



NIGERIAN BAR  
ASSOCIATION  
LAGOS BRANCH

# MY MANIFESTO

FOR THE OFFICE OF  
**VICE CHAIRMAN,**  
NBA LAGOS BRANCH

**JAMES SONDE, Esq.**  
LL.M, ABR, MICIArb.

*Upholding the Rule of Law*

## INTRODUCTION

Distinguished Senior Advocates of Nigeria, Life Benchers, Benchers, Seniors and Colleagues.

I thank you for the opportunity to present my Manifesto to you and share my vision of service for the Premier Branch.

My name is James Olaseni Sonde, and I was called to the Nigerian Bar as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Justice in 2007. I obtained my bachelor's and master's Degrees at Olabisi Onabanjo University and University of Lagos in the years 2006 and 2011 respectively, and since then I have been involved in various aspects of legal practice, including Commercial Law and Corporate Practice, Labour Law, Property Conveyance and General Practice. I served in several legal establishments including Layi Babatunde (SAN) & Co., Eden Chambers, Abioye Abioye & Co., Nunieh & Nunieh and Olusegun Sonaike & Co., before establishing James Sonde & Co. Private practice has afforded me the opportunity to develop and carve niches for myself in the specialised fields of Construction Law, Commercial Law, International Law, International Trade and Investment Law, Mediation and Arbitration.

I have served the Premier Branch, the legal profession and the society in several capacities. I was a member of the Monitoring Team of the Legal Advice Scheme of Justice for All (a DFID Initiative Programme in Nigeria), a Pro-Bono lawyer with PRAWA/Legal Aid Council of Nigeria and a member of the PDSS team of the Human Rights Committee of the NBA Lagos Branch. I am a member of other professional bodies including the Nigerian Bar Association, African Foundation for International Law, International Council for Commercial Arbitration, an Associate of the Business Recovery and Insolvency Practitioners Association of Nigeria (BRIPAN); an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, a member of Institute of Construction Industry Arbitrators (ICIArb) and Secretary of the Publicity and Events Committee of the Institute of Construction Industry Arbitrators (ICIArb.) and I have just been recently confirmed as a Certified Mediator. I served as the Secretary of the Human Rights Committee, 2017-2019, the Publicity Secretary of the Nigerian Bar Association, Lagos Branch, 2019 – 2021; a member of the Dinner Committee 2019, a member of the Law Week Committee 2021, the Chairman Software Development Sub-Committee of the NBA Lagos Branch HRC 2021 – 2023, a member of the Continuing Legal Education Committee 2021 – 2023, the Chairman Publicity Sub-Committee of the Human Rights Committee 2023 – 2025, the Secretary of the International Human Rights Day Conference Sub-Planning Committee 2024. I am currently the Alternate Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee, NBA Lagos Branch 2023 – 2025 and a member of the National Litigation Committee, NBA. In these roles, I discharged my responsibilities in a dignified manner and offered laudable services and contributions toward the advancement of our dear association.

Having served in these capacities, I believe I possess the experience and understand the reforms and programs required to effectively run the office of the Vice Chairman which statutorily doubles as the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee of the NBA Lagos Branch to uphold the rule of law. I therefore with the highest respect and humility, and with a high sense of responsibility present myself as a candidate for the position of Vice Chairman of our great Branch. I desire to serve and contribute my quota to the expansion and development of our dear Branch. As Vice Chairman of the Association, I understand that I would have a few duties and responsibilities which may be delegated to me by the Chairman, the Executive Committee and the General Meeting, more particularly, several duties and responsibilities which are directly related to me as the head of the Human Rights Committee. I believe I have the character, intelligence and charisma to serve the Premier Branch in this capacity. Permit me to share with you my sevenfold agenda for the progress of our dear Association.

## THE AGENDA

### • Collaboration within the Executive Committee

As we know, collaboration is a powerful tool for achieving common goals and driving innovation. I will collaborate with other members of the Executive Committee and contribute to the overall leadership of the Branch by working closely with the Chairman. I will use my position as the Vice Chairman to ensure that there is synergy between the Executive Committee for the purpose of achieving the mandate given to us. I will diligently carry out my duty as provided under the NBA Uniform Bye-Laws for Branches to preside over all meetings, in the absence of the Chairman or where the Chairman is unable to due to circumstances beyond his/her control. I will diligently perform all other duties delegated to me by the Chairman, the Executive Committee and the General Meeting.

### • Advocacy and Sensitization Programme

As your Vice Chairman, and the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee, I undertake to bring all my experience to bear in supporting or promoting and raising awareness about a particular issue or cause, for example, child abuse, domestic violence, human trafficking, rights abuse, etc with a clear goal of educating members of the society about the importance of such issue or cause, promoting and protecting human rights, as well as influencing public policy or decision making that impact individuals or communities while driving progress towards a more just and equitable society.



## • Stakeholders' Engagement

I will put together a quarterly stakeholders' engagement where we would have all the stakeholders in the administration of criminal justice in attendance – the law enforcement agency, the correctional centers, ministry of justice, the bar and the bench and the community leaders with the aim of building relationships, fostering cooperation and partnership, and identifying and addressing potential concerns in the administration of criminal justice. At the end of each engagement, a communique will be issued and sent to all the heads of the stakeholders for progress reporting, monitoring, feedback and improved decision-making towards a better and improved justice system and a zero-tolerance crime free society.

## • Prison Decongestion Initiatives:

I will work towards harmonizing the working relationship between the Bar and the Law Enforcement and Correctional Service Centers in Lagos. This I will do by ensuring the constant visit to the Police Stations within our jurisdiction through the Police Duty Solicitors Scheme (PDSS) to see that matters that need not be charge to court are dealt with within the Police Station while ensuring that the rights of the detainees are protected, as well as visiting the Correctional Centers to take up cases on Pro-Bono, and offering payment of fine to those who are in custody on account of inability to pay the little amount of fine given to them. The Committee will offer to pay such fines within its financial capacity and as much as we can receive support from individuals, law firms and organizations.

## • Human Rights Essay Competition:

Over the years, particularly during our International Human Rights Day Conference programme, we have had students from Secondary School and University Students in attendance, academia has advocated for human rights education as part of our educational curriculum. During the 2024 International Human Rights Day Conference, Professor Oyelowo Oyewo, former Attorney General of Oyo State and Senior Partner at PAC Solicitors has canvassed for Human Rights education as part of our educational curriculum. This birthed a desire within me to see how human rights advocacy interest could be developed among aspiring law students and a way to encourage law aspirants and young lawyers to develop an interest in human rights advocacy which in turn will further expand the upholding of the rule of law in our society. The Essay Competition will have different categories for the Secondary School Students, the University Students and the Young Lawyers. I seek individuals, and organizations' support and sponsorship in this regard.

## • NBA Lagos Branch Human Rights App:

While I was the Chairman Software Development Sub-Committee of the Human Rights Committee, NBA Lagos Branch 2021 – 2023, it was our desire for us to have a Human Rights App (**Rights App** – Human Rights Violation Platform) which could be available on Google Play Store for download. The App will be available for members of society to lodge complaints of human rights violations and abuses with a quick response mechanism. The App will serve as a database of human rights abuses where we can obtain statistical records of reported violations, decided interventions or enforcement strategies, timelines for those interventions where possible, progress report of the cases, remedial actions and other details, and equally serve as a crime report. The App will serve as a quick way to access justice and thereby creating a more fair and just society. I am aware that this may be a huge project but with the support of individuals, law firms and organizations and with the help of God, it is achievable towards a better society of our dream.

## • Funds Generation:

I will seek the support of and create an avenue whereby Individuals, Law Firms and Corporate Organizations are encouraged to donate funds for, or sponsor activities of the Human Rights Committee of our dear Branch. This is for easy and effective accomplishment of the Committee's tasks and responsibilities.

## CONCLUSION

My core agenda is to advance the Premier Branch and more importantly to promote the welfare of our members and protect their rights. I am committed to applying my time and experience to ensure that, with the help of God and the support of the Chairman/Chairperson, members of the Executives and our prestigious members, I accomplish this agenda. These plans cannot be actualized without your support. With the greatest humility and respect, I solicit for your mandate to enable me serve as your Vice Chairman as this will give me the opportunity to actualize these goals. I pledge to work passionately with the rest of the Executive Committee towards the development and advancement of the Premier Branch.

Thank you.

**James Sonde Esq. LL.M, ABR, MICI Arb.**



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MY SERVICE TO THE BAR AND OTHER PROBONO ACTIVITIES

