



## CARIBBEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

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### **STATEMENT BY THE CCJ PRESIDENT ON THE COURT'S 15<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

Today, 16 April 2020, the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) marks 15 years of serving the region. Admittedly, while our current global environment is a sombre one as we fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, we feel it necessary to acknowledge this milestone and the work of all the employees from around the region that have contributed, presently contribute and continue to contribute to the rule of law in the Caribbean.

Since its inauguration in 2005, the Court has worked on the premise that it is more just than a building, it is a service. This is a service that we have taken seriously, as the establishment of the CCJ was a defining moment in the history of the people of the region. For those countries that embrace our appellate jurisdiction, it symbolises the end of colonial ties. Even for those states that only operate under the Court's original jurisdiction, the CCJ signalled a new and different approach to regionalism. Here for the first time was a judicial body that exclusively and authoritatively determined disputes or questions concerning the CARICOM Treaty.

Underpinning what our stakeholders see in the judgments of the Court, is the hard work put in by the entire staff to ensure the CCJ's efficiency and effectiveness. The staff of the Registries of national judiciaries that support us must also be complimented for their assistance. We take the time to applaud each and every one of these staff members for their unfailing dedication to continually go over and beyond the call of duty.

As the Court has adopted its vision "To be a model of judicial excellence", we have risen to the challenge, ensuring that we produce quality judgments that are responsive to the needs of the region and are reflective of our history, values and traditions. We have also promoted a culture that supports legal development, one that enhances the quality of judges and court administration throughout the region. This has resulted in capacity-building bodies such as the Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers, the CCJ Academy for Law and The Judicial Reform and Institutional Strengthening Project, each of which, helps to transform the legal profession and justice sectors across the wider Caribbean.

The Court has been one that long responded to the need to meet its peoples virtually. Thus, our present

climate has afforded us the opportunity to reap the benefits of our technology. For quite some time now, all of the Court's filing and case processing and management systems have been electronic or automated. Many hearings are conducted via video conferencing. Our new Practice Directions allow for emergency hearings so that we can continue our work seamlessly in both sure and uncertain times.

Finally, it is important that we thank all of the countries that have allowed us to serve them, both in the original and appellate jurisdictions. We also thank counsel both from the region and outside the region who have appeared before the Court and assisted us with their submission. Your faith in us is our driving force as we continue to work towards "providing accessible, fair and efficient justice for the people and states of the Caribbean Community".

The Honourable Mr Justice Adrian Saunders  
President of the Caribbean Court of Justice

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#### About the Caribbean Court of Justice

The Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) was inaugurated in Port of Spain, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on 16 April 2005 and presently has a Bench of seven judges presided over by CCJ President, the Honourable Mr Justice Adrian Saunders. The CCJ has an Original and an Appellate Jurisdiction and is effectively, therefore, two courts in one. In its Original Jurisdiction, it is an international court with exclusive jurisdiction to interpret and apply the rules set out in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas (RTC) and to decide disputes arising under it. The RTC established the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). In its Original Jurisdiction, the CCJ is critical to the CSME and all 12 Member States which belong to the CSME (including their citizens, businesses, and governments) can access the Court's Original Jurisdiction to protect their rights under the RTC. In its Appellate Jurisdiction, the CCJ is the final court of appeal for criminal and civil matters for those countries in the Caribbean that alter their national Constitutions to enable the CCJ to perform that role. At present, four states access the Court in its Appellate Jurisdiction, these being Barbados, Belize, Dominica and Guyana. However, by signing and ratifying the Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Court of Justice, Member States of the Community have demonstrated a commitment to making the CCJ their final court of appeal. The Court is the realisation of a vision of our ancestors, an expression of independence and a signal of the region's coming of age.

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