



# International Law Association

*Nigerian Branch*

**TEXT OF THE ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL LAW ASSOCIATION, NIGERIAN BRANCH, PROFESSOR DAMILOLA S. OLAWUYI, SAN, FCIARB, DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY APRIL 19, 2023 AT THE 6<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE NIGERIAN BRANCH OF THE INTERNATIONAL LAW ASSOCIATION**

## **Protocols:**

The immediate past President of the International Law Association (Nigerian Branch), Professor Fidelis Oditah, KC, SAN  
Our Distinguished Keynote Speaker, Dr. Edward Kwakwa,  
Assistant Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Geneva  
My Lords, Honorable Members of the Bench  
Patrons of the ILA Nigerian Branch  
Distinguished Senior Advocates of Nigeria here present  
Members of the Conference Organizing Committee  
Distinguished members of the Press  
Ladies and Gentlemen

## **Introduction**

I am highly delighted and honored to stand before you today as the President of the Nigerian Branch of the International Law Association. What a great honour, what a wonderful day!

The event of today is a remarkable evidence of the power of vision and unity. As you may already know, the International

Law Association was founded in Brussels in 1873 to promote “the study, clarification and development of international law, both public and private.”

For many years, Nigerian international law experts have played significant roles in the clarification and development of public and private international law. It was therefore a big surprise that there was no branch of the ILA in Nigeria for several years. In 2014, a group of passionate and dedicated lawyers under the able guidance and leadership of Professor Fidelis Oditah, KC, SAN decided to fill this gap by establishing a Nigerian Branch that will demonstrate Nigeria’s preeminent role in international law and diplomacy to the rest of the world. That insightful decision, that vision, that determination, is why we are here today.

Since 2014 when our Branch was inaugurated by the then Chief Justice of Nigeria, Hon. Justice Aloma Mariam Mukhtar CON, CFR, FNIALS, GCON, the Branch has maintained its leadership role as the authoritative voice on international law and practice in Nigeria and Africa.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our pioneer president Professor Fidelis Oditah, KC, SAN for his outstanding, courageous, and meritorious service to the Branch for nine years. Personally, it has been one of the greatest privileges of my life and career to have been able to serve as his Vice President in those nine years and to have been able to learn from his remarkable wealth of experience. I also thank all other members of the immediate past EXCO for their devotion to the Association.

As my first executive act as President, I am pleased to announce the establishment of the **Professor Fidelis Oditah Prize in International Law** in his honour, effective immediately. This Prize will provide full sponsorship to one or more young members of the Branch to attend global ILA conferences, starting with the one in Paris, France this June. All interested young members should please watch out on our social media pages for announcements on how to win this prestigious prize.

The Professor Fidelis Oditah Prize in International Law is just one out of the many more initiatives that we will be announcing in the next few weeks. The new Executive Council is highly committed to the task of propelling our Branch to the desired next level of global impact. It is no accident at all that our country has produced three former judges of the International Court of Justice; several members of the International Law Commission; several United Nations (UN) Independent Experts and Rapporteurs; and several executive heads of UN Agencies amongst others.

By accentuating rigorous **research, publications, training, and public dialogue** we have yet another real chance to relive that proud history, and produce the next Charles Onyeama, JSC, the next Professor Teslim Elias, SAN the next Prince Bola Ajibola, SAN and of course the next Chief Bayo Ojo, SAN, a former Attorney General of the Federation and member of the International Law Commission, who we will have the pleasure of learning from tonight at the inaugural President's Dinner and Award Night.

International Law has become ever so important in light of the complex challenges facing our current world. Ranging from the problem of climate change, Russian invasion of Ukraine, the associated water, energy and food poverty in many parts of Africa, and the complex challenge of maximizing the full value of intellectual property and modern technologies in a manner that respects and fulfils international law standards amongst others.

We need vibrant and talented Africans, like our guest speaker of today, Dr. Edward Kwakwa, who will dedicate themselves to propagating Africa's interest at the global stage. The ILA is open to lawyers and non-lawyers who are interested in a career in international law. We welcome lawyers in private practice, academics, government officials, members of the judiciary, and non-lawyer experts from sciences, engineering, commercial, industrial and financial spheres and representatives of bodies to

join us and become proactive agents of international law and global affairs.

### **Conclusion**

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude my remarks by thanking all members of the Conference Organizing Committee, most especially the Chairman, Mofesomo Tayo Oyetibo, my Vice President Oludayo Olorunfemi, the Secretary General Clement Osuya, Keji Kolawole, Abraham Adeniran, Tosin Majekodunmi, our award-winning moderator Shola Soyele and several others for their tireless commitment and hard work without which this conference would not have been possible.

I also thank all our Sponsors, invited speakers and panelists for honoring our invitation and for partnering with us on this history and epoch-making Conference.

I thank you all and I look forward to working with you again for next year's conference.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Damilola S. Olawuyi', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Professor Damilola S. Olawuyi, SAN, FCI Arb**  
President, International Law Association, Nigerian Branch