



CARIBBEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

134 HENRY STREET
PORT OF SPAIN
REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
Phone: (868) 623-2225 Fax: (868) 624-4710
Website: www.caribbeancourtofjustice.org

MEDIA RELEASE

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**THE CARIBBEAN COURT OF JUSTICE
BIDS FAREWELL TO ITS FIRST FEMALE JUDGE
THE HONOURABLE MME. JUSTICE DÉsirÉE BERNARD CCH, O.R.**

CCJ, Port of Spain. The Hon. Mme. Justice Désirée Bernard CCH, O.R., the first female Judge appointed to the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), received good wishes and said farewell yesterday, as local and regional representatives gathered in Guyana for a special sitting of the Court in her honour.

The Hon. Mme. Justice Bernard, a citizen of Guyana, served as Judge of the CCJ from its inauguration in April 2005, and has contributed to the development of Caribbean jurisprudence. Prior to joining the CCJ, Mme. Justice Bernard established a number of professional “firsts,” being appointed the first and only female President of the Organization of Commonwealth Caribbean Bar Associations (OCCBA); first female High Court Judge of the Supreme Court of Guyana (1980); the first female Justice of Appeal (1992); the first female Chief Justice of Guyana and in the Commonwealth Caribbean (1996); and the first female Chancellor of the Judiciary of Guyana and in the Commonwealth Caribbean (2001).

For her exceptional contribution to the improvement of the status of women and to the development and practice of law, Mme. Justice Bernard has received several awards, the most notable being the Cacique Crown of Honour, and the Order of Roraima, Guyana’s 3rd and 2nd highest national awards respectively. In July 2005, the Honourable Judge was awarded the CARICOM Triennial Award for Women. She was awarded the degree of Doctor of Laws (honoris causa) by the University of the West Indies in November 2007. In February 2011, Mme. Justice Bernard was appointed a judge of the Inter-American Development Bank Administrative Tribunal, based in Washington DC, USA.

At the special sitting of the Court, which was presided over by the President of the CCJ, the Rt. Hon. Sir Dennis Byron. Also in attendance was the Chief Justice of Belize, The Hon. Mr. Justice Kenneth Benjamin, who together with Chancellor Singh sat with the CCJ Judges

Submissions were made to the Court by various key speakers. Contributions were made by The Hon. Mr. Justice Carl Singh, Chancellor of the Judiciary of Guyana, The Hon. Mohabir Anil Nandlall, Attorney-General of Guyana, Hon. Mr. Justice Stanley Moore, Justice of Appeal of the Supreme Court of Swaziland, Professor Harold Lutchman representing the RJLSC, Mr. Oswald Barnes, representing the CCJ Trust Fund, His Excellency Irwin LaRocque, Secretary-General of CARICOM, Mr. Ronald Burch-Smith, President of the

Guyana Bar Association and Ms. Simone Morris-Ramlal of the Guyana Association of Women Lawyers. A video message by Ms. Tracey Robinson was also submitted at the sitting.

President Byron, in his contributions, highlighted the attributes of Mme. Justice Bernard's career under the themes of excellence and integrity. He urged everyone to:

"...celebrate her achievements not merely in word, but also in deed, by making excellence and integrity the hallmark of our future endeavours"

Chancellor Singh's contributions highlighted, among other things, that:

"Her legal career and her attainment of a seat on the CCJ is eloquent testimony of the heights achievable by women in the legal profession who commit themselves to the disciplined and dedicated study of law."

Secretary-General of CARICOM, His Excellency Irwin La Rocque, added that Mme. Justice Bernard:

"...has shown what women can achieve in a not so level playing field and she has set an awe-inspiring example for women to follow."

He added;

"The CCJ is an integral edifice in the regional architecture as designed within the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas...even more important, the Court and both its jurisdictions represents the essence of our independence and sovereignty and is essential to the progress of the integration movement."

END