



UNESCO and the Caribbean Court of Justice Forge Partnership to Strengthen Freedom of Expression and Journalist Safety

Paris, France, and Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago — In a pivotal move to bolster the protection of freedom of expression, journalist safety, and other fundamental freedoms, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The agreement underscores the shared commitment to upholding democratic principles and enhancing the rule of law throughout the Caribbean region. With the agreement, UNESCO further strengthens its relationships on freedom of expression and journalists' safety with regional and sub-regional courts on human rights worldwide.

Key Objectives and Areas of Cooperation

The agreement between UNESCO and the Caribbean Court of Justice targets several key areas, particularly the protection of rights enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments. The MoU provides a structured framework for joint initiatives to achieve shared goals, promoting cooperative efforts in the areas of freedom of expression, access to information, and safety of journalists.

In light of the escalating threats to journalists worldwide, the agreement also supports the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. UNESCO and the CCJ will collaborate to create safer environments for journalists and media workers across the Caribbean region.

Additionally, the MoU highlights the judiciary's role in safeguarding freedom of expression and other human rights, ensuring justice, and promoting transparency. This includes specialized training for judicial officials to enhance knowledge and capacities on issues related to freedom of expression, access to information, and journalist safety. The agreement also addresses emerging challenges such as misinformation and disinformation, the impact of artificial intelligence in judicial systems, and judicial weaponization through Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs).

“Judges and prosecutors play a vital role in defending freedom of expression. Through this new partnership with the Caribbean Court of Justice, we will be able to further expand our important work to train these essential actors, and together build stronger judicial systems that protect the right to information,



contribute to the safety of journalists and end impunity for crimes committed against them."

Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director-General

"The CCJ is pleased to enter into this Memorandum of Understanding with UNESCO. The Memorandum will contribute to strengthening the rule of law and will in no way compromise the Court's judicial independence. The Court looks forward to our joint pursuit of the initiatives identified in the Memorandum."

The Hon. Mr Justice Adrian Saunders, President of the CCJ

Impact and Significance

This MoU follows similar cooperation agreements signed by UNESCO with other regional courts of human rights - notably with the [Inter-American Court of Human Rights](#) (October 2019), the [African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights](#) (August 2018), the [Economic Community of West African States \(ECOWAS\) Court of Justice](#) (May 2019) and the [Eastern African Court of Justice](#) (December 2021). It represents a milestone in joint efforts to reinforce judicial capacities and uphold democratic values in the Caribbean region. It aligns with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Goal 16, which advocates for peace, justice, and strong institutions. The partnership aims to contribute significantly to regional stability and development by strengthening judicial frameworks.

The signing of this MoU falls under UNESCO's global efforts aimed at raising the knowledge and capacity of judicial actors on freedom of expression and safety of journalists through the development of effective tools, regional and on-the-ground workshops, and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). These activities, supported by the Multi-donor Programme for Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists, have helped improve and reinforce the application of international standards on these issues, fostering an environment where journalists are protected and the rule of law is upheld. Since 2013, through its flagship initiative, UNESCO has engaged with over 36,000 judicial actors from more than 160 countries across the world, the largest such training programme of its kind throughout the UN system.