



CCJ Academy for Law
134 Henry Street, Port of Spain, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Tel: (868) 623-2225 Ext. 3229
Email: wanderson@ccj.org

MEDIA RELEASE

(For immediate release)

No. 01:2024

16 July 2024

CCJ ACADEMY FOR LAW COLLABORATES ON FIRST CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM CONFERENCE IN GUYANA

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. From 10-11 July 2024, over 200 Attorneys-General from the Caribbean, Heads of Judiciaries, Judges, Directors of Public Prosecution, legal experts, law professors, policymakers, criminal defence attorneys, advocates, members of law enforcement, law students, and members of civil society from across the region convened at the Guyana Marriott Hotel Georgetown for the first “Legal Conference on Criminal Justice Reform – Advancing the Needham’s Point Declaration”. The Attorney General’s Chambers and Ministry of Legal Affairs, Guyana collaborated with the CCJ Academy for Law for this conference to advance the Needham’s Point Declaration signed in October 2023, aiming to redefine the future of criminal law practice and procedures and build on the significant progress made during the Caribbean Court of Justice Academy for Law’s 7th Biennial Conference.

This conference was part of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)-funded Support for the Criminal Justice System project currently being executed by the Attorney General’s Chambers & Ministry of Legal Affairs. Ms Lorena Solórzano-Salazar, IDB Country Representative, stated, “Building and strengthening that justice system through the drafting of supportive and clear legislation as well as robust administrative policy and service-oriented judicial cultures are some of the key areas under the Declaration that are earmarked for your consideration and actioning as judicial leaders and the IDB is a steadfast partner in this regional commitment.”

The conference focused on enhancing continuous legal education in an effort to keep abreast with the transformative changes in the legal framework through shared knowledge and collaborative efforts which will serve well to equip all stakeholders in the Criminal Justice System to effectively implement and interpret new laws. The successful two-day programme was replete with relevant topics honed from the 39 interventions of the Needham’s Point Declaration intended to reform criminal justice within the region, including eliminating case backlog, plea bargaining and areas of negotiation, children’s court, modernizing the criminal justice system, victim impact statements, sentencing guidelines and policy, sufficiency hearings, character evidence analysis, DNA evidence and fact finding, judge alone trials, and restorative justice.

Public Education and Protocol Unit

Tel: (868) 612-5225 ext. 2246

Email: ccjcomm@ccj.org

Delivering welcome remarks, the Honourable Mohabir Anil Nandlal, SC, Attorney General of Guyana spoke on the role on restorative justice and making the cultural shift. Also bringing brief remarks on the first day of the conference was Chairman of the CCJ Academy for Law, Judge of the Caribbean Court of Justice, and Chairman of the Needham's Point Declaration Monitoring, Evaluating, and Facilitating Committee, the Honourable Mr Justice Winston Anderson. He stated that the Declaration "is a comprehensive menu of recommendations which, if actioned with energy and commitment, will produce a radical transformation in criminal justice." Already judgments from across the region have documented the value in point 19 of the Declaration: "That as a rule, trials should be held within one (1) year of the accused being charged (for indictable offences) and six (6) months (for summary offences)" as evidenced by 17 judgments from Belize, Dominica, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago since October 2023. This inclusion in the judgment indicates acceptance and commitment to executing the interventions of the Declaration within the first nine months of its adoption.

His Excellency Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana delivered the feature address at the Opening Ceremony of the conference. He endorsed specialized training as the key to addressing issues that the judiciaries are facing now and in the future and welcomed the opportunity to partner with the Caribbean Court of Justice in this endeavour.

On the second day, the Right Honourable Patricia Scotland KC, Commonwealth Secretary-General, stood in solidarity with the conference's objective, stating, "there is a gap – between the law, its application and justice. And it is those who shape law, and those who practice it – who stand in that gap: to hold up the principles which bind us." The CCJ Judges delivered well-received presentations on criminality and regional resolutions. The Honourable Mr Justice Winston Anderson presented on "Towards a New Sentencing Policy". The Honourable Mme Justice Rajnauth-Lee and Mr Justice Denys Barrow captured the audience's attention with presentations on "Delaying Justice is Denying Justice – Causes and Solutions" and "Quality of Evidence Necessary for Conviction", respectively.

-End-



His Excellency Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali is flanked by the integral organisers of the first Criminal Justice Reform Conference in Guyana



The Honourable Mr Justice Denys Barrow makes his presentation on the second day of the conference.



The Honourable Mme Justice Maureen Rajnauth-Lee makes her point regarding judge alone trials at the conference.

About the CCJ Academy for Law

The CCJ Academy for Law is the educational arm of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) dedicated to the advancement and promotion of legal education and research within the Caribbean region. The Academy's primary mandate is to provide informative and innovative perspectives on the rules and the roles of law, particularly International Law. Some of the Academy's key objectives are to:

- Provide a forum for discussing legal concepts and rules in the areas particularly of, general international law, international trade law, regional integration law, and comparative law.
- Instigate and encourage debate on the role and content of the discipline of Comparative Law bearing particularly in mind that the major traditions of the common law and civil law systems are represented in the Member States of CARICOM over which the CCJ exercises appellate and original jurisdiction.
- Facilitate training and evaluation and to develop problem-solving capability to enhance all areas of court administration.
- Deliver programmes to enhance practical learning in court administration and a deeper understanding of the role of court administration in judicial independence and accountability and in promoting access to justice.
- Decrease backlogs in case determinations and enhance access to justice in the judiciaries of the region.

Using various modes of delivery, the Academy develops, coordinates, and facilitates seminars, workshops, exchanges, and special lectures, as the primary vehicles for the achievement of its objectives. The Academy is run by its management committee chaired by the Honourable Mr. Justice Winston Anderson, and is responsible for conceptualizing, keeping under review, and giving effect to the objectives of the Academy.