

**OPENING ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE CHIEF JUSTICE AND CHAIRMAN,
COUNCIL OF LEGAL EDUCATION AT THE CALL TO THE BAR AND
CERTIFICATION CEREMONY ON FRIDAY, 19TH MARCH 2021 AT THE
FREETOWN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE, ABERDEEN**

Pray in silence -1 minute for Mr. Joseph G. Kobba

Members of the Council of Legal Education, Distinguished and Honourable members of the Body of Benches, Mr. Attorney-General & Minister of Justice, My Lord, President of the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone and Guest Speaker, My Lords Justices of the Superior Courts of Judicature, Honourable Ministers of Government and Honourable Members of Parliament, President & Members of the Sierra Leone Bar Association, Chairman & Members of the General Legal Council, Learned Tutors, Registrar & Members of Staff of the Sierra Leone Law School, The Sierra Leone Law School Alumni, Admitted Students who may be watching the ceremony via Zoom, Parents, Guardians, Well-wishers all.

Let me on behalf of myself, members of Council and the body of Benchers welcome you all to this historic **Call to the Bar & Certification Ceremony** for admission to the Sierra Leone Bar of successful students at the **November 2020 Bar Final Examinations** conducted by the Sierra Leone Law School under the supervision of the Council of Legal Education.

We warmly receive you our graduands and congratulate you for your hardwork, commitment and focus thus far to becoming lawyers. Especial congratulations to the two (2) best students with Class Two Division One.

The journey has not been easy – Long may be the tilling and toiling but sweet may be the reward, and thus, excepting and/or excluding the task of pupillage, admission and enrollment to practice Law - you are almost there. Today marks an important day in your life in that you will not only be moving from the Student stage to begin to earn for yourself in legal work but beginning a life-long journey. The future belongs to you. What you make of it will depend on your attitudes and applications. No requirement is more important than character and hardwork.

I take this opportunity to extend warm congratulations to your proud parents, guardians and well-wishers.

Congratulations too to the Universities namely: Fourah Bay College (FBC), University of Sierra Leone, University of Makeni and University of London that have produced these current group of students for training at our Law School that are now certified for Call to the Bar.

Over the years the Sierra Leone Law School has signaled its unique importance by turning out no less than the 1,127 graduates to be Called to the Bar with the great majority turning out to be Barristers and Solicitors. Today we shall be adding 140 more graduates to that number.

The Sierra Leone Law School started on **23rd February, 1990** after the establishment of the **Council of Legal Education Act, No. 1 of 1989** and comprised 26 students from three (3) sets of graduates from the Faculty of Law, FBC - Class of 1987, 1988 and 1989. Myself and quite a good number of us present at this ceremony were privileged to be in that **1990 Class of Pioneers**. Today the School has grown to the point where the last **Class of 2020** comprised **199 students**. This year the School will be having a **Class of over 200 students**.

This is not surprising as since the School was opened in 1990, with its first Call to the Bar on the **20th December, 1990**, the School has been growing in reputation.

We have produced very especial products like two (2) Chief Justices, three (3) Attorneys-General inclusive of a female Attorney-General and a host of My Lords & Ladies in Superior Courts of Judicature with

Justice Nicholas Browne-Marke JSC, Justice Vivian M. Solomon JSC and Justice Eldred Taylor-Camara JA, being now the only Judges that have hailed from England outside the Sierra Leone Law School. Eight of such Judges served in the highest Court of the Land, the Supreme Court. The current **Chief Justice, Justice Roberts JSC, Justice Sengu M. Koroma JSC**, the current **Attorney-General** and the past **Attorney-General** in the person of **Joseph Fitzgerald Kamara**, hailed from the **Class of 1990** and have spent over thirty (30) years after Call. Truly, truly the Sierra Leone Law School have set its footprints on the sands of time and its impact is felt far and wide.

We have noticed that more and more students are applying for admission into the Law School as they yield to the option of wanting to become Legal Practitioners. By the same token, Law and its relevance to society becomes even more ever present. Against this background the Council of Legal Education will be exploring and devising up-to-date State of the Art methods for making the School more accessible in District Headquarter towns and abroad. One such device is the Video-conference one class solution to link students in distant locations. This will require proper planning as well as more resources.

While we entertain demand, we cannot compromise quality. The Law profession is a special profession and one in which you only have the learned men and women. To become a lawyer, you must be smart, hardworking, resolute, articulate, courageous and focused. This starts from the moment you enter the Law Faculty – College days where it is your performance that would eventually celebrate you and land you in any Law School.

Two (2) major militators against admissions to the Law School are:

- (i) Failing to pass all the core-subjects viz; Criminal Law, Contract Law, Constitutional Law, Equity & Trust, Law of Tort and Land Law; and with good grades too; and
- (ii) Having a third-class degree which does not augur well for one's admission in the face of competition.

Importance of Call to the Bar and Certification

The Call to the Bar does not entitle Graduates to begin to practice Law. What it does, is that it empowers for enrollment as Temporary Pupil undergoing pupillage and learning practically the skills of the profession in a Courtroom, Law Firm environment under the guidance of a Senior Practitioner of not less than ten (10) years. During this time,

your attitude and character would be visible, open to scrutiny and watched closely; and unless you can prove good character through the required testimonials of your character which would later be submitted to the General Legal Council at the end of your pupillage, the General Legal Council will not be in the position to admit and enroll you for practice in our Sierra Leone Bar. While you have attained this level of distinction, you would be required to be even more focused as you seek admission, enrollment in the Rolls of Court and beyond.

Bar Final Examination Result 2019/2020

After this year's Bar Final Result, we shall be presenting in this Call a total of 140 Graduands who were successful in the **Bar Final Examinations** held in **November, 2020**. Two (2) had Second Class Upper, 50 had a Second-Class Lower and the rest obtained a Pass Grade.

A total number of 199 were admitted at the start of lectures, 2020 -19 of them, because of pressing reasons, deferred their admission to a subsequent year, while 180 started and finished the course. 40 of the 180 failed the Exams, making a percentage output of 78%. While this represented a far-better result than last year, it is not the best the Law

School has produced. The 1990 Class for instance had a pass of 22 out of 26 which represented 85%.

The Year as a Whole

The **2019/2020 Year** was a very challenging year for tutors as well as students. As in the course of the School Year, the deadly Corona virus found its way into the jurisdiction of Sierra Leone, leading to the suspension of classes for a few weeks as we recalibrate our operations. Fortunately, no lecturer and no student died from the deadly virus but we lost the Registrar, Mr. Joseph Kobba, after short ailment. Once again, we express deepest sympathy to the bereaved family of Mr. Kobba.

We resumed classes with a virtual-lectures policy in place and this began a process of Virtual-Learning which we need to build on, if we intend adopting a One-Class solution. Huge commendation to tutors, staff and students who made this possible.

Prizes

The School like before, will be offering eleven (11) prizes. Notable absentees from the prize list-donors, are the Sierra Leone Bar

Association and the General Legal Council. It would be a good thing if the Sierra Leone Bar Association and the General Legal Council are listed among those that should be putting out prizes.

I would be remiss if I fail to congratulate the Government of Sierra Leone for the financial support we have received over the years and in fact look forward to more as we move forward.

I thank you all for your attention.

**I NOW DECLARE THE CALL TO THE BAR & CERTIFICATION
CEREMONY OPEN.**