



## Cayman Islands Judicial Administration

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Seeking Common Solutions to Joint Regional Concerns: Regional Heads of Judiciaries Call for Meeting with Heads of Governments**

Among the key outcomes of the recent meeting in Cayman of regional heads of judiciaries was a resolution to establish a forum for communication between the regional Heads of Government and the Heads of Judiciaries (HoJs) to arrive at common solutions for “tackling crime and other pressing regional issues that intimately concern the administration of justice”.

Heads of Judiciaries from across the Caribbean Region and Bermuda met in Grand Cayman 28-29 July 2022 for the two-day Conference of Chief Justices and Heads of Judiciaries, hosted by Cayman’s Chief Justice Sir Anthony Smellie.

“Our July meeting of the Conference of HoJs was, by all accounts, highly successful,” Sir Anthony said. “Over the course of two long days a very full agenda was discussed, resulting in no less than eleven very meaningful resolutions for the advancement of our work for the administration of justice both within each of our member countries and regionally.”

The soon-to-be retired Chief Justice said that it was an honour for the Cayman Islands and for him personally to have hosted this meeting for the second time, the first being in 2007.

“The Conference at its meetings provides a very important forum for the HoJs to consult and collaborate towards the improvement of access to justice for our citizens of the Region. It is therefore a forum which should be regarded and treated as a permanent regional institution,” Cayman’s Chief Justice said.

Among other major outcomes of the Conference was the sharing of lessons learned from the application of information technology during the COVID-19 pandemic, as signalled in the

Conference's theme, "Administering Justice by Use of Information Technology: Building on Covid-19 Experiences".

As part of this focus on technology, the HoJs visited a Courthouse on the second day of the Conference for an on-site joint presentation on the *Curia Suite of Court Applications* in use by the Cayman Courts. The joint presentation was led by the Caribbean Agency for Justice Solutions (CAJS) Executive Director Bevil Wooding and Chief Technology Officer Richard Wall, and the Cayman Judicial Administration senior team. As an outcome of this presentation, the HoJs passed a strongly worded resolution calling for a commitment-in-principle in support of CAJS's court management platform.

In other technology-related resolutions, the HoJs recommended that regional judiciaries consider in appropriate cases the permanent adoption of measures to allow for the virtual participation of parties and witnesses in court proceedings. To facilitate this, the HoJs proposed the establishment of supervised kiosks at remote locations with assisted access (where needed) to proceedings by way of Zoom or other similar technology.

They also pledged the continued sharing among the membership of protocols and practice directions developed for the use of IT in response to the pandemic and more generally.

Other presenters at the Conference included a virtual and in-person team led by JURIST Project Director Gloria Richards-Johnson. The JURIST project is a multi-million-dollar Canadian Government-funded Judicial Reform and Institutional Strengthening (JURIST) project, which supports business continuity efforts in the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The Conference resolved to adopt six recommendations (see attached document) by the visiting JURIST team for a post-JURIST-project collaborative arrangement to sustain its gains and achievements.

Importantly, the Conference also resolved that a Conference e-Archive be established as part of the final collaborative effort with JURIST. It was agreed that the e-Archive be hosted by the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) based in Trinidad, as part of the Knowledge Management System (KMS), a digital platform to be created in the final phase of the JURIST Project.

A report on another multi-million-dollar Canadian-Government-funded project, the IMPACT Justice Project, led by UWI's Professor Velma Newton, was well received by the Conference.

The overall goal of this project, which concludes in March 2023, is to enhance access to justice via promotion of the drafting of legislation, the use of alternative dispute resolution, and legal training and sensitisation, among 17 aims.

The Conference also benefitted from a virtual presentation by the US National Center for State Courts (NCSC) Project Director JoAnne Richardson and her team on a Virtual Judicial Education Platform “JUST-CONNECT”, an aspect of the US Government’s Caribbean Basin Security Initiative.

The starting point of this virtual education platform would be a pilot in Trinidad and Tobago to inform its adoption and management, the presenters said. The Conference resolved to resume discussions on this project as it develops.

Other topics included wellness, with virtual presentations by Behavioural Psychologist Dr. Diane Douglas, of Trinidad-based Douglas and Associates, and Psychiatrist Dr. Joseph Sadek, of the Nova Scotia Health Services and Department of Psychiatry, Dalhousie University.

At the end of the presentations the HoJs called for the introduction of a programme of wellness, including psychological and psychiatric support, for all judiciary and judicial support officers.

As part of the continuing impacts of these annual conferences, a large Cayman contingent is expected to attend a meeting of its training arm, the Conference of Caribbean Judicial Officers (CAJO), in St. Lucia in October, having attended the 2011 and 2019 CAJO conferences in Nassau and Belize, respectively. CAJO will serve as part of the implementation of training recommendations from this recent HoJs’s conference.

Apart from these goals to drive solutions to issues impacting the administration of justice across the Region, the Conference took time out to review its Constitution, confirming the inclusion of the mid-Atlantic territory of Bermuda.

The Conference membership will therefore henceforth include Bermuda along with the 20 CARICOM Member and Associate Member States, bringing the Conference membership to 22 territories (including the Netherland Antilles and Aruba, which is not currently a member of CARICOM).

Notably, the Chief Justice of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, the Hon. Dame Janice Pereira, who represents nine CARICOM Member and Associate Member States, was unable to attend because of unexpected intervening circumstances.

Ten other Heads of Judiciaries attended, including the President of the CCJ.

Regrets were tendered by the heads of judiciaries of Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. The post of chief justice of Haiti, which is a Member of CARICOM, has remained vacation since 2011.

The Heads of Judiciaries Conference opened on Thursday July 29, with a Ceremony and Reception at the Ritz-Carlton Ballroom, at which the Acting Governor, HE Mr. Franz Manderson, and the Premier, the Hon. Wayne Panton, formally welcomed the visiting heads of judicature. The opening ceremony was chaired by Mr. Michell Davies, Director of the Truman Bodden Law School; prayers were offered by the Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble-Bloomfield, Regional Deputy General Secretary of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. Sir Anthony introduced the Conference focus and goals.

The opening ceremony featured a traditional music interlude by the *Swanky Kitchen Band*.

--Ends--

**Encl:**

1. Report of the Conference, including agenda and corresponding resolutions
2. JURIST's six recommendations for post-JURIST-project collaborative arrangement to sustain the project's gains and achievements.

**Photo links and captions:**

**Photo 1:**

<https://1drv.ms/u/s!AlyEJrGxkbnvQkazWvpAZx2qUWv?e=zptLN1>

**Heads of Judiciaries with country flags**

The regional heads of Judiciaries attending the Conference of Chief Justices and Heads of Judiciaries in the Cayman Islands, 28-29 July, are, from left, President Adrian Saunders, the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ); Chief Justice Michelle Arana, Belize; Chief Justice Narinder Hargun, Bermuda; Chief Justice Sir Patterson Cheltenham, Barbados; Chief Justice Sir Anthony Smellie, Cayman Islands; Ag. Chancellor of the Judiciary of Guyana Yonette Cummings-Edwards; Chief Justice Ian Winder, the Bahamas; Chief Justice Mabel Agyemang, the Turks and Caicos Islands; Chief Justice Ivor Archie, Trinidad and Tobago; and Chief Justice Bryan Sykes, Jamaica.

*Photo credit:* Bina Mani, Cayman Islands Government Information Services.

**Photo 2:**

<https://1drv.ms/u/s!AlyEJrGxkbnvQoe4KdAVCZIVn7z?e=6oyIX9>

Heads of Judiciaries, special guest speakers, and members of the audience gather on the grand stairway at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel after the opening ceremony of the Heads of Judiciaries Conference, on Thursday, 29 July 2022.

*Photo credit:* Bina Mani, Cayman Islands Government Information Services.

## Photos 3 & 4

<https://1drv.ms/u/s!AlyEJrGxkbngvFSXAAiSh-9bTRRu>

the Caribbean Agency for Justice Solutions (CAJS) Executive Director Bevil Wooding presenting on the Curia court management platform in use at Cayman's court. At left are Chief Justice of Jamaica the Hon. Bryan Sykes, Court Administrator Suzanne Bothwell, and Clerk of Courts Shiona Allenger (both of whom also presented on the platform). Also pictured are some of the other heads of judiciaries attending the on-site presentation: from right forefront, Chief Justice of Bermuda, the Hon. Narinder Hargun; President of the Caribbean Court of Justice, the Hon. Adrian Saunders; and Chief Justice of the Bahamas, the Hon. Ian Winder.

[https://1drv.ms/u/s!AlyEJrGxkbngvFDz4hIR5\\_-wJsyM](https://1drv.ms/u/s!AlyEJrGxkbngvFDz4hIR5_-wJsyM)

Sir Anthony Smellie, Chief Justice of the Cayman Islands, and host of the Conference (right), makes a point during the discussion at the on-site presentation on the Curia court management technology in use at the Cayman Courts. From left forefront, are Chief Justice Ian Winder (Bahamas), President Adrian Saunders (Caribbean Court of Justice), Chief Justice Narinder Hargun (Bermuda), Chief Justice Michelle Arana (Belize) and Ag. Chancellor of the Judiciary of Guyana Yonette Cummings-Edwards.

## Photo 5:

<https://1drv.ms/u/s!AlyEJrGxkbngvCdPnWrcHD8msJvJ>

Regional heads of judiciaries in a round of congratulatory applause following the signing of the amended Constitution of Chief Justices and Heads of Judiciaries, at the 29 July conclusion of the two-day conference.