



## CARIBBEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **STATEMENT ON THE PASSING OF FORMER CCJ PRESIDENT THE RIGHT HONOURABLE MR JUSTICE MICHAEL DE LA BASTIDE**

**Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.** With deep sorrow, the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) wishes to advise that its first President, the Right Honourable Mr Justice Michael de la Bastide TC passed away on 30 March 2024. Mr Justice de la Bastide steered the Court from its inauguration until his retirement in 2011.

Mr. Justice de la Bastide was an exemplary jurist. Having received a sterling education in Trinidad and Tobago and the United Kingdom in his formative years, he served as an Independent Senator in Trinidad and Tobago's Parliament. He was an exceptionally successful attorney-at-law and also President of the Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago. He was appointed Chief Justice of Trinidad and Tobago directly from private practice in 1995. The following year, he was awarded the country's then highest national honour, the Trinity Cross. After demitting office as Chief Justice in 2002, he was appointed as a member of the Privy Council by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 2004 and elected as President of the Caribbean Court of Justice on 18 August 2004. In 2021, he published his book "Within the Law, Memoirs of a Caribbean Jurist" to great acclaim. His words "Be intolerant. Be intolerant of incompetence, of inefficiency, and of inertia. Be as intolerant of these as you are or should be of injustice. If intolerance of this kind would spread, who knows what wonders we might perform" sum up his life's devotion to the law and humanity.

CCJ President, the Honourable Mr Justice Adrian Saunders, remembers Mr Justice de la Bastide, saying, "It was an extraordinary honour and privilege to have worked alongside President de la Bastide. His razor sharp mind, his prodigious knowledge of the law and his tremendous experience exerted a profound influence on me. I express deepest condolences to his dear wife and family."

As we pay homage to the great leadership Mr Justice de la Bastide provided our institution, the Court will open a condolence book to the public on Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024. We mourn this sad loss to the region and express deepest sympathies to his loved ones. May he rest in peace.

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#### About the Caribbean Court of Justice

The Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) was inaugurated in Port of Spain, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on 16 April 2005 and presently has a Bench of six judges presided over by CCJ President, the Honourable Mr Justice Adrian Saunders. The CCJ has an Original and an Appellate Jurisdiction and is effectively, therefore, two courts in one. In its Original Jurisdiction, it is an international court with exclusive jurisdiction to interpret and apply the rules set out in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas (RTC) and to decide disputes arising under it. The RTC established the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). In its Original Jurisdiction, the CCJ is critical to the CSME and all 12 Member States which belong to the CSME (including their citizens, businesses, and governments) can access the Court's Original Jurisdiction to protect their rights under the RTC. In its Appellate Jurisdiction, the CCJ is the final court of appeal for criminal and civil matters for those countries in the Caribbean that alter their national Constitutions to enable the CCJ to perform that role. At present, four states access the Court in its Appellate Jurisdiction, these being Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, and Saint Lucia. However, by signing and ratifying the Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Court of Justice, Member States of the Community have demonstrated a commitment to making the CCJ their final court of appeal. The Court is the realisation of a vision of our ancestors, an expression of independence and a signal of the region's coming of age.

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