

DAY THREE

SECOND PLENARY

The second plenary started at 9:15am with the recap of activities of day two delivered by Hon. Justice Nauma Bibonga of the Taraba State Judiciary. This was immediately followed by a presentation titled **Nurturing and Mentoring the Next Generation of African Women Judges** facilitated by Hon. Justice Amina Augie, CFR, Justice of the supreme court Rtd and moderated by Hon. Justice Hellen Ogunwumiju, CFR, JCA.

Justice Amina Augie mentioned that the progress of women in the African judiciary is the result of courage, perseverance, and sacrifices of pioneering women, but sustained efforts are needed for future advancement. He highlighted mentorship as a critical judicial responsibility through which experienced judges transmit knowledge, ethics, and judicial philosophy, while providing encouragement, visibility, and role models for younger women.

He further noted that women face challenges such as balancing societal expectations, overcoming institutional biases, and establishing authority, and that mentorship helps build resilience, confidence, leadership, and belonging and stressed that, Core values to be passed on include integrity, judicial independence, courage, humility, and compassion.

Justice Augie also addressed the issue of technological changes, warning against uncritical reliance on artificial intelligence and emphasizing that technology cannot replace human judgment and ethical responsibilities. He added that, Future judges should be prepared for issues like algorithmic bias, AI-generated evidence, cybersecurity, and digital commerce, while maintaining professionalism under increased public scrutiny.

His Lordship called for women Judges to be courageous and committed to lifelong learning, while encouraging young women to pursue judicial leadership. He concluded that investing in mentoring women of integrity, discipline, and courage is essential to building stronger, independent and humane judicial institutions.

Hon. Justice Thanig from Benin expressed appreciation for the choice of the theme and noted that despite progress in women's participation in the judiciary, representation at senior decision-making levels remains a challenge. He also emphasized mentorship and intergenerational support as essential, particularly given the unique challenges women judges face in balancing professional and societal expectations. Drawing attention to francophone systems where judges are appointed at a young age, my Lord stressed the importance of structured mentorship, while also highlighting the role of women judges' associations in fostering resilience, confidence, and leadership and called for expanded mentorship programmes, continuing judicial education, and

professional development initiatives. My Lord concluded that investing in young women judges strengthens judicial institutions, democracy, and access to justice.

Hon. Justice Hellen Omondi Court of Appeal Kenya, advocated for a holistic approach to mentorship that goes beyond legal knowledge and ethics to include social, financial, and personal dimensions of judicial life. He emphasized the need to address work-life balance, financial discipline, judicial comportment, and professional presentation, noting their impact on public confidence and judicial effectiveness. He also highlighted the importance of mental health and wellbeing, calling for mentorship programmes to incorporate support for stress management and resilience. Drawing from Kenya's experience with structured mentorship initiatives for newly appointed judges, she concluded that comprehensive mentorship frameworks are essential for developing competent, confident, and resilient judicial leaders.

The chairman thanked the presenter as well as the discussants for a vibrant plenary and the session came to a close at 11.00 am.

THIRD PLENARY

The Third plenary commenced at 11:40am with a health break for participants who were encouraged to gently sway to an energizing music.

The session was moderated by Hon. Justice Binta Nyako of the Federal High Court and the facilitator is Justice Jane Fancis Abodo.

The paper titled **Work/ Home management balance** focuses on the innate nature of women to nurture while juggling several other work demands. Prof. Olugbamisola Titilayo Odunsote DG Nigeria Law School. The presenter, stated that maintaining good health and overall wellbeing is essential for effective judicial service, noting that women judges balance multiple responsibilities including judicial duties, family, social, religious, and community obligations, which place significant physical, mental, and emotional demands on them. She highlighted mental health as a key concern, stressing that wellbeing must encompass physical, mental, and emotional dimensions, and encouraged intentional rest, relaxation, and self-care to manage stress and avoid burnout. She also underscored the importance of family and community support, particularly the role of extended networks and older women in mentoring and providing guidance. He concluded by urging a holistic approach to life that prioritizes health, relationships, and wellbeing alongside professional responsibilities to ensure sustainable success.

Hon. Justice Sophia Wambura from Tanzania reflected on her judicial and administrative experience, emphasizing commitment, continuous learning, and adaptability. He highlighted the importance of effective time and case management, noting the use of individual judicial calendars in Tanzania to enhance efficiency and control over

caseloads. He stressed the transformative role of technology in improving accessibility and efficiency, enabling judges to remain engaged remotely, and encouraged continuous learning to keep pace with technological developments. Reflecting on her early career, He noted the absence of formal induction programmes and explained that he relied on observation and support from court staff, who provided access to previous case files.

Hon. Justice Gifty Dekyen, court of Appeal Ghana spoke on effective case management, wellbeing, resilience and the responsible use of technology in judicial practice. He emphasized that efficient administration of justice depends on strong case management skills, including the ability to organize work, manage caseloads, and ensure timely resolution of matters, thereby reducing delays and enhancing public confidence.

His Lordship highlighted the importance of resilience, encouraging judicial officers to learn to let go of unnecessary burdens, manage emotional pressures, and remain focused despite challenges, setbacks, or criticisms. He also stressed the need to prioritize physical and mental health, noting that a healthy judicial officer is better equipped to sustain productivity and sound decision-making.

On technology, My Lord acknowledged the benefits of artificial intelligence in improving efficiency but cautioned that it must be used ethically and should never replace human judgment or accountability. He underscored the need for proper training, verification of information, and adherence to principles of fairness, confidentiality, and justice.

He concluded by encouraging judicial officers to strengthen case management skills, maintain resilience, prioritize wellbeing, and embrace technology responsibly while upholding the core values of the administration of justice.

Hon. Justice O. A. Ipaye, Lagos State Judiciary, expressed appreciation to the organizers and shared reflections from his experience on the Bench, emphasizing the significant personal and professional adjustments that accompany judicial appointment, noting that judges are constantly subject to public scrutiny and, in many respects, are themselves on trial.

He highlighted that judges are masters of their courts and bear primary responsibility for ensuring proceedings are conducted efficiently, fairly, and with dignity, stressing the importance of active case management, control of proceedings, and timely disposal of cases to maintain public confidence and reduce delays.

He also emphasized the need for a healthy lifestyle, noting that physical and mental wellbeing are essential for sound decision-making, resilience, and effective performance of judicial duties.

My Lord concluded by encouraging judges to embrace the responsibilities of judicial office, manage their courts proactively, and prioritize their health, underscoring the importance of professionalism, accountability, effective case management, and personal discipline.

A robust question and answer session ensued after the presentations and the session came to a close at 2pm.