Justice Bulkachuwa: CISLAC berates deliberate gender discrimination

The Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) is perturbed by the ongoing undemocratic efforts to backpedal the nation’s emerging effort at attaining inclusive, participatory and equal opportunity in both public and private spheres.

We are seriously worried by the unpatriotic effort to sabotage the nation’s little gain in equal opportunity and inclusiveness in appointive position as buttressed in the ongoing needless agitations and clamouring for the President of the Court of Appeal, Justice Zainab Adamu Bulkachuwa to recuse herself as chairman of the Presidential Election Petition Panel for a baseless political reason and unjustified ground that her spouse is a member of a political party.

While CISLAC and other Civil Society groups work assiduously to uphold gender equity and inclusiveness in appointive and elective positions achieving full implementation of the 35% Affirmative Action for Women by governments at all levels, we are not unaware of the reluctance hitherto maintain by the successive administrations to fulfil Nigeria’s commitment to the African Union’s Protocol to the African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, as ratified by member nations including Nigeria.

We are seriously concerned about the continued marginalisation, unchecked discrimination and abuse against women despite existence of the ratified protocol, Affirmative Action and Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which guarantee comprehensive rights to women including the right to adequately engage in the political process, socio-economic, health, justice system in both public and private spheres, primarily to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and give greater attention to the plights of women in Nigeria.

We are surprised by the discriminatory efforts by some individuals or groups to discourage inclusiveness and participation of women as leaders and decision-makers in the public sphere, as showcased in the ongoing unjustifiable political efforts to side-line or uproot Justice Bulkachuwa as chairman of the Presidential Election Petition Panel.

Just as the provision of Section 239 (1) (a) which gives the Court of Appeal original jurisdiction to hear and determine questions as to whether any person has been validly elected to the office of the President or the Vice President, we recall that Section 3 of the sixth schedule of the 1999 constitution empowers the President to appoint the Chairman and members of the Election Petition Tribunals; and the provision of section 145 of the Electoral Act 2010, empowering the President of the Court of Appeal to make practice directions for Election Tribunals.

Given her track record of prudence, integrity, discipline and commitment to best practices in the Nigerian judicial system, we also recall that Justice BULKACHUWA has worked diligently to stabilize the nation’s appellate justice administration through Fast Track Case Management Systems and Alternative Dispute Resolution; and should rather be appreciated for promoting the sanctity of the rule of law and the dignity of women.
As we call for total respect for the rights, dignity, freedom, democracy, solidarity of womenfolk at all levels, we urge all well-meaning Nigerians to kick against gender discrimination and disregard the claims in its entirety that Justice Bulkachuwa should recuse herself from sitting on the Presidential Election Petition Panel on the grounds that her spouse is a member of a political party.

Signed:

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