CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION OF JUDICIAL OFFICERS

MEDIA RELEASE

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CAJO's Largest-Ever Conference Examines the Changing Fundamentals of Judging

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers (CAJO) brought together over 200 judicial officers, court administrators and academics from across the Caribbean and further afield for its largest-ever Biennial Conference, held from 19–21 November 2026 at the Georgetown Marriott Hotel in Guyana.

Hosted by the Judiciary of Guyana under the theme 'Changing Fundamentals of Judging', the 9th Biennial Conference examined how courts can respond to technological, social, and global developments affecting judiciaries and the administration of justice across the Caribbean and beyond.

Speaking at the Opening Ceremony, His Excellency Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of Guyana, reflected on the Caribbean's role in shaping its own judicial traditions. He remarked:

'The Caribbean inherited much of its judicial architecture from the colonial experience. Our legal systems, constitutional arrangements, court structures. and many of our legal traditions bear the imprint of that inheritance. But while we inherited judicial systems. We did not simply remain custodians of someone else's legal tradition. We have developed, strengthened, and adapted those systems that reflect our own constitutional journeys, democratic aspirations, and social realities.'.

The Opening Ceremony also featured remarks by the Honourable Mr Justice Winston Anderson, President of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ); the Honourable Mme Justice Roxane George, Chancellor of the Judiciary of Guyana (Ag); Mr Justice Peter Jamadar, CCJ Judge and Chair of CAJO; and Ms Katy Thompson, United Nations Development Programme Resident Representative for Guyana and Suriname. A cultural presentation showcased Guyana's rich cultural diversity brought a close to ceremony.

Delivering the feature address, entitled 'Changing Fundamentals of Judging', the Honourable Mr Justice Bryan Sykes OJ, CD, Chief Justice of Jamaica, emphasised that while the circumstances in which courts operate continue to evolve, the foundational principles of judicial decision-making remain constant:

‘The fundamentals of judging have not changed. Independence, impartiality, integrity and fidelity to the rule of law are exactly what they were. What has changed is the ground’

Over the three days, participants explored artificial intelligence and technology, public trust and confidence, crime and violence, human rights, judicial ethics and judicial wellbeing through plenary discussions and breakout sessions.

Professor Justin Robinson, Pro Vice-Chancellor of The University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus, examined the implications of a weakening international legal order for small and medium-sized states. In his presentation, ‘The Death of International Law? Implications and Opportunities for Small and Medium States’, he emphasised the Caribbean’s role in defending international law through stronger regional institutions and effective domestic courts:

‘International law is not dead. It has been abandoned by those who needed it least and left in the care of those who need it most’

Mr Justice Adrian Saunders, former CCJ President and former Chair of CAJO, presented a proposal for a model Practice Direction on gender sensitive adjudication for adaptation by regional judiciaries. Building on existing Gender Equality Protocols, the proposed Direction aims to address gender stereotypes, protect vulnerable participants and promote fairness for all court users.

As part of the Conference programme, CAJO reaffirmed its longstanding commitments through several resolutions addressing judicial independence, constitutional rights, public confidence, judicial resources, training and wellbeing. The resolutions underscored the responsibility of judiciaries to maintain the highest standards of integrity, safeguard democracy, prudently engage technology including AI, and to be mindful of the specific needs of persons and communities who are marginalised and vulnerable.

They also urged governments to adequately staff and resource judiciaries and encouraged stronger stakeholder collaboration to improve judicial efficiency. Further recommendations addressed the wellbeing of judicial officers and staff and continuing education and training to strengthen responses to arms, drug and human trafficking.

The resolutions reiterated that undue and unfounded attacks on the judiciary undermine public confidence, the authority of courts, and the rule of law. They also reaffirmed the importance of international law and a global rules-based order to the political, economic and social development of small and medium-sized states.

During the Conference, CAJO elected a new 15-member Management Committee and announced that its next Biennial Conference will be held in the Cayman Islands in 2028.

For more information about CAJO and the Conference resolutions, visit www.thecajo.org.



The newly installed CAJO Management Committee comprising judicial officers from across the region.



From L-R: Vanessa Untiedt, Project Specialist and Liaison with EL PACCTO, UNDP Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean; the Honourable Mme Justice Roxane George, Chancellor of the Judiciary of Guyana and Vice-Chair of CAJO; Christalle Gemon,

Lead- PACE Justice Project; and the Honourable Mr Justice Peter Jamadar, CCJ Judge and CAJO Chair at the closing ceremony of the Conference.

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About the Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers

The Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers (CAJO) brings together the region's Chancellors, Chief Justices, Judges, Masters, Registrars, Magistrates, Tribunal Members, Executive Court Administrators, and other judicial staff. The CAJO is a non-profit organisation registered in Trinidad and Tobago. The first meeting of judicial officers from across the region took place in June 2009 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, marking the birth of the CAJO. With its own Constitution and membership, the CAJO was ably headed by Hon. Mr Justice Adrian Saunders, former President of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), who served as Chair from 2009 to 2019. The CAJO is led by a Management Committee comprising judicial officers elected at the Association's Business Meeting, held biennially. The Management Committee comprises 16 members from almost all countries in the region. The CAJO provides a host of judicial education engagements for judicial officers across the region, including its Biennial Conference, training programmes, and workshops on various topics and areas of law and practice, and a biannual publication, CAJO News.

For more information on the CAJO's 9th Biennial Conference, please contact:

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