



CARIBBEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

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MEDIA RELEASE
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DR CHANTAL ONONAIWU TO JOIN THE CCJ BENCH

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Dr Chantal Ononaiwu of Jamaica has been selected by the Regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission (RJLSC), the independent body responsible for recruiting staff and judges for the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), to join the CCJ as a Judge, filling the vacancy created by the untimely retirement on 31 December 2023 of Mr Justice Jacob Wit, who died on 16 January 2024.

Dr Chantal Ononaiwu is an attorney-at-law with over 20 years' experience at the Bar. In particular, she has specialist expertise in Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Law and International Law, including International Trade Law, and varied legal experience as an adjudicator, litigator, legal advisor, and university lecturer. Apart from her international trade law experience, Dr Ononaiwu has expertise in Commercial Law, having worked in the international business and financial services sector as the Director, Value Proposition Development at Invest Barbados. She also served as a Vice-Chair of the International Chamber of Commerce Digital Standards Initiative Legal Reform Advisory Board. Further, at the start of her legal career, Dr Ononaiwu worked as counsel in the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Division of the Attorney General's Chambers in Jamaica.

Dr Ononaiwu has lectured in International Trade and Investment Law, Public International Law, and Criminal Law at The University of the West Indies. Her academic work includes publications in the areas of International Trade Law, Investment Law, Public International Law, and Constitutional Law.

Dr Ononaiwu most recently served as the Director, External Trade, CARICOM, leading the coordination of the organisation's external trade policy. During her tenure, she advised CARICOM and its Member States on international trade and investment issues and was a negotiator for the Community in negotiations of international trade agreements. She also has experience as an international trade adjudicator, having served as a member of a panel that adjudicated a World Trade Organization dispute.

Dr Ononaiwu is a Rhodes Scholar and holds the degrees of Doctor of Philosophy in Law from the University of Oxford; Master of Laws from the University of Cambridge; and Bachelor of Laws (First Class Honours) from The University of the West Indies, as well as a Legal Education Certificate of Merit from the Norman Manley Law School.

In making the announcement, the Chairman of the RJLSC and President of the CCJ, the Honourable Mr Justice Adrian Saunders, took the opportunity to commend the process used to recruit Judges of the Court, stating, “The RJLSC prides itself on a recruitment process that is competitive, premised on merit and experience and fiercely independent. Each appointment reflects our unwavering commitment to selecting individuals of the highest calibre, based solely on their expertise, integrity, and dedication to justice. During the recruitment process, we received applications from The Bahamas, Great Britain, Canada, Nigeria, Dominica, Jamaica, Sri Lanka, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. Of the applications received, four candidates, three females and one male, were shortlisted for further consideration and subsequently interviewed by the entire membership of the Commission in Port of Spain in person. This process ensures that our Court continues to be a beacon of fairness and excellence, characterised by the utmost professionalism and impartiality.”

It is expected that Dr Ononaiwu will take the oath of office in October 2024. The RJLSC is currently conducting recruitment exercises for further appointments to the Bench, including the post of President to replace Justice Saunders who will retire in 2025.



Dr Chantal Ononaiwu

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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 seven 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, five 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.

For more information, please contact:

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