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PRESS RELEASE

...Elevation of Judges to Appeal Court not lopsided

The attention of the National Judicial Council has been drawn to an on-line publication and some newspapers alleging the National Judicial Council of recommending 14 Judges for appointment to the Court of Appeal, and that none of the Candidates shortlisted was from the South-East.

This allegation is nothing but a figment of the imagination of the on-line media as the exercise is on-going and no candidate has been recommended so far.

To put the records straight, appointment of Judicial Officers to the Court of Appeal is done on merit and geographical spread.

Section 2 of Court of Appeal (Amendment) Act, 2013, governing the appointment of Justices of Court of Appeal provides that the total number of Justices to be appointed should not be more than 90 plus the President. The Court

however, currently has 76 Justices leaving vacancy for additional 14 Justices. Of the 76 Justices of the Court, the North Central with 6 States and FCT has 12 Justices; North-East with 6 States has 12 Justices plus the President; North-West with 7 States has 9 Justices; South-East with 5 States has 13 Justices; South-South with 6 States has 14 Justices and South-West with 6 States has 15 Justices.

In considering appointment for the 14 vacancies, and to ensure that each zone is adequately presented, all States that have 3 serving Justices were not considered unless under special circumstances.

The States not considered are:

Anambra, Bauchi, Borno, Cross-River, Ebonyi, Edo, Ekiti, Gombe, Imo, Kogi, Kwara and Oyo.

States like Adamawa, Kebbi and Sokoto have zero representation which informed the need to include them in the current exercise.

Appointments are made to the Court based on the elevation of Appeal Court Justices to the Supreme Court, retirement at the age of 70 years, or death. Such vacancies are filled with Judicial Officers from the Zone of the Judge who died, retired or elevated.

It is therefore unfair for the online media to claim that the National Judicial Council recommended no Candidate from the South-East which currently has 13 Justices at the Court of Appeal.

Journalists are pleased advised to always balance their report to avoid litigation.

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