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**MANIFESTO AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE OFFICE OF
CHAIRMAN, NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION, LAGOS BRANCH**

Learned Seniors and Colleagues.

It feels an honour and privilege to formally declare my interest in holding the office of Chairman, Nigerian Bar Association, Lagos Branch. With your kind permission I will refer to our dear Lagos Branch as “the Premier Branch” – which truly is what it is in words and deed. I have great passion for the Bar, especially the Premier Branch. It is this passion that has kept me as a regular feature of the meetings and activities of the Branch. My passion has also prompted me to serve the Branch in different positions and capacities over the years, and to remain consistent even when some of my peers have stopped being active.

I have dreams of what great work the Premier Branch can do if we can have more tested and capable hands on deck, harness our energy, and move with the vision of a resourceful leader. I have for so long nursed the ambition of becoming the Premier Branch Chairman and to help lift it to higher heights. It is for this reason that I am now offering myself for election as the Chairman of the Premier Branch.

Hereunder are a brief statement of my bio-data, previous services to the Bar and the Premier Branch, and my detailed manifesto and plan for attaining the in the leadership of the Premier Branch.

BIO-DATA

I was born in Enugu to the family of Mr. and Mrs. J. N. Amaefule being an indigene of Imo State. I attended the University of Benin from 1986 to 1990 where I earned the Bachelor of Laws Degree, LL.B, (Hons). I attended the Nigerian Law School, Lagos (then the only campus) and was called to the Nigerian Bar in December, 1991 and was enrolled in the Supreme Court of Nigeria in the same month. I was called up for the Nigerian Youth Service Corps in September, 1991, served in the Nigerian Navy, Apapa Lagos State and was honourably discharged in August, 1992. I have been in active Law Practice since completing my Youth Service effectively from January 1993.

ACTIVITIES AT THE BAR

My first outing with the Bar Association was the attendance of the Bar Conference, Port Harcourt '92. The fallout of that conference left the Bar comatose for over five years and without a clear leadership. There was intense struggle for the control of the soul of the Bar between competing ideologies. It was into this struggle at the Bar that I stuck in my head and cut my teeth in Bar activism.

I served as an Ex Officio member of Executive Committee under the Chairmanship of Chief T. A. Ezeobi, SAN (deceased) from 1993-1995. It was my privilege to work under great Bar men like Hon. Judge Niyi Ademola (as he now is) - Secretary, Hon. Judge Jide Candid-Johnson (as he now is) - Financial Secretary, and Mr. Kola Awodein, SAN (as he now is) – Vice Chairman. I served as the 1st Assistant Secretary of the Executive Committee under the Chairmanship, of Mr. Akinola Aina from 1995-1997 and upon the resignation of the then Secretary Mr. Adebayo Adejare, I acted as Secretary to complete the tenure. I again served as 1st Asst. Secretary in the Executive Committee, under the Chairmanship of Sir E. U. Ofulue from 1997-1999 – when Chief Emeka Ngige, SAN (as he now is) was Secretary. In between I served in several Committees, notably a Dinner and Bar Centre Fund Raising Committee under Chief Debo Akande SAN (Deceased).

In 2007 I was the Secretary under the Chairmanship of Mr. Bola Baderinwa in which position I was an ex officio member of all Committees of the Branch and one of the statutory members of the National Executive Committee of the Nigerian Bar Association (the Bar). During this period, I was a regular voice at NBA NEC Meetings contributing to deliberations. The last office I held in the Executive Committee was that of 2nd Vice Chairman from 2011-2013 under the Chairmanship of Hon. Judge Taiwo O. Taiwo (as he now is). I was also Chairman of the Legislature Liaison Committee of the Branch in 2014 which appointment was based on my successfully moving the Branch to resolve that the Bar should not only be in the know but proactively make inputs into Bills being discussed on the Floor of the State House of Assembly to check the making of anti-people laws. I am presently a member of the Judiciary Relations Committee of the Branch since 2019.

One part of my activism at the Bar which I also will put on record is my discomfort with any incidence of lack of due process at the Bar. Hence in 2012 when the Bar announced a 100% increment in the Bar Practice Fees and claimed that this was imposed by the General Council of the Bar, having first made a finding that by the provisions of both the Legal Practitioner Act, and the Constitution of the Nigerian Bar Association, the Bar Council has no power to effect any increment in the Practicing Fees. I caused the increment to be challenged in the Federal High Court, and up to the Court of Appeal. The Bar Practice Fees being paid currently by Nigerian lawyers is a compromise following our action.

MANIFESTO AND PROGRAMME FOR ATTAINMENT

The vibrancy and activism of the Bar at the time I joined the Association has waned considerably, and especially at the Premier Branch it appears totally absent. In its place, we have beautiful programmes, especially the great effort and resources invested in learning, capacity building, Young Lawyers' welfare, and transparency generally. While I intend to build on these noble programmes, I intend to focus on bringing back the vibrancy and activism of the Bar, and to once again make the

Premier Branch the leader of all other Branches as it was between 1992 to 1997 when the National Body laid comatose. I also plan to get the Branch to focus on innovations that will enhance the administration of justice, at least as it affects Lagos State, and possibly using my automatic membership of the NBA NEC to push the programmes to have national impact.

In pursuance of the above broad objectives, I will direct energy and resources to:

1. ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

- a. Advocacy for implementation of electronic systems of justice administration and sustaining law practice under the new normal, and despite any disruptions in the economy
- b. Advocacy for review and drastic reduction in processes and time for obtaining Probate of Wills and Letters of Administration.
- c. Advocacy to remove impediments in the enforcement of court judgments, obedience of court orders, facilitation of release of detainees from custodies. For example, why is it imperative that the judgments of courts will await the pleasure of the Commissioner of Police for their execution? Can Judicial Autonomy not be expanded to include having its own judgment enforcement arm? Under the current arrangement, how well have litigants who seek justice against the executive arm of government fared? Also with respect to bail, can we explore and implement the Bondsmen provision of the ACJL and ACJA?
- d. Advocacy for strict compliance with timelines provided in the Rules of Court to ensure prompt completion of litigation.
- e. Advocacy to curtail to the barest minimum the incidence of corruption of and by the staffers of the Judiciary.

2. ENGAGEMENT WITH MINISTRIES AND PARASTATALS TO ENHANCE SPEED OF DELIVERY OF SERVICES

The most difficult places to get business done are in the ministries and parastatals where the nonchalance and poor attitude to work of civil servants greatly impede the ease of doing business, causing hardship to both lawyers and their clients. Two easy examples are the Land Registry and the Corporate Affairs Commission.

3. LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

In the past few years laws and even Rules of Court were made which caused grave hardships to users of the systems. Examples are the Land Use Charge, and Penalty provision of the High Court Rules. We will set up a Committee of lawyers whose terms of reference will include regular update of the Branch on pending bills in the House of Assembly and the aspects of such bills requiring the interventions by the Bar as gate-keepers for the society.

4. PUBLIC INTEREST AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISM

We will develop pro bono programmes to assist people in need of legal assistance, engage with State actors and intervene in all perceived cases of executive high-handedness and violation of the rights of these people. This important work must not be left to the NGOs only

5. BAR/BENCH RELATIONSHIP

The need for cordial relationship between the Bar and Bench cannot be over emphasized. We will sustain current efforts of the Branch to foster good relations to succeed in our administration objective

6. INITIATIVES FOR YOUNG LAWYERS

So much is already being done for young lawyers in the Lagos Branch. They have benefitted from mentorship programmes, Continuing Professional Development Programmes, subsidized training programmes, etc.

- a. I will continue along this path. I will do more by leading the Branch to institute or partner with a corporative society that can provide seed capitals for Young Lawyers who wish to build their own practice firms. Assistance will be given based on approved feasibility study reports.
- b. Training programmes will be set up to provide sustainable skill acquisition that will go beyond the short burst learning during the Knowledge Sharing Sessions.

7. CONTINUITY AND IMPROVEMENT ON EXISTING PROGRAMMES

- a. Knowledge Sharing Sessions will continue and will get better
- b. Building of the Premier Bar Center will be vigorously pursued and with God's help, will be completed during my tenure as chairman

8. INCREASED VISIBILITY FOR THE PREMIER BRANCH THROUGH ACTIVISM AND PUBLICITY

The Premier Branch cannot lead from the rear. We do so much at the Branch but we are low in public perception. This is due to poor or lack of publicity. We will not only engage in activities that will impact on public consciousness and welfare. We will also make our activities public. The purpose is to give eminence, stature, and aura to our Branch. This is necessary for effectiveness.

I need the support of the Branch to mount the saddle of Chairman. And by the grace of God and with your support, this Branch will see two years of structure building, activism, vibrancy, and innovations that we will all be so glad about.

I am the right person the job. Make me the chairman, and I assure you that we will do more.

Seth O. S, Amaefule, Esq.
Candidate for office of Chairman
N. B. A Lagos Branch

