



Federal Ministry of Justice

ENSURE EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL, AGF TASKS LEGAL AID COUNCIL

...LAUDS ACCESS TO JUSTICE FUND INITIATIVE

The Honourable Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami, SAN has charged the Legal Aid Council to ensure equal access to justice for all irrespective of means and that Constitutional rights of citizens are respected, protected and defended. The AGF made the call in Kano while declaring open a two-day Legal Aid Governing Board Retreat with the theme “The Role of the Governing Board in the Corporate Governance: Providing Strategic Direction towards Achieving the Mandate of the Legal Aid Council”.

In a statement, the Special Assistant on Media and Public Relations to the AGF, Dr. Umar Jibrilu Gwandu, said the Minister further charged Board Members of the Council to keep themselves abreast with the extant laws.

According to the AGF, the policies of the Council must retain the force of facilitating its core objectives which includes the provision of pro-bono legal services to indigent, economically deficient and less privileged Nigerians.

He said the services of Legal Aid Council are geared towards reducing, to the barest minimum, incidents of Human Rights abuses perpetrated against nation’s citizens.

The statement partly reads: “The Board’s policies must assist the Council to remain the leading and pro-active provider of free, qualitative and timely legal aid services in Nigeria, ensuring social justice and the emancipation of the oppressed, reprieve to the weak and vulnerable, thereby giving voice to the voiceless,”.

According to Malami, such steps would enable the Board to bear allegiance to the motto of the Council: “Giving Voice to the Voiceless” while maintaining the Council’s Mission mantra: “To ensure free, effective and efficient legal aid services to indigents in Nigeria.”

He assured the Council of the commitment of the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Federal Ministry of Justice in supporting activities of the Council aimed at providing strategic direction in achieving its mandates, adding that his Office in conjunction with the Management of the Legal Aid Council have duly concluded all the requisite legal arrangements for the launch of the “ACCESS TO JUSTICE FUND”, a Fund duly provided for under the Legal Aid Act, 2011, which is a unique national fund aimed to raise funds for the assistance of legal aid works in Nigeria.

The Minister who expressed appreciation over the cordial working relationship between the Council and the Federal Ministry of Justice being the Supervisory Ministry of the Council, cited Paragraphs 1 (iii) and (iv) of the Federal Government Circular Ref No. SGF/OP/1/S.3/T.1/142 dated 2nd August, 1999 which provides that “the Ministry is not to take over the running of the Parastatals/Government-owned Companies under them by getting involved in their day to day management, and that Ministers are not expected to serve as Chairmen of Boards of Parastatals and Government-owned Companies under their Ministries”.

He also commended the Council for releasing thirty-one (31) of its Law Officers for the terrorism trial of Boko-Haram members which, he said provided the requisite legal defence in the trial.