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Court Convicts Clearing Agent Arrested With Container Load Of Pangolin Scales, Elephant Tusks

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Justice Tijjani Ringim of a Federal High Court, sitting in Lagos have convicted a clearing agent, Felix Olame, who was arrested with container load of pangolin scales, elephant ivories, tusk and bones by the Nigeria Customs Services (NCS).

Justice Ringim convicted the clearing agent, after he pleaded guilty to three counts charge made against him by the Customs.

The convicted clearing agents, according to the prosecutors, David Ereh and Mike Osong, was arrested on January, 2021, at Apapa Port, Lagos, for being in possession of 1X20ft Container marked CSLU 2362640, containing 158 sacks of pangolin scales and 57 sacks of elephant ivory, horns and bones.

The prosecutors told the court that the convict conspired with some others, who were said to be at large to commit the offence.

The prosecutors told the court that the offences committed by the convict, are contrary to and punishable under section 516 of the Criminal Code Act, Law of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004. And section 7(3) of the National Environmental (Protection of Endangered Species in International Trade) Regulations, 201 and punishable under section 7(4) of the same Regulations

The convict pleaded guilty to the charges when they were read to him.

Upon his plea, the prosecutors reviewed the facts of the charge, and urged the court to convict and sentence him accordingly.

But counsel, pleaded with the court to tamper justice with mercy, saying that his client was used by those who wanted to smuggle the items.

He pray the court should tender justice with mercy by given the defendant an option of fine.

Delivering judgment on the charge, Justice Ringim held that: "in the certificate of the provision of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015, the prosecution review evidence after the defendant pleaded guilty to the three counts charge.

"I have painstakingly looked at the three counts charge and I observed that count two and three are the same, therefore the defendant can not by punished on the two counts together to avoid the principle of double jeopardy.

Consequently count two is hereby struck out.

The defendant is hereby convicted on count one and three only.

“Consequently, the convict is hereby sentenced to six months imprisonment.”