



## CARIBBEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **NEW CCJ JUDGE SWORN IN**

**Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.** On Tuesday, 29 October 2024, the Honourable Mme Justice Chantal Ononaiwu was sworn in as a Judge of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), becoming the second Jamaican national to join the Bench of the regional Court. The swearing-in ceremony was conducted by the Governor General of Jamaica, His Excellency the Most Honourable Sir Patrick Allen, at King's House, Kingston, Jamaica.

In his remarks during the ceremony, the Honourable Mr Justice Adrian Saunders, CCJ President, noted that *“Article IV(1) of the Agreement Establishing the Court requires that when the Court... at least three [judges] must possess expertise in international law including international trade law. Mme Justice Ononaiwu is not merely an expert in international law, she is more specifically an expert in international trade law and an active practitioner in the field. She has appeared as counsel before the CCJ in many of the Court’s seminal cases dealing with the CSME. She has experience in adjudicating WTO international trade disputes. The job she previously held involved negotiating international trade issues on behalf of the Caribbean Community. Indeed, she led the coordination of CARICOM’s external trade policy. Caricom’s undoubted massive loss is the CCJ’s gain, but I venture to suggest that the region would benefit even more greatly from her tenure on the Court.”*

Mme Justice Ononaiwu was chosen from a pool of 12 applicants by the [Regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission \(RJLSC\)](#), an independent body of 11 individuals responsible for appointing the Judges and staff of the Court. Applicants must have either served as a judge for at least five years or have a minimum of 15 years of experience in the practice or teaching of law. Additionally, candidates are evaluated on criteria including high moral character, intellectual and analytical abilities, sound judgment, integrity, and an understanding of people and society.

With over 20 years of legal experience, Mme Justice Ononaiwu brings specialist expertise in Caribbean Community (CARICOM) law and international law, including international trade law. Her varied legal background includes roles as an adjudicator, litigator, legal advisor, and university lecturer. Mme Justice Ononaiwu also has significant expertise in commercial law, having worked in the international business and financial services sector as the Director of Value Proposition Development at Invest Barbados. Additionally, she served as Vice-Chair of the International Chamber of Commerce Digital Standards Initiative Legal Reform Advisory Board. She has also lectured on international trade and investment law, public international law, and criminal law at The University of the West Indies. Prior to her appointment to

the CCJ, she served as Director of External Trade at the CARICOM Secretariat and previously as a Trade Policy and Legal Specialist.

In her remarks, Mme Justice Ononaiwu stated: *"I am honoured to serve as a Judge of the region's highest court. Our Caribbean Court of Justice plays a pivotal role in advancing the rule of law in CARICOM and building Caribbean jurisprudence. I will work assiduously with my colleagues in service of the Court's mission to provide accessible, fair and efficient justice for the people and States of the Community."*

Mme Justice Ononaiwu's appointment fills the vacancy left by Mr Justice Jacob Wit, one of the first judges appointed to the Court, who retired in December 2023 and passed away in January 2024. The RJLSC will, in due course, announce the appointment of another Judge and the Court's fourth President, who will succeed Mr Justice Andrew Burgess and Mr Justice Saunders, respectively, upon their retirements in 2025.

**-End-**



*The Honourable Mme Justice Chantal Ononaiwu  
Judge of the Caribbean Court of Justice*

### **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.

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