

**MANIFESTO OF JAMES SONDE FOR THE POST OF SECRETARY, NBA, LAGOS  
BRANCH**

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.

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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 and Master's Degree at Olabisi Onabanjo University and University of Lagos in 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., Olusegun Sonaiké & Co before establishing James Sonde & Co in 2016. In 2019, I joined the law firm of Nunieh & Nunieh as an Associate and Head of Chambers. Private practice has afforded me the opportunity to develop and carve niches for myself in the specialized fields of international law, international trade and investment law.

I have served the premier bar, 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 member of the Pro –Bono team of the Human Rights Committee of the NBA Lagos Branch and the Secretary of Human Rights Committee. I am presently the Publicity Secretary of the Nigerian Bar Association, Lagos Branch and a Pro-Bono lawyer with Legal Aid Council of Nigeria. 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 required to effectively run the administrative and operational organ of the NBA Lagos Branch to meet local and international best practices. I therefore, with the highest respect and humility, and with a high sense of responsibility present myself as a candidate for the position of secretary of our great branch. It is my desire to serve and contribute my quota to the expansion, development and better administration of our secretariat. As secretary of the association, I understand that I would have a number of duties and responsibilities which are directly related to the association's well-being. I believe I have the qualities of a good secretary – cool, calculative, approachable and diligent – as well as the charisma to serve the Premier Bar in this capacity. Permit me to share with you my blueprint to make the secretariat more efficient, effective and vibrant.

## 2.0 THE AGENDA

2.1 **Proper Management and Organization of the Secretariat:** The Secretariat is the engine house of the association and so must be properly managed for effective service delivery to members. As secretary, my ultimate responsibility will be to ensure effective management and functioning of the secretariat. I will do this in the following ways:

- a. **Secretariat Staff:** First, I will ensure that members of staff execute their daily administrative tasks effectively and efficiently for easier and better interface with members of the branch and the general public. With the support of the chairman, I will also ensure that the secretariat staff are properly trained and equipped with the competence and expertise to be able to perform their responsibilities with a professional attitude.
- b. **Electronic Database:** Second, I will ensure proper coordination and upgrading of the directory of members of the branch. I will also sustain, maintain and constantly update a verifiable and accessible electronic database containing the details of all members. The mailing list will also be up-to-date to ensure speedy transmission of information to our prestigious members. I will create email addresses dedicated to receiving suggestions, complaints and applications from members. Communication channels created will ensure direct and sustainable relationship between the secretariat and members. This will also ensure that the process for the application and collection of stamp and seal is as seamless as possible.
- c. **Electronic Filing System:** Third, as secretary, I will develop and maintain a calendar of upcoming events and make this calendar available to members upon request. I plan to establish a modern, accurate and reliable electronic filing system for storing our branch records of completed activities. This is to ensure that when it is time for handing over to the subsequent administration, proper and accurate records would be passed. The goal is to facilitate a culture of continuity and transparency at the branch secretariat.
- d. **Proactive Information System:** Fourth, I will maintain the information dissemination channels created by the previous administration. However, I will ensure that information is circulated to branch members timeously and in a proactive manner. I will ensure that the website recently launched by the preceding administration is up-to-date with branch activities – meetings, events, seminars, trainings, committees' activities. Working hand in hand with the publicity secretary, I will ensure that all events and activities are adequately publicized via all the communication channels. This will enhance effective dissemination of information and ensure that no member of this great association is left out in terms of access to information.

*e. Planning and Organizing Meetings:* Fifth, I will ensure that meetings are well planned and organized to avoid subjecting our members to hardship and stress during meetings. I will work with the chairman, welfare secretary, committees and executives to ensure the proper planning and implementation of events and meetings. Information will be disseminated as and when due; notice and agenda will be sent out speedily; minutes of the previous meetings will be circulated prior to meeting date to enable members study them and note corrections. Also, an attitude of respect for members' time will be adopted. I will ensure effective time management at our meetings

**2.2 Effective Administration and Policy Formulation:** As your secretary, I undertake to bring all my experience to bear in providing support to the chairman, executives and committees of the Branch in developing robust and scintillating agendas for welfare of members and activities of the bar. These include

- a. trainings and seminars
- b. insurance and housing schemes
- c. continuing legal education
- d. mentorship and support for young lawyers
- e. schemes for promoting and safeguarding the rule of law, good governance and human rights.

More to this, I will support the chairman by offering sound and trusted advice on governance, policy and administrative issues and also act thoughtfully about the needs of members of the Premier Bar. I will effectively coordinate members' input and work together on common goals for the expansion and growth of the Premier Bar.

**2.3 Branch Project:** Having understudied the NBA Secretariat over the years, I have discovered certain projects which when executed would serve to promote the image of the branch and the welfare of members. They include:

- a. **Secretariat Building:** It is saddening that the Premier Bar is yet to have its own secretariat building. For many years now, many candidates in the elections have promised to begin the building project but have not been able to do so. When I am elected to the office of the Secretary of the Premier Bar, I will work with the chairman and the executive members to ensure the speedy completion of the building project which the present administration has commenced. I believe the time is now for the Premier Bar to have a befitting secretariat accessible to all members of the branch for a robust and accommodative interface.
- b. **Digitization of the Branch Secretariat:** The world today is technology or internet driven and this has been re-emphasized by the recent global Covid-19 pandemic. Technology is, thus, an important factor in the effective running of any organization

and we must not be left out. As secretary of the branch, I will embrace the achievements of the past administration as regards digitizing the secretariat and also improve on it. For example, I acknowledge the automated Bar Practicing Fees (BPF) and Branch Dues (BD) receipts created by the previous administration of which I was a part. I will go several steps further by ensuring that the BPF and BD receipts of at least ten previous years are digitized. This will give members easy and quick access these receipts. I believe this would aid them in their various applications i.e. notary public, letter of good standing, senior advocate of Nigeria, etc. As stated earlier, I will also ensure that the E-filing system and Electronic database are created.

### **CONCLUSION**

My core agenda is to advance the premier branch and more importantly to promote the welfare of our members. I am committed to applying my time and experience to ensure that, with the help of God and the support of the chairman, executives, committees of the Branch 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 secretary 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.**