

**RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT THE 8TH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF
THE CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION OF JUDICIAL OFFICERS (CAJO)
FOR PUBLIC DISSEMINATION**

THE CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION OF JUDICIAL OFFICERS at its 8th Biennial Conference held at the Hamilton Princess, Bermuda, on 21st November – 23rd November 2024:

CONSCIOUS of its influential role in improving the administration of justice throughout the Caribbean Region;

REAFFIRMING its commitment to judicial education in the region;

RECOGNISING that public trust and confidence in the judiciary and adjudicatory bodies are essential both to protecting judicial independence and for the proper administration of justice;

NOTING that there is a need to fortify public trust and confidence in judiciaries and adjudicatory bodies across the Caribbean Region, and aware of the onus on judiciaries and adjudicatory bodies to respond to this need;

AFFIRMING that judicial officers are accountable to the public for their performance and in particular for ethical conduct on and off the Bench and for the timeliness of their decision-making bearing in mind the necessity for appropriate resourcing;

AWARE OF the fact that the administration of justice in the region is plagued with inordinate delays that negatively impact the administration of justice and public confidence in the judiciaries and other adjudicatory bodies, and also noting the role that external agents have in creating and reducing these delays;

DESIROUS of calling attention to some of the more significant impediments to the enhancement of public confidence and the strengthening of judicial independence;

RECOGNISING that inordinately lengthy acting appointments of judicial officers and adjudicators can undermine public perceptions about the core judicial values of independence, integrity, impartiality, and erode public trust and confidence;

MINDFUL that Caribbean Constitutions expressly constitute the State with three co-equal branches of government whose respective Heads are entitled to be accorded appropriate treatment in keeping with their status as the highest office holders in the land;

RECALLING CAJO's 2019 and 2022 Resolutions in Belize and Saint Lucia and noting with continued concern that the practice of inordinately long acting appointments of high judicial officials negatively impacts public confidence in the administration of justice and undermines judicial independence;

COGNISANT of the location of the Caribbean region and the occurrences of contemporary forms of slavery, forced labour, domestic servitude, and human trafficking, predominantly of women and girls, and the pivotal roles that judicial officers can play in mitigating, ameliorating, and eradicating these human rights violations;

ACKNOWLEDGING that gender-based violence in the Caribbean is pervasive, takes many forms, and is acutely connected to gendered power imbalances. And noting the prevalence of domestic and intimate partner violence, sexual violations, and sexual harassment in our region while many accounts of gender-based violence remain unreported and are not prosecuted;

RECOGNISING that all persons are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that all persons regardless of sex, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and disability are entitled to the protection of their human rights;

ATTENTIVE to the fact that there must be a focus on the wellbeing of judicial officers and judiciary staff so that they can continue to perform at the highest levels of efficiency and effectiveness and that a large proportion of judicial officers and judiciary staff experience high levels of stress which negatively impacts their mental health and wellbeing;

ACCEPTING that technology, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), is an intrinsic part of the infrastructure of court administration and necessary for its effective and efficient functioning and delivery of services.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION OF JUDICIAL OFFICERS

- 1) Reaffirms the duty and responsibility of all judiciaries and adjudicatory bodies to take all reasonable steps to operate with integrity, and to secure the trust and confidence of the people of the Caribbean, which includes a commitment of judiciaries to working with appropriate stakeholders and external agencies to reduce unreasonable delays in the judicial system.
- 2) Recommends and encourages the commitment by governments to ensuring that judiciaries are properly staffed and resourced to discharge their responsibilities in continuously changing judicial landscapes in the context of continuously increasing workloads.
- 3) Restates its serious concerns over the continuing untenable situations in which Heads of Judiciaries in the Caribbean are appointed in acting capacities for extended periods of time, such as is the case in Guyana since 2005 in relation to the important Office of Chancellor and since 2017 in relation to the Office of Chief Justice.
- 4) Reiterates the role that judicial officers have to guard democracy and uphold the constitutional rights of all, and that judicial officers have a duty to respond to the specific needs of persons and communities who are marginalised and vulnerable.
- 5) Recommends increased continuous education and training for judiciaries, adjudicatory bodies, various law enforcement arms, and other agencies on their roles in eradicating modern slavery, forced labour, and human trafficking, including identifying victims of human trafficking, the non-punishment principle, and trial procedures and principles of sentencing to prevent re-victimisation.

- 6) Reaffirms its commitment to supporting research and educational initiatives that address environmental issues negatively impacting sustainable development and human rights in the region.
- 7) Recommends that judiciaries and adjudicatory bodies should be cognisant of the importance of the wellbeing of its judicial officers and staff and should constantly strive to create an environment and implement and maintain interventions that foster the wellbeing of judicial officers and judicial staff, and that the promulgation or adoption of policies promoting wellbeing should be pursued.
- 8) Recommends that judiciaries and adjudicatory bodies embrace technology, including AI, as an intrinsic part of the infrastructure of court administration and necessary for its effective and efficient functioning and delivery of services, and that the promulgation of relevant policies should be pursued, especially in relation to the use of AI.
- 9) Re-commits itself to facilitating regional research-based and regionally responsive judicial education and training initiatives in furtherance of Caribbean-based judicial reform initiatives and maintaining sustainable judicial excellence throughout the region.
- 10) Recommends the commitment by governments and judiciaries to provide adequate resources, financial and otherwise, for judicial education and training.