



## CARIBBEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

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### **MEDIA RELEASE** (For immediate release)

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### **CCJ CELEBRATES ITS 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

**Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.** Today, Wednesday, 16 April 2025, the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) celebrated its milestone 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an Interfaith Service of Reflection and Prayer at the Queen’s Hall, Port of Spain, Trinidad.

The ceremony attended by Her Excellency Christine Carla Kangaloo ORTT, President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, brought together members of the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago, representatives from the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, representatives of various faiths from the Inter-Religious Organisation, regional stakeholders, members of the diplomatic corps, the legal fraternity, commissioners of the Regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission, and former and current Judges and staff of the Court. The event served as a moment of gratitude and reflection on the Court’s journey over the past two decades.

Delivering the address at the event, Ms Sophia Chote SC, Attorney-at-Law and Commissioner of the Regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission commended the Court stating ‘the achievements of the CCJ are the achievements of our region. We continue to have Commissions which are responsible, and which ensure that the CCJ’s Bench is populated only with the best. The Judges themselves are acutely aware of their responsibility to the region and discharge their duties with diligence and integrity. The Registrar and her staff and other arms of the organisation continue to perform their duties with responsibility and innovation. The educational arm of the CCJ has had valuable outreach with judges, lawyers, and law students throughout the region.’

When asked about the significance of this particular milestone anniversary, CCJ President, the Honourable Mr Justice Adrian Saunders noted ‘today is a time for reflection and giving thanks. For the past 20 years, the CCJ has upheld the rule of law, safeguarded rights, and strengthened Caribbean jurisprudence. The Court has been a shining example of Caribbean ingenuity, with its innovative funding arrangement, in the form of the CCJ Trust Fund, and, through the establishment of the Regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission, its insulation from external interference in its recruitment practices. This anniversary is not just a celebration of 20 long years, but also of our enduring commitment to delivering accessible, fair, and efficient justice to the people and states of the Caribbean. It is a privilege and an honour to serve the people

of this region, and we, the Judges and staff of the Court, are incredibly grateful to have had that opportunity over the past 20 years. We look forward to doing so for the next 20 years and beyond.’

The CCJ was established in 2005 to serve as a final court of appeal for the region and to determine any matters arising out of the interpretation and application of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas which established the CARICOM Single Market Economy. In the last 20 years, the Court has heard over 400 matters in its Appellate Jurisdiction and 37 matters in its Original Jurisdiction. In the Appellate Jurisdiction, a number of its landmark cases have concerned issues of constitutional rights, while in the Original Jurisdiction, the Court has decided on matters which include the imposition or failure to impose applicable tariffs, economic policies that affect regional trade, or disputes where CARICOM nationals are denied their right to live, work, or travel freely.

The CCJ has also developed a reputation for innovation in the administration of justice. It was one of the first courts in the region to livestream matters and conduct virtual hearings, having started doing so from as early as 2008. As a leader in technology in the region, the Court is an early adopter of the use of artificial intelligence incorporating it as a tool for legal research.

In addition to justice administration, the CCJ’s work with affiliate organisations such as its educational arm, the CCJ Academy for Law and the Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers (CAJO) has also proven to be beneficial to the region. Recently, through the efforts of the Academy, chaired by CCJ President-designate, the Honourable Mr Justice Winston Anderson, the Needham’s Point Declaration on Criminal Justice was adopted and since then, has been cited in over 50 matters throughout the region. While the CAJO, chaired by CCJ Judge, the Honourable Mr Justice Peter Jamadar, provides judicial training for judicial officers throughout the region to support effective and efficient justice delivery in the region.

The Interfaith Service is just one of several activities that will be held during the Court’s year-long celebration. As part of the commemorative activities, the Court will host a public exhibition showcasing a range of artefacts and archival material that chronicle its two-decade journey which will be open to the public later this year in Port of Spain. The 8<sup>th</sup> Biennial CCJ Academy for Law Conference will also be held in November under the theme ‘The CCJ at 20: Reflections on Caribbean Jurisprudence.’

Interested persons can view the live stream via our YouTube channel at the link: [Interfaith Service of Prayer and Reflection](#).

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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, five states access the Court in its Appellate Jurisdiction, these being Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, and Saint Lucia. 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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