



CARIBBEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

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MEDIA RELEASE

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THE CCJ CELEBRATES TEN YEARS TODAY

The President of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), the Rt Hon. Sir Dennis Byron is hopeful that all member states of Caricom will give the CCJ a 10th anniversary gift of “full accession” to the Court. Sir Dennis made the statement at the anniversary celebrations of the Court at its headquarters in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago Thursday evening.

“The CCJ has increased access to justice for the people of the Caribbean,” Sir Dennis told the ceremony attended by judges of the Court, members of the Regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission, which appointed the judges, the President of the Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago, Reginald Armour SC and members of the diplomatic fraternity here. And he cited the case of *Ross v Sinclair* [2009] CCJ 11 (AJ) “of two very poor ladies in Guyana who had a dispute of the right to occupy a condominium.”

“The CCJ heard this case under special rules for poor people. The Guyanese bar agreed to represent both ladies *pro bono* (free of charge) and they saved the cost of travel and heard submissions by way of teleconferencing,” said the President of the CCJ to indicate the people-centred nature of the Court.

The CCJ in its original jurisdiction is the Court of the Caricom Single Market and Economy to which all member states belong. In its appellate jurisdiction so far Barbados, Guyana, Belize and Dominica have made the Court their final Court of appeal in all matters replacing the British Privy Council.

President Sir Dennis Byron quoted Trinidad and Tobago calypsonian, Singing Sandra in her 2005 composition in which she noted that “to foreign masters you bow, look how them judges in London, making final decisions for we. To their judgment we must keep bowing, most insulting indeed, why to their council we must be privy.”

“The CCJ is a breath of fresh air and we should embrace it,” said Lecturer in Political Science at the University of the West Indies (St. Augustine) Dr. Indira Rampersad.

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And giving his full support to Trinidad and Tobago and all Caricom countries abolishing appeals to the British Privy Council in favour of the CCJ, President of the T&T Law Association, Reginald Armour said “there can be no turning back on the road to maturation of the Caribbean.”

He said “there will always be stumbles along the way but we will only be able to walk when we try,” said Armour. The Senior Counsel cited and praised the CCJ’s judgment in the Shanique Myrie case in which the Court affirmed the right of the Jamaican national to travel freely to Barbados under the arrangements of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

Chairman of the Grenada Constitution Reform Committee, Dr. Francis Alexis, lauded the quality of judges produced by the Caribbean over many decades and noted that the “machinery for appointing judges, pivoting on the autonomous RJLSC, is fully insulated against political interference.”

And he, like others at the ceremony, cited the Myrie case as indicative of the Court’s ability to rule against governments when there is the need to do so.

President Sir Dennis noted that the CCJ was established on a solid foundation laid “with the sterling contributions of the first President of the Court, the Rt Hon. Mr Justice Michael de La Bastide, the senior members of his team including Master Morris-Alleyne and the first Registrar of the court Ms. Paula Pierre.

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