



Chair: The Hon Mr Justice Peter Jamadar– Caribbean Court of Justice

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**CARIBBEAN JUDICIAL OFFICERS HOST SUCCESSFUL 7th BIENNIAL
CONFERENCE**

PORT OF SPAIN. The Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers (CAJO) 7th Biennial Conference has been hailed a resounding success. The Conference was hosted by the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (ECSC) under the theme ‘Caribbean Judiciaries in a Changing World’ from 27-29 October 2022 at the Royalton Saint Lucia. The Conference attracted over 120 judicial officers from throughout the region including the Heads of Judiciary of The Bahamas, Barbados, the ECSC, Guyana, and Jamaica as well as other dignitaries. The 2 ½-day intensive judicial education programme comprised 11 interactive sessions facilitated by regional and international jurists and experts. Additionally, there were two keynote addresses by the Honourable Mia Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados and Professor Trevor Munroe, International Development Consultant and Principal Director of National Integrity Action, Jamaica’s Chapter of Transparency International.

In his opening remarks, CAJO Chairman, the Honourable Mr Justice Jamadar, Judge of the Caribbean Court of Justice, noted that the theme for the Conference was ‘informed by the desire to educate, enlighten, and empower’ in a rapidly evolving global and regional order. He also reiterated that judicial officers were called to ‘deliver justice to real people, living real lives, in real time’. With this in mind, the Conference featured thought-provoking exchanges on a variety of issues of critical and immediate importance for Caribbean citizens and judiciaries such as criminal trials without juries, the use of artificial intelligence in courts, and forced labour, human trafficking and modern forms of slavery. The Conference also examined other pressing areas such as time standards for the hearing of cases and delivery of judgments and best practice performance benchmarks for courts. Participants also engaged in discussions surrounding legal and socio-legal issues relating to human rights, sustainable development and the environment, and gender. These sessions probed matters concerning regional and global changes and the need to implement sensitive and appropriate approaches to justice delivery.

In her presentation, Prime Minister Mottley raised a number of issues affecting the delivery of justice and the rule of law in the Caribbean. She expressed the view that ‘the most important thing in a civilised society, the thing that defines us as nation states is our ability to maintain the rule of law. We have to ask ourselves as Caribbean people whether we have not reached a moment where the ultimate defence of the rule of law is what is necessary to save our societies and to reserve our capacity to grow from strength to strength.’

Professor Trevor Munroe, on Day 2 of the Conference, recognised the importance of the law and judges in maintaining democracy. In his keynote address, Professor Munroe stated that while ‘CARICOM states are not experiencing a “democratic recession”, high homicide rates, levels of inequality, concern with corruption and early signals of voter disillusionment are signals which indicate vulnerability to the global downturn of democratic governance.’ He also remarked that ‘the judiciary appears to have the least decline in public trust and confidence which gives the potential to check the slide toward democratic recession.’

In keeping with the CAJO’s commitment to being more environmentally conscious, the event also included the second symbolic exchange between the Association and regional judiciaries under its ‘Plant a Tree, Save the Planet’ initiative. As part of the exchange, the CAJO Chair presented a rubber tree to the ECSC and urged judicial officers present to plant a tree upon their return to their home states.

A new CAJO Management Committee was also elected to office and Justice Jamadar was re-elected as CAJO Chair. At the Association’s First Annual General Meeting, CAJO also adopted a number of Resolutions related to the delivery of justice in the region. The members reiterated the role that judicial officers have to guard democracy and uphold the constitutional rights of all and the duty that judicial officers have to respond to the specific needs of persons and communities who are marginalised and vulnerable. Additionally, the Association recommended and encouraged the commitment by governments and judiciaries to provide adequate resources, financial and otherwise, for judicial education and training.

The full Resolutions can be seen on CAJO’s website at thecajo.org/reports/.

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The Hon. Mr Justice Peter Jamadar, CCJ Judge and CAJO Chair, addresses the audience on the last day of the 7th Biennial Conference. The Conference is the largest gathering of judicial officers in the region and aims to support the improvement in judicial service delivery throughout the Caribbean.