



# Message from the President

The Caribbean Court of Justice is part of the soul and spirit of the human beings who call these shores of the Caribbean home. It is one of the institutions of governance constructed by the creative intellect of our people to deliver new guiding principles of order and coherence for our societies, as one of our early thinkers, the great Guyanese historian, Professor Elsa Goveia puts it. It begins with the creation of institutions, but the search is a process which is fuelled by an unrelenting optimism and belief in our capacity to offer to each citizen of the Caribbean, and those in the global society with whom we come into contact, the inspiration and opportunity to construct spaces for excellence, renewal and growth. This is precisely what the Caribbean Court of Justice is – an institutional space for Caribbean excellence, renewal and growth.

I am humbled to have been selected as the President of the Court which I consider a pleasure and a privilege. I see my serving in this capacity as a high point in my judicial career. I am of the view that it is extremely important for appeals to the Privy Council to be abolished, as the benefits to be derived are tremendous.

As President of this Court, to continue the vision and in the footsteps of our great Caribbean judges and political leaders to put our stamp on our creative and intellectual space is an immense privilege. This is an opportunity to be at the forefront of the change which the first Chief Justice of Trinidad and Tobago, Sir Hugh Wooding, described as the “radical, almost revolutionary change, if we are to have a juridical system to meet the needs of our social order.” The Caribbean Court of Justice is the lynchpin in the development of Caribbean jurisprudence. It represents the completion of the circle of independence started by our regional forefathers.

Thus far, the Court has unveiled its Strategic Plan 2013-2017, which will foster the fulfilment of our overarching goal of being a leader in providing high-quality justice reflective of the values and mores of our diverse communities and is worthy of the trust and confidence of the people of the region. In the journey towards excellence, access to justice for our Caribbean people is of critical significance. In this vein, the Court has streamlined its internal processes to provide for the electronic filing of documents through a specially designated and secure electronic portal. We have also embarked on a review of our procedural rules to ensure that the Court’s processes are user-friendly, accessible, effective and efficient. The justice we deliver must touch the life of the

ordinary man. With this in mind, the Court has endeavoured not to sit in isolation at the Seat of the Court but rather to ensure that we visit various jurisdictions throughout the Caribbean region, such as Barbados and Jamaica. The judges of the Court have been engaged in several initiatives aimed at raising the public profile of the Court. This has seen a high level of participation at judicial conferences, seminars and workshops to ensure that the presence of the Court is felt both regionally and internationally.

Quite apart from its work as an appellate court, a substantial commitment has been made to strengthening and building the capacity, both in terms of infrastructure and intellect, of Caribbean judiciaries. This initiative has spawned the creation of umbrella bodies, the Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers (CAJO) and the Caribbean Academy for Law and Court Administration (CALCA). CAJO is a prime vehicle for judicial education in the region and is currently considering online judicial education programmes for Caribbean judges. It has already held two successful biennial conferences bringing together the judicial officers in the region. CALCA’s main objective is the advancing of knowledge, education, learning, research, and practical application of law and the administration of justice in the Caribbean context. Its two main functions are to provide a forum for discussing legal concepts and rules in the areas particularly of, general international law, international trade law, regional integration law, and comparative law and to facilitate training and evaluation and to develop problem-solving capability in order to enhance all areas of court administration.

It is my steadfast belief that the *raison d’être* of this Court is to serve our Caribbean people. This Court belongs to the people; I am merely the custodian. With that in mind I present to you our Court Report for the period 2011-2013.

**Sir Dennis Byron**  
**President**