



## CARIBBEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **STATEMENT ON THE PASSING OF RETIRED CCJ JUDGE MR JUSTICE JACOB WIT**

**Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.** The Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) regretfully advises of the passing of retired CCJ Judge, Mr Justice Jacob Wit. Mr Justice Wit was a member of the inaugural CCJ Bench in 2005 and he diligently served until his retirement in December 2023.

This native of the Netherlands was an eminent jurist with wide legal expertise in private law, commercial and admiralty law, insurance, bankruptcy and insolvency, company law and intellectual property, criminal law, military law, administrative law, constitutional law, and international human rights law. Prior to joining the CCJ, he adjudicated over cases in Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles, and the Dutch Windward Islands of Sint Maarten, Sint Eustatius, and Saba.

Justice Wit was a polyglot, with fluency in several languages and will be remembered for his wit inside and outside of the courtroom. He also served as a Ranking Member of the CCJ Academy for Law and was the President of the Constitutional Court of Sint Maarten, a part time role. Recently, Justice Wit was the 2020 recipient of the Nederlandse Juristen Vereniging Award because of his long and effective contributions to forging and maintaining public trust in the judiciary in a turbulent environment.

CCJ President, the Hon. Mr Justice Adrian Saunders commented that “it is a sad day for the Court. Justice Wit and I worked together since 2005 when we formed part of the inaugural Bench of the Court. He was the lone Civil Law Judge on the current CCJ Bench with rich experience in military law, administrative law, constitutional law, and international human rights law. His involvement with the CCJ Academy for Law and his role in coordinating the Academy’s most recent Biennial Conference and Regional Town Hall focusing on crime, paired with his passion for regional

criminal justice reform are recognised and deeply appreciated. I will certainly miss him and his contributions to the Court and to the region.”

Justice Wit was also fondly regarded and highly respected by his peers on the Bench, the Court, and the entire region. His judgments and rich contribution to the work of the CCJ Academy for Law, will endure. The Court will convene a Special Sitting and open a condolence book to recognise the Judge’s contribution.

Our sincerest condolences are extended to his family.

**-End-**

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More information about Mr Justice Jacob Wit

The Honourable Mr Justice Wit studied law from 1971 to 1977 at the Vrije Universiteit (Free University) of Amsterdam, from which he took the degree of Meester in de Rechten (Master of Laws) with honours. After completing his military service (1976-1978) as a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Dutch Navy, he was admitted in March 1978 as a Judicial Trainee at the Studiecentrum Rechtspleging (Training and Study Centre for the Judiciary) in Zutphen, the Netherlands, where he remained enrolled until 1984. During this period, he held the posts of Griffier (Law Clerk) in the Rotterdam District Court, Rotterdam, (1978-1980) and plaatsvervangend Officier van Justitie (Deputy Prosecutor) at the Amsterdam District Court (1980-1982) and worked as an advocaat (attorney-at-law) with the Law Firm of Van Doorne & Sjollemma in Rotterdam (1982-1984).

Mr Justice Wit was appointed by Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands as Deputy Judge of the Rotterdam District Court in January 1984, Judge of the Rotterdam District Court in March 1985 and Judge of the Joint Court of Justice of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba on 1 October 1986. This Court consists of several Courts of First Instance (Aruba, Curaçao, Sint Maarten, and the so-called BES islands) and a Court of Appeal.

Between 1986 to 2005, Mr Justice Wit presided over or sat in the Court of Appeal, but mainly presided in the Courts of First Instance. Over this period, he had acquired significant expertise in various posts within the Joint Court of Justice system: Coordinating Judge, Court of First Instance, Curaçao (1993-1996); Coordinator Judge of Instruction, Netherlands Antilles (1994-1997); Coordinating Judge for the Dutch Windward Islands of Sint Maarten, Sint Eustatius and Saba (1997-2001); and from 2001 to 2005 as Senior Judge and Acting President of the Court.

Mr Justice Jacob Wit took the Oath of Office as a Judge of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) at The President’s House, Port of Spain, on Wednesday 1 June 2005. In November 2010, Mr Justice Wit was appointed and sworn in as the President of the Constitutional Court of Sint Maarten, a part-time function. He was the lone Civil Law Judge on the CCJ Bench.

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