

Dear Member/ Participant,

As you know, PALU recently held its 10th Annual Conference, from 17th to 20th July 2019, in Lomé, Togo, I would like to thank all of you who were able to attend. We were delighted to see so many familiar faces, as well as to welcome new members and meet some potential partners. For those of you who were unable to make it, this email outlines the key points and information that were discussed.

The theme of the Annual Conference was **“The future of the legal profession in Africa”** and we showcased and discussed a range of effective tools that lawyers will need to succeed in the changing environment.

The Conference was formally opened by Hon. Mr Puis Kokouvi AGBETOMEY, Minister for Justice and the institutions on behalf of the President of the Republic of Togo, H.E. Faure Gnassingbe. The opening roundtable, on the Future of Law and Business in Africa, had topics on the African Lawyer of tomorrow; the place of the lawyer in the African market, and in the context of the African Union Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Agenda 2030. The second roundtable discussed evolutions and revolutions in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and how these are impacting on the legal profession. These included 5th generation internet (5G), artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics, block chain, cryptocurrencies, etc. Our firm resolution was that lawyers must continuously build their capacities and equip themselves to be on the frontline of harnessing these changes, rather than taking a back seat or attempting to resist these developments.

The conference then proceeded for an additional two days, in a total of 13 Sessions, designed along three (3) simultaneous streams, mirroring the three (3) Members’ Sections of PALU, i.e. Business Law (SBL); Legal Practice (SLP); and Public Interest and Development Law (SPIDEL). This enabled members and participants to discuss, in a more detailed manner, the current status, recent developments and the future outlook for our profession and the broader society. Click [here](#).

The Section on Business Law (SBL) looked at the future of doing business in the continent, and how to prepare lawyers to facilitate this business. We revisited one of the key themes of our 2018 Annual Conference, which is the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and reiterated the importance of the free movement of lawyers as we serve our clients who are transacting and otherwise relating across national borders, across the regions and internationally. We took stock of recent developments at the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA), which we have periodically done since the establishment of PALU in 2002. We appreciated the need, going forward, to continue fusing the best elements of the different civil law, common law and other legal systems that are practiced on our continent, and to infuse in them an African flair that responds to our context and its needs.

The Section on Legal Practice (SLP) discussed the future of legal education; the future of alternative dispute resolution in Africa; and the future of African Judiciaries and quasi-Judicial institutions (at national, regional and continental level).

The Section on Public Interest and Development Law (SPIDEL) discussed the future for advocacy for rule of law, and protection and promotion of human and peoples' rights. It focused on the role of lawyers and lawyers' associations in protecting and promoting civic space, in light of the current developments in reversing gains in this area, on the African continent as indeed elsewhere in the world. It also discussed the challenges and dynamics of data protection and privacy in this new world, and the role of the organised legal profession in this. It held Working Sessions of the Women Lawyers' Forum, and the Young Lawyers' Forum, in which these two important organs of PALU brainstormed on their practical work agendas for the coming year.

A cross-cutting theme across the three Sections was the focus on combatting illicit financial flows (IFFs) from Africa, and especially in the area of Beneficial Ownership of business and other entities. These sessions, carried out in partnership with members of the Financial Transparency Coalition (FTC), elicited lively debates and many lawyers gave practical, real-life experiences of the challenges that they face in their daily practice as they try to balance instructions from clients with the larger public good. They committed to further detailed discussions of these issues and most lawyers present signed the PALU Code of Ethics on Anti-Corruption and Compliance in Business Relations.

On the final day of the Conference, we invited one of our honoured guests, Mr. Peter Haynes, President of the International Criminal Court Bar Association (ICCBA), who chaired a lively, interactive Panel discussion with Barristers, Judges, Public Notaries and Bailiffs, regarding how our various professions interact. We then held our final Plenary, which was on **the future of the Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU)**. Members and friends present gave robust views on how they want PALU to be structured, and the way in which they want to see it interacting with members and with the larger society. These views will be incorporated into our strategic planning as well as the fundamental overhaul of the PALU Constitution.

The Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, SAN was represented by the Solicitor General of the Federation of Nigeria, Mr. Tayo Akpata who addressed the masses with what us as Lawyers ought to adhere in order to set the right and smooth future for both the old and the young lawyers on Africa.

Goodwill messages of support and solidarity from the Lawyers in the diaspora including the German Federal Bar were received as represented by the Senior Legal Officer Me, Hassanain Riad Khalil, with a particular approach on creating synergies of the young lawyers of Africa through particular summer school schedules, webinars and mentorship programs.

On behalf of my colleagues on the Executive Committee I assured members that we will continue building PALU to respond more comprehensively to members needs and aspirations. With regard to the theme of the Conference, the Executive Committee (Board) and the Secretariat will intensify our work with the PALU Committee on Information and Communication Technologies (PALU ICT Committee) to propel our members to understand and benefit from the developments and opportunities that we had discussed throughout the Conference. Working with our partners, we will organise Online Seminars (Webinars), and will also work to set up an Incubator on ICTs and the law, at the PALU Secretariat. We will also engage the African Union (AU) to assist it to provide leadership, practical guidance and

assistance to Member States to formulate policies and laws for all of Africa to benefit from these technological innovations and evolutions.

All the presentations, speeches and the gallery from the Conference has been put for you on the Whova Application, where you will have access to until January 2020.

Download the Whova Application from the Play Store/App Store on your handset, login with your email address and with the same password used.

Alternatively, use "PALU2019" as the code to gain access when promptly asked. The platform is an interactive one, feel free to make comments on the various documents if necessary.

Thank you very much.

Chief Emeka J.P. Obegolu

President, Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU)