



NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION

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24 March 2020

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – RELEASE II

1. The Nigerian Bar Association (“NBA”) appreciates and thanks the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Honorable Justice (Dr.) Ibrahim Tanko Muhammad, CFR for his circular of yesterday, 23 March 2020, directing “all Heads of Courts”, with effect from today, “the 24th day of March 2020 . . . to suspend Court sittings for an initial period of two weeks at the first instance, except in matters that are urgent, essential or time bound according to . . . extant laws.” In our initial release on the COVID-19 pandemic on 22 March 2020, we had indicated that the NBA “will be immediately consulting with the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Honorable Justice (Dr.) Ibrahim Tanko Muhammad, CFR and the various Heads of Courts, notably at the Federal level, on how best to address the COVID-19 pandemic *vis-à-vis* our courts and their users”. We followed up on that commitment and we are pleased that our efforts, as earlier stated, has yielded the desired results.

2. I must also commend our various Branches and Sections that have canceled planned meetings and programs as a pre-emptive measure to prevent contracting or spreading COVID-19 diseases amongst our members and guests. We must be extra cautious in these moments of global distress and therefore advise all our members to be safe and follow all the advisories of the Federal and State Governments, the World Health Organization and the Nigeria Center for Disease Control on the measures to institute in order to forestall contracting or spreading the virus. As we pointed out in our Release I on the COVID-19 Pandemic, these dark days . . . will pass” and “we will survive the pandemic”. We “must not panic nor lose hope”.

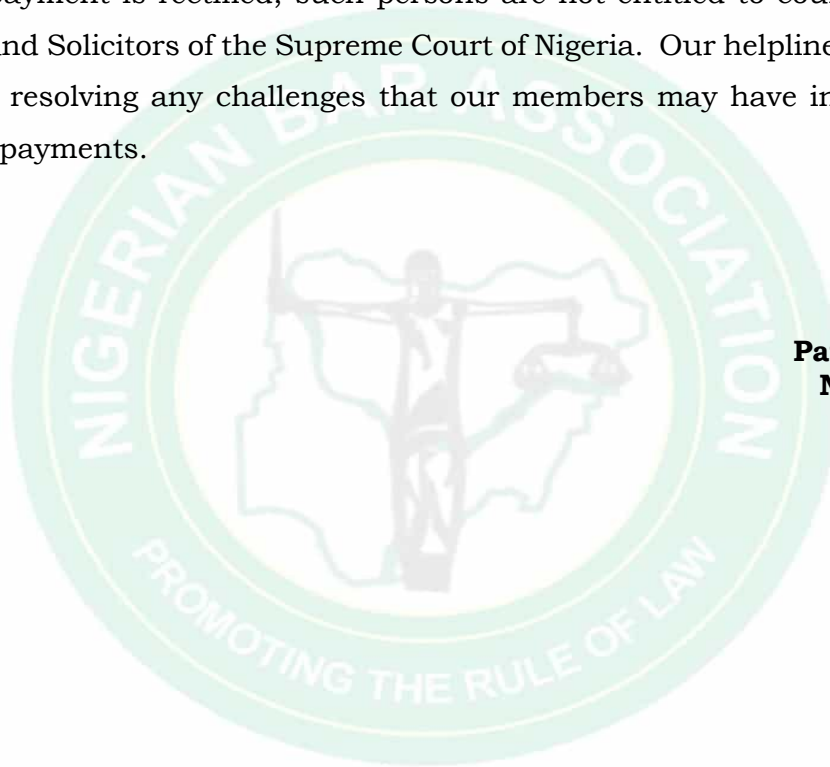
3. Meanwhile, we recognize that the stay-home orders that have literally been forced on all of us by the circumstances of COVID-19 may make it difficult if not impossible for some of our members who wished or planned to physically visit Bank branches and manually pay their Bar Practicing Fees (“BPF”). The remedy is to make

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the payments online. This option remains feasible and open 24 hours and 7 days of the week up to 31 March 2020. Can the BPF be paid by our members beyond that deadline? Yes, of course, but with consequences: such late payments, for example, may make persons ineligible to vote or be voted for in NBA Elections and until the default in payment is rectified, such persons are not entitled to court audience as Barristers and Solicitors of the Supreme Court of Nigeria. Our helplines remain open to assist in resolving any challenges that our members may have in making their BPF online payments.



Paul Usoro, SAN
NBA President