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HEDG'S REMARKS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, CHILD ABUSE AND SEXUAL OFFENCES. 13:06:2014.

PROTOCOLS

I felicitate with the members of the National Association of Women Judges of Nigeria (NAWJIN) South West Zone. I congratulate and salute your courage for hosting the first Global Leadership of Women (GLOW) Conference.

I equally appreciate and thank you for using this platform which is a not-for-profit and non-governmental to further promote justice, equity, truth and fairness in our society.

I commend the Chief Judge of Lagos State, our reliable, resourceful, responsible and energetic

Lady of Lagos who is the Chief Host of the Conference.

The theme 'Justice for All' chosen for this Conference is indeed most relevant to seek and demand justice for all, and particularly for the poor and victims of Domestic violence, child abuse, rape as well as sexual harassments. It is also most appropriate using this forum to call on all stakeholders, for joint and united actions to end this scourge, threatening to decapitate our society.

For the sake of our children and other stakeholders in the society, let me briefly emphasize again that domestic violence is an intentional and persistent maltreatment, abuse of anyone in the home in a way that causes pain, distress or injury. It also refers to any

abusive treatment of one family member by another, thus violating the law of basic human rights.

Violence against women could be sexual, physical, psychological, emotional, economic, and spiritual among others that tend to lower the self-esteem, causes trauma, stress and injuries to the person and psyche.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, about 1.3 million women are assaulted by an intimate partner every year, and 25 percent of women will experience violence in their life time, meaning that 1.3 million of our women who should enjoy love, care, protection, cooperation, encouragement, support and happiness with their partners(spouses) are assaulted every year.

And that 25% of our women will still experience same in their life time.

A 2007 report published by Amnesty International confirmed that a third (and in some cases two-thirds) of women are believed to have been subjected to physical, sexual and psychological violence carried out primarily by husbands, partners, fathers, uncles, cousins, relations and guardians or male colleagues.

Domestic violence causes psychological pains than the visible marks of bruises and scars. The experience lives with the victims for a life time. For how long will this ugly trend continue? It is still quite unfortunate that in spite of government's efforts on the legal instruments, advocacy and sensitization, the perpetrators seem to be increasing by the day. I am aware

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that in 2012, rape was among the cases that dominated the Magistrate Courts in the country.

We therefore need more of public enlightenment and aggressive sensitization which must be taken to our schools, market places, hospitals, churches, mosques and at social events. We must involve our religious leaders, traditional rulers, Community Development Associations, parents, guardians and all other stakeholders to join hands with the Government to end these unacceptable, intolerable acts.

The Child Rights Law and the Protection Against Domestic Violence Law were passed to protect our girls and women. Also, the introduction of the Simplified Copy of the Laws and the Yellow cards were designed to promote advocacy and

sensitization for easy understanding of the Laws. It is however unfortunate that many people in our society, even legal practitioners are ignorant of these laws.

Parents and guardians especially, the mothers are advised to be more vigilant, available and co-operative to protect their girl-child, and to also report cases of rape, assaults and any form of abuse to Law enforcement agencies when they occur. We should not allow these cases to be swept under the carpet for any reason. If these perpetrators are not reported, exposed and prosecuted, they would not stop the inhumane acts. We must all break the culture of keeping silent on rape cases and violence.

One of our Law enforcement spokes persons, Damastus Ozoani once reported that parents of

most rape victims are always afraid to report incidents because of the fear that the police may expose the identity of the victims and the fear of stigmatization!. This must STOP, if we all desire a united action to stop the ugly trend. The perpetrators must be exposed and brought to book, as there is a tendency for rapists or sex offenders to commit more rape acts, and it could be my child, your child or grandchildren. So prosecuting them will serve as deterrents to others.

Our Law Enforcement Agencies, particularly the Police are implored to please cooperate with the citizens by ensuring that perpetrators are brought to book to face the full wrath of the law. You should create a positive atmosphere to instill confidence, trust and encourage citizens

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to report cases of violence or sexual assault freely with your protection and maximum support. All our police stations **MUST** have dedicated officers who are specially trained to effectively handle domestic violence, abuse and all related sexual offences.

The Judiciary remains the hope of the common man. We must continue to have confidence in our courts through the legal instruments to help expose and prosecute the perpetrators. We also need to know how well our family courts are helping in reducing this crime rate through the prosecution of offenders. Do we need to strengthen or increase the number of the family courts? What are the related challenges? Do we need a review of the existing laws? Or what other measures does the government need to

put in place to assist? We would require adequate feedback from the Judiciary to determine and assess the level of progress.

I have always posited that with the increase in rape cases and domestic violence against women, is perhaps the need to make psychiatric test compulsory for some men, especially the perpetrators as part of the routine check because I notice sociopathic tendencies in some men, a situation where a father impregnates his own daughter or a blood brother impregnates his sister or an uncle impregnating his cousin cannot be explained and calls for concern.

Government in Lagos State will continue to intensify its efforts with your full cooperation as stakeholders. We will be ready to give

maximum support, encouragement and empower more people to understand that violence against women *“degrades us all”*. All of us must know that violence against women is *“a peace and security issue. It is both human right and development issues”*. We must therefore rise up; play our roles to protect the rights and integrity of women and the girl-child.

I appreciate the members of the National Association of Women Judges of Nigeria (NAWJN) South West Zone. I also appreciate your efforts and commitment for raising the tempo of advocacy and public enlightenment, considered as an instrument towards ensuring adequate protection, welfare and full development of our girls and women.

“I will be raising my voice, and I count on all of you to join the chorus demanding justice and action to end this intolerable act.”

I wish you a fruitful deliberation, please enjoy your stay in Lagos, the state of good and happy people and feel the fresh breeze from the Atlantic.

Eko O Ni Baje O!

He Adejoke Orelope – Adefulire,

Deputy Governor, Lagos state.

13th June, 2014.