



**NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION**  
**NBA HOUSE, PLOT 1101, OFF MUHAMMED BUHARI WAY, CBD, ABUJA**  
**ELECTORAL COMMITTEE OF THE NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION**  
**(ECNBA)**

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**ECNBA PRESS STATEMENT NO. 003**

**NBA NATIONAL ELECTIONS 2020 – THE JOURNEY SO FAR**

**1.0 PREAMBLE**

The Nigerian Bar Association is set for a change of leadership of its national Executive this year 2020 as the tenure of the present elected national officers of the association is due to expire and their offices become vacant by August 2020. It is preparatory to their exit that the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Association, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, appointed the Electoral Committee of the Nigerian Bar Association (ECNBA) to midwife the process of electing new officers to pilot the affairs of the Association for another two (2) years. Membership of this Committee includes:

- i. Tawo E. Tawo SAN - Chairman
- ii. Abdullahi Haruna SAN - Member
- iii. Prof. Augustine Agom - Member
- iv. Mr. Alozie Echeonwu - Member
- v. Cordelia U. Eke (Mrs.) - Secretary

The ECNBA started work immediately upon its inauguration and has continued to carry out its assignment regardless of the challenges of the global COVID-19 pandemic, with the members committed to delivering on the mandate of the committee in the best interest of the Association and the legal profession. It had been the intention of the committee to hold periodic conferences and interactive sessions with stakeholders as progress is being made on the assignment, however, we are constrained to make do with Press releases/statements in the light of the present restrictions on public gatherings and travels for safety and health reasons. It is hoped that this would be one of such press releases/briefings on the election process.

**2.0 THE ROLE OF LAWYERS**

Every member of our noble profession has a shared responsibility to protect the integrity of the electoral process by shunning any activity that would be subversive and counter-productive to this exercise and to ensure that other individuals or groups also abide by the rules of engagement for the elections. The ECNBA is convinced that if we all as members determine to change the narrative with respect to our elections and play fair, we shall have an election that will accord our profession its pride of place and set enviable standards for the Nigerian polity.

Candidates and their supporters are advised to abide by the rules provided for the campaigns as the ECNBA will do the needful and not hesitate to apply the relevant Constitutional provisions against any Aspirant or Supporter that is found to have fallen foul of them. Anyone in doubt pertaining to any electoral provision is at liberty to seek clarification from the ECNBA by sending an email using the address stated above.

### **3.0 ACTIVITIES THUS FAR**

Some activities embarked upon by the ECNBA thus far include the following:

- i. Publication of a Preliminary Notice of Elections
- ii. Publication of Election Guidelines
- iii. Call for Proposals on IT Consultancy for the election (e-voting)
- iv. Call for Branch Bar Dues Lists and National BPF list for Voters Register
- v. Publication of Nomination Forms on the NBA Website

### **4.0 ONGOING ACTIVITIES**

- i. Compilation of the Interim Voters Register
- ii. Screening of IT Proposals
- ii. Interview of IT Consultancy firms

### **5.0 HIGHLIGHTS OF ACTIVITIES**

#### **a) Election Platform**

There is no gainsaying that the success of the elections would depend to a large extent on the electronic or IT platform that would be deployed for the election. The need to procure such a platform has been a priority. The Committee was briefed that the NBA has its own e-voting platform/portal for elections developed by TAVIA, an IT firm. TAVIA was invited to brief the Committee in conjunction with the NBA IT Officer Umar Gezawa, on the said NBA election platform/portal. Further to the said briefing, the ECNBA decided that in spite of the advantages of such a portal, exploring the use of other viable e-voting platforms if necessary is

not foreclosed. As such there was the need to engage an independent IT Consultant that would examine the NBA portal and critique same, its integrity, functionality and suitability or otherwise for the purpose of the elections as well as advise on other options. The Consultant would also be required to identify avenues for possible threats, and advise on how to contain same. Other issues to be addressed include the training of staff and all those associated with handling any part of the e-voting process by the consultant. They would be expected to verify electronically, the votes cast at the end of the exercise.

Notwithstanding the above, the platform or portal to deploy for the election by the ECNBA would largely be dependent on the advice and report of the IT Consultant.

**b) Election Timetable**

The ECNBA, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2020 Published its Preliminary Notice of Elections as provide for in Section 8 (1)-(4) of the Constitution And Paragraph 1.5 of the Second Schedule of the Nigerian Bar Association Constitution 2015 (as amended). The publication effectively gives notice to members that the National Elections will hold on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of July 2020.

Thereafter on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2020, the Guideline for Elections was published by the ECNBA throwing more light on the modalities for the election and highlighting constitutional provisions on the eligibility of Candidates and Voters to participate in the electoral process.

Both publications can be accessed on the website of the Nigerian Bar Association

**c) Compilation of Voters Register**

The compilation of the register of eligible voters is one of the major issues that is being addressed by the Committee. Paragraph 1.3 (d) second schedule of the NBA Constitution provides for the ECNBA to compile the list in conjunction with the National Secretariat. In furtherance of that provision, the Committee requested the General Secretary (GS), to provide the Committee with the list of members who have paid their Bar Practice Fees (BPF) and Branch Dues (BD) as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. It is disheartening to observe that although the GS sent out a similar request to the leadership of all Branches of the NBA, only few of them have responded to the request. While we understand that the country has been in various stages of lock down and restriction of movement due to the covid-19 pandemic, the Committee is aware that not all parts of the country are equally affected in the same degree. We are also aware that Banks have been functional in most parts of the country, as such are able to provide Branch with statements of their Accounts

from which Dues payments can be extracted. It goes without saying that Branches who do not supply the required information of their members may unwittingly put them at the risk of being disenfranchised in the forthcoming elections. The Committee therefore solicits the cooperation of Branch Chairmen in this regard to enable it compile a credible list of voters and ensure that every eligible Lawyer is not denied the opportunity of exercising his/her right to vote. We commend those Branches that responded promptly to the request.

## **6.0 THE TASK AHEAD**

In the days to come, the ECNBA will carry out other aspects of its assignment which include, selection of an IT Consultant, receiving duly completed nomination forms, screening of aspirants and publication of the names of qualified candidates for the Elections, amongst others.

The ECNBA will issue further updates on the NBA website as the need arises to keep members abreast of our activities. Please always endeavor to get information from the right source to avoid being misled by fake news.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

The ECNBA 2020 wishes to assure our colleagues that it holds this assignment as a sacred one and will do its best to execute same to the best of its ability and in the best interest of the legal profession.

The ECNBA is totally independent. Mr. Paul Usoro SAN and his elected executive have given the ECNBA the needed liberty to do what is just and proper for the benefit of the profession in Nigeria. All candidates for the 2020 Elections shall be treated equally.

On the whole, we will continue to count on your cooperation, prayers and support as we work together towards achieving and effecting a smooth, rancor free and successful transition in the leadership of the Bar.

May God bless you all.

DATED THIS 15<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF MAY 2020

  
Tawo E. Tawo, SAN  
Chairman

