



CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION OF JUDICIAL OFFICERS  
**CAJO**

Training and Education Report

# Regional Magistrates' and Parish Judges' Forum

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## October 2020

The Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers (CAJO) brings together the region's Chancellors, Chief Justices, Judges, Masters, Registrars, Parish Judges, Magistrates, Tribunal Members, Executive Court Administrators, and other judicial staff. The first meeting of judicial officers across the region took place in June 2009 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago and this marked the birth of the CAJO. With its own Constitution and membership, the CAJO was ably headed by Hon Mr Justice Adrian Saunders, President of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), who served as Chair from 2009 – 2019. The CAJO is led by a Management Committee which comprises judicial officers elected at the Association's Business Meeting held biennially. At present, Hon Mr Justice Peter Jamadar, Judge of the CCJ, serves as Chair of the Association with Hon Mme Justice Vivian Georgis Taylor-Alexander, Judge of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, as Vice-Chair. The Management Committee comprises 15 members from almost all countries in the region. The CAJO is also supported by its Research and Programme Coordinator, Elron Elahie. The CAJO provides a host of judicial education engagements for judicial officers across the region including its Biennial Conference, training programmes and workshops on various topics and areas of law and practice, and a biannual Newsletter, CAJO News.

# Overview

On Friday 09 October 2020, the CAJO held its first Magistrates' and Parish Judges' Roundtable Webinar which brought together over sixty Magistrates from across the region. Prior to the Forum, the CAJO conducted an assessment of what topics and areas Magistrates would like to focus on at their forum. This information allowed for the CAJO to design a programme that provided two knowledge sharing sessions as well as generate discussion. A third session was designed around ascertaining the needs of Magistracies across the region.

## Sessions

**The first session**, which was on Remote Hearings, addressed the challenges faced and solutions implemented around protocols, non-appearance, non-compliance, access to justice, and etiquette as they relate to remote hearings in the Magistrates' and Parish Courts. This session was facilitated by Chief Justice (Ret) of Barbados, Sir Marston Gibson and Parish Judge Michele Salmon delivered a comprehensive and insightful presentation on her experience with remote hearings.

**The second session**, Safety and Support in the time of COVID-19, was also facilitated by Sir Marston Gibson and included a presentation from His Worship Ian Weekes, Chief Magistrate of Barbados on his experiences with ensuring safety and providing support during pandemic times. The session sought to explore the challenges faced and solutions implemented around the safety of and support provided to judicial officers, the safety of and support provided to staff and litigants, and health protocols in the courtroom/courthouse as well as interrogating present and future needs to ensure safety and support in their courtrooms and courthouses.

## Sessions

**The final session**, facilitated by Justice Peter Jamadar and Mr Dennis Darby, Consultant to the JURIST Project, provided a space for Magistrates and Parish Judges to share their present and future needs as they relate to ICT equipment and support, access to legislation, case law, databases, protocols, and directions, improvement of physical environment, and continued judicial education and training. Riana Kanhai of the JURIST Project was assigned as rapporteur to collect and collate the information from this session. It is hoped that arising out of the information collected during this session, the JURIST Project will be better positioned to offer support to Magistracies across the region.

## Feedback

Magistrates and Parish Judges engaged with each other throughout the Roundtable Webinar and noted, in particular, how beneficial this virtual coming together has been. One Magistrate noted that, “**In a decade as a Magistrate, this is the first time I’ve been able to hear from colleagues so far afield in the region.**” And many Magistrates and Parish Judges celebrated the CAJO’s commitment to providing judicial education and training opportunities.

The CAJO was thanked by all in attendance for facilitating the Roundtable Webinar and providing a space for Magistrates and Parish Judges to share concerns, experiences, insights.