



## ICJ KENYA CHAIRMANS OPENING REMARKS AT 2017 JURIST OF THE YEAR (JOYA)

The Hon Chief Justice, David Maraga, the Hon (Rtd) Chief Justice Earnest Sakala of Zambia, Judges (of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, High Court) present, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good evening. (Protocol)

It gives me great pleasure this evening to welcome you all under the stars for this very auspicious occasion being the Jurist of the Year Award (JOYA) ceremony where we come together as a body of Jurists to celebrate the achievements of the recipient of the award. The award is not conferred in vain; it goes a long way in inspiring and motivating many other Jurists in the promotion and protection of human rights in Kenya and the region.

It is an ICJ Kenya long time tradition which has been held since 1993. It has seen men and women who have demonstrated distinguished service to humanity awarded for the work they have do throughout the year, sometimes in challenging and difficult circumstances.

It is the late Prof Wangari Maathai who said that *'it is the little things citizens do. That's what will makes the difference. My little thing is planting trees'*. We all have our own little things that we do that to change the course of events and the destiny of those we encounter: that is what will make the difference. The beauty about it is that we do not have to carry the universe on our shoulders to be deemed to have achieved great and tremendous things but the little we do leaves a legacy foot print that is heard by generations and generations. It is the little things done that impact and bear fruit bore of recognition that lead to the conferment of this award.

For the ICJ Kenya family, this year's award comes at a time when we have witnessed several events unfold before our eyes: some events have surprised and shocked human dignity and some that have brought a smile and joy to the hearts of the men and women who have championed the rights of the Kenyan people. Some of them restored hope and faith in our institutions but others brought out the pain and frustration especially those who were dissatisfied with fruits of democracy.

To quote the late Prof Wangari Maathai again who said, *'In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now.'* For us at ICJ Kenya, this time came when the Supreme Court annulled the August 8<sup>th</sup> General Elections and ordered for a fresh elections. This gave us hope that all was not lost, that the roots of democracy had not all been up rooted; they were still firmly germinating on the ground. It also gave us hope that there are still courageous men and women who can defend and uphold the Constitution and the laws of the land. This gave hope to *Wanjiru* This also not only give us

hope here in Kenya but also gave hope to our brothers and sisters within the African Region and the world over.

It is also in this year that we witnessed attacks on Civil Society groups and human rights defenders for the work that they do and that is to ensure that the rights of every person are respected, that the rule of law is upheld that duty bearers are held accountable for their actions. These attacks were a threat and intimidation so that they would cower and retreat to the cold corners in their rooms but they were and are still are determined to continue with the fight for a greater course. Abraham Lincoln said that *'great men are ordinary men with great determination'* and those who continue with this fight are these ordinary men and women who have a great determination to continue re-writing the course of history. They are great and continue to be.

We witnessed the unwarranted attacks on the Judiciary, where the executive and some members of parliament seized the opportunity to unleash their arsenal of threats and insults on the judiciary. They were castigated for the work they do as enshrined in the Constitution, they were insulted for their boldness and upholding the rule of law. This sent out a wrong message to the members of the public, who were blinded by their political affiliations and did not see the fruits of democracy at work. This none the less restored hope in the many who know were sure justice can be achieved.

We cannot downplay the award given today; it must be celebrated. It is a symbol of courage, boldness and determination doing great things for all us. It is an award that restores hope and faith in those who it may be dwindling away from, it is a reminder that what they do has and continues to have impact and not only for us here and now but for the generations to come. This award continues to serve as a reminder that we are still on a journey to ensuring that we achieve that which we yearn for and that is the full realization of our democracy.

I urge you all here that let this award be the shining light that will shine your paths, paths upon which you will find encouragement and motivation and that all you do is not in vain but it will bear fruits and continues to bear fruits.

As we celebrate the recipient of this award this evening, let us also celebrate ourselves for the work that we do and continue to do, we do not do it for our good but for the great good of the nation and the people of Kenya. The journey may seem long but we will surely get there, with determined hearts we will get there.

Thank you all for finding time to come and celebrate with us this evening at this award ceremony.

Thank you and God bless you. Enjoy the rest of your evening.

**KELVIN MOGENI  
CHAIR**

**ICJ KENYA**