024.

named the “Nigerian Law Society” (NLS). The promoters of the NLS submitted applications for registration as an incorporated trustee. However, the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), based on certain interventions, refused to approve/register the name “Nigerian Law Society” and other proposed names claiming, among others, that the names are similar to the already existing name “Nigerian Bar Association” and would be misleading.

Following this refusal, the promoters of the NLS filed a suit at the Federal High Court of Nigeria⁷ against the CAC seeking, among other reliefs, declarations that the refusal of the CAC to register the NLS is unlawful, illegal and unconstitutional and a breach of the fundamental rights to peaceful assembly and association under Section 40 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), Article 10 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

At the trial court, judgment was delivered on Friday, December 15, 2023, in favour of the promoters of the NLS.⁸ The Court held that the body sought to be registered is in line with the rights to peaceful assembly and association which do not violate any extant law. The Court further held that the names proposed by the promoters of the NLS are not identical to that of the NBA, thus, there is no justification for the refusal to register the body. However, the CAC has appealed the judgment and the NBA has sought leave to appeal as an interested party against the judgment of the Federal High Court. This is all that can be highlighted, as the matter is *subjudice* before the Court of Appeal of Nigeria.

Interestingly, while the immediate past President of the NBA⁹ sought leave for the NBA to appeal as an interested party against the judgment of the Federal High Court, opposing the formation or continued existence of NLS, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the NBA¹⁰ published some public interest statements to the effect that the NLS has the fundamental right to exist and function. The respected Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the NBA stated, among others, thus:¹¹

“I don’t see why we can’t have more than one NBA. There’s no reason. The accountants have two. So, personally speaking, I’m

⁷ Chief Bolaji Ayorinde SAN & Others v. Corporate Affairs Commission (Suit Number: FHC/ABJ/CS/482/2023).

⁸ Judgment was delivered by Honourable Justice G. K. Olotu, sitting at the Federal High Court of Nigeria, Abuja.

⁹ Mr Yakubu Chonoko Maikyau, OON, SAN.

¹⁰ Dr Olisa Agbakoba, OON, SAN, FCI Arb.

¹¹ Onozure Dania and Solomon Odeniyi, ‘Ex-NBA president backs court on alternative lawyers’ association’ (Punch Newspaper, January 2024) <<https://punchng.com/ex-nba-president-backs-court-on-alternative-lawyers-association/>> accessed 9 December 2024.

not opposed to having more than one association of lawyers because the Constitution says that anyone is free to associate. It's a decision that has been supported by the constitution. ...

So, at the end of the day, it's not about whether it's only one NBA; it's about what the NBA does for its members. So I have nothing against having more than one body of lawyers.”

In addition, the Chairman¹² of the Body of Benchers of Nigeria,¹³ in an interview published by ThisDay Newspaper while he was the Vice-Chairman of the Body of Benchers of Nigeria,¹⁴ also legitimised the existence of the Nigerian Law Society as a body in line with the fundamental rights enshrined under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.¹⁵ The erudite Senior Advocate of Nigeria stated thus:

“The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria supports the formation of Associations, and freedom to be a member is guaranteed. I am aware that the Law Society of Nigeria is sponsored by eminent and respectable members of the legal profession. The Promoters, I understand, have made efforts to register the Association with the Corporate Affairs Commission, like the Nigerian Bar Association. I do not have any opinion of members of the Body of Benchers on this development, but I know that time will tell.

I do not see the Law Society of Nigeria as a rival body to the NBA. Rather, a body that will complement the NBA. In the United Kingdom, South Africa, United States and other countries, there are more than one body of persons as Association of Lawyers. They all play their required roles in the society. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is the grundnorm regulating rights to form and belong to Associations. So, anyone is free to belong to any Association of his/her choice. I believe the primary responsibility of any Lawyers' Association is the

¹² Asiwaju Adegboyega Awomolo, SAN.

¹³ The Body of Benchers of Nigeria is the legal body of practitioners of the highest distinction in the legal profession in Nigeria.

¹⁴ Asiwaju Adegboyega Awomolo, SAN, 'There's No Splinter Body in the NBA' (ThisDay Newspaper, October 2023) <<https://triplenet.com.ng/documents/10@10@23@08@30@06.pdf>> accessed 9 December 2024.

¹⁵ 'There is no Splinter group in the NBA says Vice Chairman Body of Benchers Awomolo' (Triplenet.com.ng) <https://triplenet.com.ng/lawparliament/law_body.php?myId=4549&myView=2776> accessed 9 December 2024.

promotion of the Rule of Law and safeguarding the fundamental rights of citizens.”

Furthermore, the Chairman of the Body of Benchers of Nigeria, in his address at the recent Call to Bar Ceremony held on November 27, 2024, while admonishing new wigs to actively participate in activities of the bar, further confirmed the existence of the Nigerian Law Society as an independent association. The Chairman of the Body of Benchers stated thus:¹⁶

“... I am aware of the Nigerian Law Society as an independent association ...”

It is pertinent to note that the NLS is not in competition with the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA). Rather, the NLS adds its own unique value to the legal profession in Nigeria and thus, is a supplement to the NBA. The NLS and the NBA should be seen as brothers working towards the advancement of the legal profession in Nigeria. This is in line with the position in many jurisdictions around the world, where legal practitioners are not confined to a single law society or bar association, and have the freedom to belong to multiple umbrella law-related associations.

The Nigerian Law Society and Its Impact on the Nigerian Society

The motto of NLS which is “*Justice for All*” and its vision and/or mission “*to be the foremost professional organization of Lawyers dedicated to upholding the rule of law, promoting justice, and safeguarding human rights and interests of the Nigerian people*”, serve as clear indication of the roles played by NLS in the Nigerian Society.

In upholding the rule of law, for example, the NLS has publicly advocated for measures that condemn disregard to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, or abuse of public office by individuals or groups. Perhaps, the most obvious way by which the NLS undertakes this work is by generating educative materials which outline procedures for what should or should not be done and the mechanisms for giving effect to such procedures in the event of any perceived breach.

To promote justice, the NLS has from time to time set up committees that render pro bono legal services to the indigent, who do not have the financial capacity to seek redress in court, and the NLS has in the past and currently, also advocated for speedy

¹⁶ Address By Chief Adegboyega Solomon Awomolo, SAN, Life Bencher, Chairman, Body Of Benchers At The Call To Bar Ceremony Held At The Benchers Complex, Abuja, On Wednesday, 27th November, 2024 (Pages 8 to 9).

trial of all cases before all courts in Nigeria, because delayed justice may equally translate into denial of justice. The NLS also advocates for reforms in laws, judicial systems, and procedures to ensure fairness, efficiency, and justice. The society actively engages with lawmakers and policymakers to address gaps in legal frameworks through lobbying for the independence of the judiciary and observing judicial proceedings, in order to ensure free and fair trial of all cases in all courts in Nigeria. It also defends the independence of the Judiciary, without which justice cannot be guaranteed; and this role is achieved by acting as watchdogs and pressure groups on the Executive and Legislature to safeguard the independence of the Judiciary from political and other undue influences.

In upholding human rights, the NLS champions fundamental rights, such as freedom of association, freedom of speech, fair trials, and protection from discrimination. The Society mobilizes lawyers to challenge human rights violations and unconstitutional laws by resisting attempts to undermine judicial processes and promoting impartial adjudication. The Society also provides platforms for public interest litigation to challenge injustice and promote societal interests. Lawyers under the Society's leadership often initiate cases that address systemic issues like corruption, human rights abuses, and environmental concerns.

The NLS, in its short period of existence, has contributed significantly to the advancement of our dear country, Nigeria, in a plethora of ways. In its quest to promote excellence, professionalism, and the rule of law in Nigeria, the NLS has developed a Policy Agenda, as follows:

a) Access To Justice:

The NLS is committed to promoting equal access to justice for all Nigerians, and its work in this regard comprises the following:¹⁷

- i) Advocacy and lobbying for legal aid funding policies.
- ii) Promoting access to justice for Indigenous people.
- iii) Addressing access to justice issues in rural and remote areas.
- iv) Conducting a biennial Access to Justice and Pro Bono Conference.
- v) Supporting pro bono legal work.

b) Advancing the Profession:

The Policy Agenda of the NLS on 'Advancing the Profession' aims to promote excellence and professionalism in the legal profession, and to support the

¹⁷ 'Access to Justice – Policy Agenda' (Nigerian Law Society) <<https://nls.org.ng/policy-agenda>> accessed 9 December 2024.

growth and development of legal practitioners in Nigeria. The work of the NLS in this area includes:¹⁸

- i) Continuing Legal Education (CLE).
- ii) Mentorship and Professional Development.
- iii) Standards and Ethics.
- iv) Advocacy and Policy Development.

c) Criminal Law and National Security:

The NLS aims to promote a fair and effective criminal justice system, while also protecting the national security interests of our country. The work of the NLS in this area includes:¹⁹

- i) Advocacy and Reform.
- ii) Legal Aid and Support.
- iii) Capacity Building.
- iv) Research and Advocacy.

d) Human Rights:

The NLS aims to promote respect for human rights and the rule of law, and to hold government and other actors accountable for human rights violations. The work of the NLS in this area includes:²⁰

- i) Advocacy and Reform.
- ii) Human Rights Monitoring.
- iii) Legal Aid and Support.
- iv) Capacity Building.
- v) Research and Advocacy.

e) International Law

The NLS is committed to promoting and upholding the principles of international law, and to advocating for policies and practices that promote peace, security, and development around the world. The work of the NLS in this regard focuses on:²¹

- i) International Human Rights Law.
- ii) International Criminal Law.
- iii) International Trade Law.

¹⁸ 'Advancing the Profession – Policy Agenda' (Nigerian Law Society) <<https://nls.org.ng/policy-agenda/advancing-the-profession>> accessed 9 December 2024.

¹⁹ 'Criminal Law and National Security – Policy Agenda' (Nigerian Law Society) <<https://nls.org.ng/policy-agenda/criminal-law-and-national-security>> accessed 9 December 2024.

²⁰ 'Human Rights – Policy Agenda' (Nigerian Law Society) <<https://nls.org.ng/policy-agenda/human-rights>> accessed 9 December 2024.

²¹ 'International Law – Policy Agenda' (Nigerian Law Society) <<https://nls.org.ng/policy-agenda/international-law>> accessed 9 December 2024.

- iv) International Environmental Law.
- v) International Humanitarian Law.

f) Regulation of the Profession and Ethics:

The NLS is committed to promoting and upholding the principles of legal profession regulation and ethics. The work of the NLS in this regard focuses on:²²

- i) Legal Profession Regulation.
- ii) Ethics and Professional Conduct.
- iii) Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing.

From the foregoing, the role of the NLS to the Nigerian Society will be discussed under the following headings:

- a) Promotion of the Standards of the Legal Profession.
- b) Enhancement of Administration of Justice and Access to Justice.
- c) Advocacy for Human Rights.
- d) Facilitating Good Governance and Respect for the Rule of Law.
- e) Promotion of Welfare of Legal Practitioners.

A. Promotion of the Standards of the Legal Profession

The need for legal practitioners to abide by the essential hallmarks of professionalism in legal practice cannot be overemphasised, and the NLS stands as a vanguard for promoting these professional standards.

The Continuing Legal Education (CLE) programs of the NLS help to equip lawyers with cutting-edge knowledge, enhancing their professional development. These programs cover a range of topics, from updates on new laws and regulations to best practices in litigation, dispute resolution and other practice areas. Additionally, the NLS enforces rigorous professional conduct guidelines to promote ethical behaviour. Furthermore, the NLS fosters a culture of mentorship, by pairing experienced lawyers with junior practitioners, thereby promoting knowledge sharing and skill development.

B. Enhancement of Administration of Justice and Access to Justice

The responsibility of the justice system is enormous as it involves the resolution of disputes involving social and moral questions of great importance to society. The

²² 'Regulation of the Profession and Ethics – Policy Agenda' (Nigerian Law Society) <<https://nls.org.ng/policy-agenda/regulation-of-the-profession-and-ethics>> accessed 9 December 2024.

public therefore expects an effective judicial system that can meet the demands of modern democratic society. It is widely believed that the efficacy of any judicial system is gauged by its capacity to provide timely and appropriate justice to parties in a dispute.

Unfortunately, the Nigerian Justice System cannot boast of such effectiveness. The most serious indictment of the Nigerian justice system is that it takes too long and costs too much. Generally, the backlog of undecided cases becomes an impasse for the even flow and orderly disposition of cases because the cases keep piling up and the time between filing of a lawsuit to ultimate disposition keeps increasing.

Closely linked to the vicious circle of backlog and delays, another indicator of the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the administration of justice is limited access to justice. Generally, in Nigeria, the law is discriminatory, while the legal processes are expensive, slow and complex. The result is that people, and particularly the poor and vulnerable, have inadequate and unequal access to justice through the formal legal system. In addition to delay and difficulty in accessing justice, other challenges include a lack of transparency and predictability in court decisions and shortages of resources. The consequential effect of these collective problems is a weak public confidence in the Nigerian judicial system.²³

The NLS advocates for judicial reform and modernized court processes and procedures. The NLS also encourages alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, like mediation and arbitration. By providing free or subsidized legal services, the NLS helps to provide accessible justice for vulnerable populations. In addition, the NLS aims to collaborate with judicial institutions to enhance court infrastructure and technology, improving efficiency and reducing delays.

C. Advocacy for Human Rights

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination. International human rights law lays down the obligations of Governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups.²⁴

²³ Halima Doma, 'Enhancing Justice Administration in Nigeria through Information and Communications Technology' (John Marshall Journal on Information Technology & Privacy Law, 2016)

<<https://repository.law.uic.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1786&context=jitpl>> accessed 9 December 2024.

²⁴ 'Human Rights' (United Nations)<<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights>> accessed 9 December 2024.

The NLS contributes to promoting and preserving the human rights of Nigerian citizens by providing legal assistance and representation to individuals whose rights have been, are being or are likely to be violated. This entails offering these legal services directly or supporting organizations that offer such services.

The NLS also aims to collaborate with or support non-governmental organisations (NGOs), other entities and individuals focused on human rights and public interest work. This includes providing resources, funding, expertise, and networks to enhance the work of these organisations, both at the governmental and grass-roots level. The NLS also aims to monitor the actions of governments and pressure them to act according to human rights principles.²⁵

The goal of monitoring the human rights situation within a country is to document and provide redress for human rights violations that have taken place and to promote reform of laws, policies and practices that will prevent human rights violations from occurring. Through such monitoring and reporting, the NLS can draw the attention of the government to situations in any part of the country where human rights are violated and make proposals to it for initiatives to put an end to such situations and, where necessary, express an opinion on the positions and reactions of the government. The NLS can also monitor human rights compliance in relation to certain events, such as political protests, demonstrations and elections. This monitoring can help promote compliance with human rights standards, for example, by police or security officials.²⁶

The NLS also aims to create awareness about human rights issues and legal remedies by organizing conferences, seminars, workshops and publishing materials to foster the notion of respect for human rights and inform citizens about their rights and legal protections.²⁷

D. Facilitating Good Governance and Respect for the Rule of Law

The rule of law is the legal principle that law should govern a nation as opposed to being governed by arbitrary decisions of individual government officials. It primarily refers to the influence and authority of law within society, particularly as a constraint

²⁵ 'Human Rights Organizations' (United for Human Rights) <<https://www.humanrights.com/voices-for-human-rights/human-rights-organizations/non-governmental.html>> accessed 9 December 2024.

²⁶ 'Responsibilities of NHRIs: Monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation' (Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions) <<https://ganhri.org/monitoring-and-reporting-nhris/>> accessed 9 December 2024.

²⁷ Jeremy Gauntlett SC, 'The role of Bar Associations in fostering the rule of law', Speech delivered at the 12th Commonwealth Law Conference, Malaysia, September 1999.

upon behaviour, including behaviour of government officials. The rule of law implies that every citizen is subject to the law, including lawmakers themselves.

The law plays an important role as the tool of social control because the violation of the law implies punishment of offenders. The society becomes a jungle in the absence of law. Actions and inactions are not accounted for. Man therefore reserves the latitude to decide the trend his relationship with other members of the society and even his environment will follow. Put differently, the resultant effect of man's actions and activities will be left at his whims and caprices. Law serves to regulate and set an acceptable standard for economic, social, cultural and even human personal relationships and the impact of activities arising from these relationships on the society generally and its members.²⁸

The NLS aims to facilitate good governance and respect for the rule of law in Nigeria, through its laudable activities such as advocacy for law reform and initiatives geared towards strengthening of democratic institutions. These initiatives help to promote transparency and accountability, foster ethical conduct among public officials, and ensure rule of law adherence.

E. Promotion of Welfare of Legal Practitioners

The duty of legal practitioners demands sharp critical thinking, adaptability, and an unwavering ability to perform under pressure. Thus, to guarantee optimal performance within the Nigerian society, it is vital to prioritize the welfare of lawyers.

The NLS aids lawyers in achieving balance by prioritizing mental health, wellness, and stress support of its members and legal practitioners in general. In addition, the NLS advocates for better working conditions, fair compensation, and social benefits for legal practitioners. Furthermore, the community building among lawyers in the NLS promotes networking and camaraderie, with resources and guidance for navigating professional challenges.

²⁸ Arthur Obi Okafor SAN, '21st Century Legal Profession And Its Social Responsibility Paradigm' (AJLHR, 2018) <<https://journals.ezenwaohaetorc.org/index.php/AJLHR/article/viewFile/530/493>> accessed 9 December 2024.

Concluding Remarks

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the civil rights activist, once said:

“Whatever your life’s work is, do it well. A man should do his job so well that the living, the dead, and the unborn could do it no better.”

The role of the lawyer whether in practice before the Court or in offering legal advice has always been to jealously defend the law and to use his or her courage, passion and integrity to push for necessary law reforms for the purpose of improvement in various spheres of the society. The role of the lawyer generally entails helping the society to achieve orderliness, peaceful co-existence and the protection of the fundamental rights of members of the society. The legal profession is one of the instruments vide which the society is planned and the general pattern of behaviour or norms of members of the society regulated. Suffice it to state that legal professionals are not only concerned with the stimulation of the courtroom contest but they also perform, promote and advocate socially responsible acts amongst themselves as professionals for the benefit of the wider society.²⁹

In the same vein, the NLS, being a community of legal practitioners, is committed to the advancement of the Nigerian society as evidenced by its multifaceted role discussed above. Through its tireless efforts, selfless service and invaluable contributions, the NLS has earned its place as an indispensable asset to the Nigerian society.

Finally, I leave us with the wise words of Janet Reno, the first female and 78th Attorney General of the United States of America, thus:

“Being a lawyer is not merely a vocation. It is a public trust, and each of us has an obligation to give back to our communities.”

Thank you for your attention.

²⁹ Arthur Obi Okafor SAN, ‘21st Century Legal Profession And Its Social Responsibility Paradigm’ (AJLHR, 2018) <<https://journals.ezenwaohaetorc.org/index.php/AJLHR/article/viewFile/530/493>> accessed 9 December 2024.