



## Federal Ministry of Justice

### **LOCALISING THE ENGAGEMENT OF OUR LAWYERS HAS IMMENSELY BUILD THEIR CAPACITY-MALAMI**

The Honorable Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice (HAGF), Abubakar Malami SAN, has said that localizing the engagement of the Ministry Lawyers has immensely built their capacity. The Minister revealed this during the 2020 Budget Defense before the House Committee on Justice on Thursday, November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at the House of Representatives, National Assembly, Abuja. Answering questions to ascertain if the Ministry engages external Solicitors, the HAGF said the ministry has resulted into engaging the Lawyers in the Ministry. According to him, the decision was made to develop the Lawyers and also to stop out cases to external Lawyers, in order not to attract huge burden to the Ministry and for the government. He said the office of Attorney General has over 815 Lawyers and they are engaged to provide services through their advocacy.

Malami explained that on assumption of office as the Attorney General of the Federation, there were lots of legal Services outstanding of about N17 billion that was unpaid for and judgment fees that could not be paid for because of the retention of the provision in the template. As a result, he felt that there was no justification to continue attracting professional fees when he has over 815 in Attorney General's Chamber and the Ministry has no capacity for such fees. He further explained that the decision since 2015 till date has yielded success not only in building capacity but have been able to prosecute cases within the Ministry of Justice Lawyers. "So localizing the engagement of our lawyers has immensely built their capacity and has saved ourselves of the trouble of money to pay the professional fees, but that does not mean that we have outlawed entirely the possibility of farming out cases but it is certainly on essential basis "he explained.

He cited example that, international arbitration could be engaged and in some cases where external capacity, a lawyer from the Office of the

Attorney -General or a Nigeria Lawyer cannot go out to UK and stood for a Case like Asset Recovery in such of limited circumstances, the possibility of engaging external Lawyer would be considered. “The prime drivers in any given maturing democracy such as ours are Rule of Law, Due Process of the Law, Human Right, International Obligations and Allied Matter. Evidence reveals that Administration of Justice which guarantees sustainable peace, equity and fair play is undeniable capital intensives. In the circumstances we need to reconceptualise the existing funding pattern of the Justice Sub-sector” he explained.

The Minister, while soliciting for support of the Honorable Members of NASS for justice sub-sectors, said all the Parastatals under the purview of the Ministry are in dire need of funding which he described as dangerous as it is disturbing because funding gaps in the face of competing challenges could endanger effective administration of justice, and unwarranted travesty of justice. He also solicited funds for the Presidential Committee on Correctional Reform and decongestion to enable them to continue the good work they have started. Speaking on the looted assets recovery, Malami said, the Ministry had made appreciable recovery and that the monies recovered were promptly deposited into government treasury for effects. He informed that presently, efforts are still ongoing to ensure that the ministry is giving some requisite commissions stemming from recovered funds to bankroll the recovery operations. “To date there are quantum of illicit sums of money stashed abroad for which we are working at close quarters with the ICPC and the EFCC as dependable allies largely to effect recovery “he affirmed. He finally appealed for more refreshing feeling of common bond between the Justice Sub-sector and all the Honorable Members of the National Assembly for a seamless administration of Justice in Nigeria.

Malami said the 2020 was repleted with fair and unfair challenges arising from competing needs and demands especially given the Covid-19 pandemic challenges. He explained, “in the face of scarce but allocatable resources and granted the fact that the Justice Sub-sector superintends over the rule of law, it is hereby reasoned that we reconceptualise the Justice architecture in tandem with the vital role

of Justice Delivery and administration in a heterogeneous society such as ours”. In his opening remarks, the Chairman House Committee on Justice, Hon. Ugonna Ozurigbo said, they are aware of the importance of Budget to any nation, hence the need to give it the attention and seriousness it deserves which can never be over emphasized. “In view of the strategic nature of this Ministry, I want to presume that while the accountants in charge of the budget have done their best to balance the mathematical accuracy of the figures, the lawyers at the Ministry must have done substantial justice to the documents before the committee” he mentioned

Ugonna said, the Committee, prior to the exercise visited some agencies under FMOJ for an oversight to have a firsthand information on the state of affairs of the organizations and that the oversight visit would guide their deliberation for an inclusive consideration of the Ministry and sub-sectors proposal.