



CARIBBEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

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THE CCJ ACADEMY FOR LAW SUCCESSFULLY HOSTS ITS LARGEST BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The CCJ Academy for Law successfully hosted its 8th Biennial Conference from 26–28 November 2025 at the Hyatt Regency Trinidad under the theme “The CCJ at 20: Reflections on Caribbean Jurisprudence”. Attracting over 400 judicial officers, legislators, legal practitioners, academics, law students and other civil society stakeholders from across the region, this year’s event was the largest Conference ever hosted by the Academy. Participants engaged in discussions on the evolution, impact, and future of Caribbean jurisprudence.

Declaring the Conference open, the Honourable Mr Justice Winston Anderson, President of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) and Chair of the CCJ Academy for Law, reflected on the significance of the moment. He remarked that ‘The Conference theme invites us to reflect on the strides made, the progress achieved, and the paradigm shifts inspired by the region’s apex court, as well as on the promises and potential for the future. As the educational arm of the Court, the CCJ Academy considered it fitting to bring down the curtain on this year’s anniversary celebrations by presenting the opportunity to examine the Court’s landmark judgments and the impact that the Court has had on the Caribbean legal landscape and the administration of justice.’ Additionally, President Anderson paid tribute to the late Mr Justice Wit, former Judge of the CCJ, describing him as an integral member of the Academy whose scholarship and vision helped shape modern Caribbean jurisprudence.

Also delivering remarks at the Opening Ceremony, Ms Lisa Shoman, SC, General Counsel, CARICOM (Caribbean Community) Secretariat, emphasised the regional importance of forging a distinct Caribbean jurisprudence. She stated that political independence compelled Caribbean legal practitioners to ‘ensure that we work to shape our own legal landscape, to forge a Caribbean

jurisprudence that is a true reflection of our own unique culture, our particular social and economic realities, and that girds and supports our integration process as the Caribbean Community.’

During the Opening Ceremony, regional and international development partners also reaffirmed their support for strengthening justice institutions throughout the Caribbean. Her Excellency Cécile Tassin, Ambassador of the Delegation of the European Union (EU) to Trinidad and Tobago, highlighted the EU’s enduring partnership with the Court, noting that ‘since 2010, the European Union has been honoured to support the CCJ in its mission to advance access to justice and judicial excellence in the Caribbean. The EU strongly believes that supporting justice institutions in our partner regions is essential for democratic governance, the protection of human rights, gender equality, citizen security, and sustainable socio-economic development. Effective and accessible justice systems serve as the foundation upon which inclusive and resilient societies are built.’

Mr Anton Edmunds, General Manager of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Caribbean Country Department, observed that the Court’s 20th Anniversary represents ‘more than a milestone in the CCJ’s institutional journey; it is a testament to how far we have come as a region in shaping our own narrative of justice. The Court’s legacy rests not only on its rulings, but on its unwavering commitment to excellence, integrity, and accessibility – values that resonate deeply with the IDB, and its ONE Caribbean programme’s vision of fostering sustainable, inclusive development through regional cooperation and institutional strengthening.’

Commending the CCJ and the Academy for their leadership in strengthening the rule of law in the region, Dr Isaac Solomon, Vice-President (Operations) of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), opined, ‘CDB salutes the CCJ and the Academy for their contributions on rule of law; access to justice, including by the poor; and regional integration.’ He also encouraged attendees to ‘work together toward a justice ecosystem that is more deeply integrated, technologically-enabled, people-centred, and capable of supporting the ambitious development agenda of a dynamic Caribbean Community.’

The opening ceremony also featured the launch of the publication “**Caribbean Court of Justice: Striving for Excellence – 20 Years of Evolving Justice**”: a commemorative book featuring summaries of CCJ decisions and scholarly contributions from leading jurists and legal practitioners across the region.

The Conference marked an important leadership transition within the CCJ Academy for Law. The Honourable Mme Justice Ononaiwu, CCJ Judge, was named the new Chair of the Academy, while the Honourable Mme Justice Mira Dean-Armorer, Justice of Appeal of Trinidad and Tobago, was appointed Deputy Chair. Their appointments were warmly received by participants, who recognised the critical role of the Academy in advancing judicial education and legal development across the region.

A significant outcome of the Conference was the adoption of the forward-looking **Port of Spain Declaration on the Development of Caribbean Jurisprudence**. Participants called for targeted

convergence of legislation in appropriate areas while respecting the diversity of legal systems in the region. They advocated for the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms in our constitutions, encouraged review of the continued relevance of savings law clauses in Commonwealth Caribbean constitutions and stressed the importance of enhanced public education on constitutional matters. Participants also reaffirmed their commitment to the continued implementation of the **Needham's Point Declaration on Criminal Justice Reform** and welcomed the development of a digital dashboard to monitor progress on implementation across the region.

Participants recognised the importance of judicial sensitivity to the evolving needs and realities of families in the Caribbean and encouraged modernisation of estate and probate practice. They highlighted the importance of environmental justice and the appropriate recognition and protection of intellectual property rights to sustainable development. Participants affirmed the relevance of international legal obligations to the interpretation and application of domestic law. They advocated for greater awareness and enforcement of the rights of CARICOM nationals under the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

The Port of Spain Declaration encourages the ethical use of technology within the judicial landscape as well as culturally grounded technological innovation to enhance access to justice. The Declaration acknowledges the important role of stakeholders other than the judiciary, in particular, legislatures, CARICOM, academia and the media, in the development of Caribbean jurisprudence. The Port of Spain Declaration will be published on the CCJ Academy for Law's website, www.ccj.org.

The next conference will likely be held in November 2027.



From left to right: Mr Julian Belgrave, Inter-American Bank, Country Representative, Trinidad and Tobago, Mr Anton Edmunds General Manager, Caribbean Country Department, The Inter-American Development Bank; the Hon. Mme Justice Chantal Ononaiwu, CCJ Judge and new Chair of the Academy; the Hon. Mr Justice Winston Anderson, CCJ President and outgoing Chair of the Academy; Mrs Gabrielle Figaro-Jones, CCJ Registrar and Chief Marshal; Her Excellency Cécile Tassin, Ambassador of the Delegation of the European Union to Trinidad and Tobago; and Dr Isaac Solomon, Vice-President (Operations) of the Caribbean Development Bank at the Opening Ceremony of the Conference.

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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 Winston Anderson. 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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