



# OPENING REMARKS AT THE SEXUAL OFFENCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE SPECIAL PLANNING MEETING

The Honourable Mme Justice Maureen Rajnauth-Lee,  
Judge of the Caribbean Court of Justice

## **Sexual Offences Advisory Committee Special Planning Meeting**

Caribbean Court of Justice,  
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago  
10 March 2016

**The Judicial Reform and Institutional Strengthening (JURIST) Project** is a multi-year (2014-2023) regional Caribbean judicial reform initiative funded under an arrangement with the Government of Canada. The Project is being implemented on behalf of Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and the Conference of Heads of Judiciary of CARICOM (the Conference), by the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), which was appointed by the Conference as its Regional Executing Agency (REA). The JURIST Project commenced activities on April 1, 2014 after the signing of a Contribution Arrangement between the CCJ and GAC.

A key component of the JURIST Project is the Sexual Offences Project. The two key initiatives of the Sexual Offences Project are, one, the development of Model Guidelines for Sexual Offences Cases within the Caribbean Region. The Model Guidelines were developed with the support and advice of the Sexual Offences Advisory Committee. And two, the establishment of a Sexual Offences Model Court (in Antigua and Barbuda) to assess the effectiveness of the Model Guidelines.

## **Opening Remarks**

**By**

**The Honourable Mme Justice Maureen Rajnauth-Lee, Judge of the Caribbean Court of  
Justice and Chair of the Sexual Offences Advisory Committee**

**on the occasion of**

**The Sexual Offences Advisory Committee Special Planning Meeting**

**10 March 2016**

### **Welcome and Greetings**

It is with great pleasure that I join with The Right Honourable Sir Dennis Byron, President of the Caribbean Court of Justice, to welcome you all to this Special Planning Meeting of the Sexual Offences Advisory Committee. Although some of our members cannot attend in person, we are making use of modern technology to host this important meeting and to facilitate the participation of all our members.

### **The Role of the Sexual Offences Advisory Committee**

I am pleased to report that the Sexual Offences Advisory Committee has already held several meetings. Sir Dennis has helpfully recounted the accomplishments of the Advisory Committee to date and has spoken of the work ahead. As we have noted on other occasions, the Caribbean region continues to be plagued by high levels of sexual violence, along with other forms of gender-based violence. Under-reporting of offences and ineffective handling of these cases by the authorities have been our unhappy experiences. One of the main components of the JURIST Project is the Sexual Offences Project that includes initially the development of Model Guidelines for treating with sexual offence cases and the survivors of sexual offences, including children. The establishment of the Advisory Committee is, therefore an important milestone for the development and implementation of these Model Guidelines.

### **The Terms of Reference of the Sexual Offences Advisory Committee**

The objectives and activities of the Advisory Committee are therefore aimed at developing a comprehensive approach to the management of sexual offence cases which will include, importantly, the necessary support that will be provided for the survivors of sexual offences (including children). It must be noted here that sexual abuse of our children is also of growing

concern, as can be seen in the most recent report of the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. The Advisory Committee is therefore tasked, among other things, with:

- the training of key stakeholders, including judges, court staff, police and Attorneys;
- public sensitization;
- the introduction and use of technologies for improved court adjudication, case management and data collection;
- the strengthening of survivor support systems; and
- the monitoring, documenting and sharing of best practices.

### **Engagement of Consultant Ms Elizabeth Solomon**

We are particularly pleased that UN Women has partnered with the JURIST Project to engage Ms Elizabeth Solomon, Consultant, Human Rights and Conflict Prevention, to conduct a Baseline Study which will inform the future work of the Advisory Committee. The Baseline Study will involve the following reviews, which will be carried out in five (5) named countries:

- The listing of existing legislation relating to sexual offences;
- A listing of existing protocols impacting sexual offence cases;
- The identification of existing best practices on institutional processes and the administration of justice within the context of international standards; and
- The outlining of court processes, the identification of gaps and the highlighting of good practices.

We are so very pleased that Ms Solomon will share her preliminary findings, which will serve as a platform for the work to be undertaken today.

### **Special Planning Meeting**

I wish to thank all who have taken the time to be here today, whether personally or virtually. I wish to express special appreciation to Ms Renee Cummings, Criminologist, who has taken up our invitation to be here. I also wish to welcome to the Committee Ms Safiya Berkley, Judicial Research Counsel of the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago. We ask that Ms Berkley conveys to the Honourable Chief Justice of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr Justice Ivor Archie, our gratitude for his agreeing to her participation in the work of the Committee. As Sir Dennis has observed, we are at a critical juncture in the role and work of the Committee. We hope that our deliberations today will set the stage for mapping out the future work of the Committee.