A court cannot serve the public unless it has that public’s trust and confidence. As a new court, the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) is mindful that it must not only win that trust and confidence, but it must also maintain them.

It is important to the development and success of the Caribbean region and each of its Member States that the CCJ is strong and is trusted by the people of the region as well as the international community. This requires that the public is aware of the existence of the Court, understands its purpose, work and standards and consistently witnesses the Court’s adherence to its tenets. The public education drive therefore continued to play an important role in the Court’s agenda during the period under review. This agenda includes maintaining access to justice; expedition and timeliness; equality, fairness, and integrity; and independence and accountability. As it publishes its 4th Annual Report on the approach to its milestone 5th year, the CCJ continues to apply the fundamental principle of public trust and confidence and has rededicated itself to providing the Caribbean public with evidence of the institution’s value and integrity.

The Vision Statement of the Court underscores the maintenance of “an inspirational, independent institution worthy of emulation by the courts of the region and the trust and confidence of its people”. While, of course, the Court acknowledges that after just four active years, there are some battles yet to be fought and won, it is nonetheless satisfied that it has remained true to its vision. It does so by expending every effort to provide to the Caribbean as well as to people and institutions outside of the region, a court in which they can believe and upon which they can rely.

In support of this assertion, one can cite the fact that nine of the CCJ’s judgments have been published in the West Indian Reports. Additionally, the integrity, clarity and cogency of the Court’s judgments are regularly praised by disinterested commentators and several international organisations have encouraged the Court to publish its judgments in languages other than English so that non-Anglophone laymen and jurists alike may benefit from the expertise contained therein.
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The hosting of the VI Brandeis Institute for International Judges and the Inaugural Conference of the Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers (CAJO) expanded the collegial reach of the Court and provided valuable opportunities for intellectual discussion and exchange with international and regional judicial officers and thought leaders.

The still new areas of law presented by the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas and the Court’s original jurisdiction led to the CCJ’s development of an International Law Moot, undertaken for the first time this year. This exercise presented Caribbean law students with an opportunity to witness and participate in the practical application of international law principles in a competitive environment before the Judges of the highest Court in the Caribbean Community and will no doubt form a part of the Court’s annual calendar of events.

The Court is also pleased that it has been able to rely on the yeoman service provided by members of the Court Administrative Unit as well as support staff. An institution is only as good as those operating it. In this regard, the Court is justifiably proud of its staff, who represent diverse backgrounds and a multiplicity of competencies, but are all nevertheless united in making the Caribbean Court of Justice a regional exemplar, which supports regional development and growth and an institution in which the Caribbean people can take pride.