



CARIBBEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

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CCJ CONVENES THE FIRST HEMISPHERIC MEETING OF REGIONAL COURTS

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. From 22-23 September 2022, the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) convened the First Hemispheric Meeting of Regional Courts (FHMRC) at the Hyatt Regency, Trinidad. Under the theme “The Rule of Law and International Justice”, the FHMRC brought together over 30 participants including heads of judiciaries from the Caribbean Court of Justice, Central American Court of Justice, Court of Justice of the Andean Community, Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights along with members of the Trinidad and Tobago Judiciary. Also in attendance were practitioners, academics, and policymakers from across the Caribbean, Europe, and Latin America, Institutions represented included the University of the West Indies, CARICOM Secretariat, iCourts (The Danish National Research Foundation’s Centre of Excellence for International Courts); University of Peru and University of A. Coruna.

Special guests and participants over the two days included the Hon. Mr Justice Ivor Archie, Chief Justice and President of the Court of Appeal of Trinidad and Tobago, Justice of Appeal, the Hon. Mme Justice Mira Dean-Armorer, Justice of Appeal of the Court of Appeal of Trinidad and Tobago, and former President of Trinidad and Tobago, His Excellency Anthony Carmona. Special remarks were made the Hon. Mr Reginald T.A. Armour, Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs in the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

This historic two-day meeting included plenary sessions focusing on Compliance and Enforcement of International Judgments, Institutional Arrangements of International Courts, The Relationship with Domestic Courts, and The Referral Obligation. A Declaration was prepared and adopted by acclaim by all regional courts present (and other participants).

During the FHMRC, regional courts from the Caribbean and Latin America reaffirmed their commitment to the principles and objectives of their founding documents, the Charter of the United Nations, the American Convention on Human Rights, and other relevant international human rights instruments. They accepted these standards to further the administration of justice to their citizens. A stable, adequate, and independent budgetary framework, separate from governments in office, was declared to be essential to guarantee justice, the rule of law, and democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean. As declared by CCJ President, the Hon. Mr Justice Adrian Saunders, “Justice is an important component of peace. And so, in providing an avenue for redress in instances of a breach of obligations, whether between or among States or as between a State and the citizenry, courts contribute to the peace, stability, development and prosperity of our regional communities and the international community.”

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Notably, the FHMRC was a necessary collaboration between regional and national courts. In his opening remarks, the Hon. Mr Justice Winston Anderson, CCJ Judge with the lead responsibility for organizing the Conference, affirmed that this meeting provided “a platform for discussing issues of institutional stability and strengthening; even as we exchange best practices in carrying out our substantive work of treaty interpretation and application; facilitating and responding to referrals for treaty interpretation from national courts and tribunals; and ensuring compliance with our judgments.”

The plenary on the Referral Obligation was a robust discussion and provided ample opportunity for the Caribbean Court of Justice to highlight its own referral process and introduce its soon-to-be-launched Referral Process Manual. This publication, along with an instructional video, will be formally launched at the biennial conference of the Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers, which takes place 27-29 October 2022.

Participating courts from the Caribbean and Latin American regions highly commended the CCJ for its gracious and excellent hosting of this inaugural event and expressed gratitude to various arms of the state which provided support. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) has agreed to host the Second Hemispheric Meeting of Regional Courts in San Jose, Costa Rica in 2023.

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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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