EASTERN CARIBBEAN SUPREME COURT

LAW YEAR ADDRESS 2023

The ECSC: Navigating the Changing Tides



Address by
Her Ladyship, The Hon. Dame Janice M. Pereira, DBE, LL.D, Chief Justice

Tuesday, 10th January 2023
The Valley, Anguilla

- Justices of Appeal, Judges and Masters of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court;
- Her Excellency, Ms. Dileeni Daniel-Selvaratnam, Governor of Anguilla and Mr. Perin Bradley, Deputy Governor of Anguilla and Their Excellencies, Governors, Governors General and Heads of State of each of the OECS Member States and Territories;
- The Honourable Dr. Ellis Lorenzo Webster, Premier of Anguilla and Heads of Government of each of the other OECS Member States and Territories;
- Retired Judges of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court;
- Honourable Dwight Horsford, Attorney General of Anguilla and Honourable Attorneys General of each of the other OECS Member States and Territories;
- Honourable Ministers of Government of Anguilla and Honourable Ministers of Government of each of the other OECS Member States and Territories;
- His Honour Mr. Keithley Benjamin, Senior Magistrate and Magistrates of Anguilla and Chief and Senior Magistrates and Magistrates of each of the other OECS Member States and Territories;
- Honourable Barbara Webster Bourne, Speaker of the Anguilla House of Assembly and Honourable Speakers of the Houses of the Assembly and Presidents of the Senate of each of the other OECS Member States and Territories;
- Honourable Cora Richardson-Hodge, Leader of the Opposition in Anguilla and Leaders of the Opposition of each of the other OECS Member States and Territories;
- Members of the Anguilla House of Assembly and Members of the Houses of Assembly and Parliaments of each of the other OECS Member States and Territories;
- His Excellency, Dr. Didacus Jules, Director General, OECS Commission;
- Directors of Public Prosecutions of each of the OECS Member States and Territories;
- Solicitors General of each of the OECS Member States and Territories;
- Mrs. Michelle John-Theobalds, Chief Registrar and Ms. Danielia Chambers, Deputy Chief Registrar of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court;

- Mrs. Vernette Richardson Richards, Registrar of the High Court of Justice, Anguilla and Registrars, Deputy and Assistant Registrars of the High Court of each of the other OECS Member States and Territories;
- Mr. Gregory Girard, Court Administrator and Mr. Francis Letang, Deputy Court Administrator of the Court's Headquarters and Court Administrators of each of the High Court Offices of the OECS Member States and Territories;
- Ms. Jean Dyer, President of the OECS Bar Association;
- Ms. Merline Barrett, President of the Anguilla Bar Association and Presidents of the constituent Bar Associations of each of the other OECS Member States and Territories;
- Learned Members of the Inner Bar and Utter Bar of each of the OECS Member States and Territories;
- Members of the Clergy;
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
- Mr. Elliot Forbes, Acting Commissioner of Police and Police Officers of Anguilla and Commissioners of Police and Police Officers of each of the other OECS Member States and Territories;
- Superintendent of Prisons of Anguilla and Directors/Heads of Correctional Facilities in each of the other OECS Member States and Territories;
- Staff of the Court's Headquarters and Court Offices in each of the OECS Member States and Territories;
- Distinguished Guests;
- Members of the Media; and
- Citizens and residents of the Eastern Caribbean.

Good morning.

I am deeply honoured and humbled to have the opportunity to address you on the occasion of the Opening of the Law Year 2023. In what seems like a moment, we

are once again at this highly anticipated event on the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court's yearly calendar. This is for us, as well as for you, a time of reflection on the workings of the court over the previous year, as well as a time to share with you our exciting plans moving forward. And so, I take this opportunity to welcome each and every one of you to this Special Sitting with best wishes for a new year filled with much hope and positive change. I pray that, as we embark upon this new year, God will bestow upon us his richest blessings, wisdom and guidance.

In keeping with the rotation for the commencement of the Court's Law year, we are pleased to greet you from the beautiful island of Anguilla, both physically and virtually. I am especially happy to be physically here in Anguilla, the place where I first started my sojourn on the bench of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court. And, happier still to have this opportunity to see so many of you in person in the court room and to participate once more in all the time-honoured traditions that have come to mark the special occasion of the Commencement of the Law year. The Covid Pandemic may have changed how we did business but what is of significance is that despite Covid we were able to adapt and do business. As you know, over the last two years, the Opening of the Law year took the form of virtual Special Sitting productions. This blended approach which is being adapted today – with some speakers physically present and some appearing virtually,- is a signal of a gradual return to the physical spaces of the Court room and in person hearings.

Before I go further, permit me to recognise the recent appointees to the Bench of the Court of Appeal - the Hon. Mde. Margaret Price-Findlay, the Hon. Mde. Vicki-Ann Ellis

and the Hon. Mr. Trevor Ward. They have all given remarkable service as Judges of the High Court for a number of years and are certainly no strangers to the Court of Appeal having also in the past, done short acting stints as Justices of Appeal. I take the opportunity here to welcome them into the Court of Appeal family, with every good wish that they will find their sojourn on the appellate bench mentally stimulating, enlightening and rewarding. I think it important to highlight that, for the first time since its establishment, four women are now serving on the Court of Appeal. I consider this achievement to be a step in the right direction towards gender parity.

Last year, we also bade farewell to two Justices of Appeal in the persons of the Hon. Mr. Davidson Baptiste who retired in November and the Hon. Mde. Louise Blenman who retired in August last year. Justice of Appeal Baptiste joined the Court of Appeal a year after I was appointed as a Justice of Appeal and until his retirement had been serving as a judicial officer for over 20 years. Justice of Appeal Blenman joined the Court in 2003 on her appointment to the High Court Bench and in 2012 was appointed to the Court of Appeal where she served until her retirement and subsequent appointment as Chief Justice of the State of Belize. I wish to place on record my thanks to them for their years of service and dedication to the Court. I also wish them every success for the future.

The past year has, like others before, brought with it many trials as our small island States and Territories continue to navigate through a sea of challenges. In my last address to you, I recounted many of these challenges which by now have become well-known. It hardly bears repeating that the Court has not been spared the tides. I

however, firmly believe that out of the depths of adversity there are always positive and enduring lessons to be learnt. It is our collective courage to persevere, regardless of whether the seas are calm or rough, which has been instrumental to the Court's achievements in various areas of operation. And, over the last year, we have indeed made further progress along the way with a steady focus towards an improved and resilient justice system across the length and breadth of the OECS. It is this experience of making positive change in difficult times which has inspired the theme of this Law Year Address: "***The ECSC: Navigating the Changing Tides***". This theme recognises the resilience of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court and its enduring commitment to reforming its processes and procedures and broadening the avenues by which the people of our sub region can access justice. In reflecting on the changes over the past year, I cannot help but recall the popular saying *'**the difference between stumbling blocks and stepping stones is how you use them**'*.

In this address, I will apprise you of the Court's accomplishments over the last year and the course being charted for a more enduring future. **2022 was a busy year**. Case statistics show that, although there is continued productivity, there are also existing challenges which continue to adversely impact the due administration of justice. I invite you though to read the Court's Annual Report for an in depth analysis of the work of the Court. It can be found on the Court's website.

I now provide you with an update on the Court's achievements, including the progression of the many reform initiatives mentioned in the address of the previous year.

THE ECSC @ 55: 55TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

It is only fitting that I begin this aspect of my address with what was perhaps the most important event on the Court's calendar last year. On 27th February 2022, the Court celebrated the 55th anniversary of its establishment. To commemorate this milestone achievement, the Court hosted a week of celebratory events under the theme '*The ECSC @ 55 navigating, redefining and reimagining the future.'* Those events were well received. Throughout its relatively short existence, the Court has made its mark on the jurisprudence of the English-speaking Caribbean and remains a pillar for the rule of law in the region, and indeed the world. It has also significantly contributed to the development of our OECS region. This should fill us all with a sense of pride and its 55th year is worthy of celebration. In more ways than one, the anniversary celebrations set the stage for a progressive law year and more building blocks for a progressive future. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all persons who helped make the Court's 55th anniversary a memorable one.

IMPLEMENTATON OF PHASE 2 - ELECTRONIC LITIGATION PORTAL

It is undeniable that a considerable part of our mandate of improving access to justice is the development of a digitally driven court system. We live in an era where technology sets the stage for our very existence. It impacts every facet of our daily lives. Having recognised the real benefits to be gained from the use of modern information communication technologies, the Court has been actively pursuing the integration of these technologies into its everyday operations.

As many of you know, the main component of our ICT push has been the phased implementation of our electronic document filing and service platform, the E-Litigation Portal which commenced in 2018. In my last Law Year Address, I announced the achievement of a significant milestone – the completion of the first phase of implementation of the Portal which saw the Portal being made available for new civil matters filed in the High Court and the Court of Appeal in all Member States and Territories comprising the Court's jurisdiction.

I also revealed in my last address that the Court would soon be embarking on the second phase of implementation. This second phase began last year and is ongoing. It involves the long-awaited expansion of the Portal to accommodate High Court criminal matters as well as proceedings filed in the Magistrates' Courts in each Member State and Territory. This phase is pivotal to modernising the delivery of services offered by the Magistrate's Courts, which statistically handles the bulk of court cases brought in every State or Territory. Implementation of the Portal would also enhance user experiences at the lower, but no less important, level of the justice system. It is also a further step towards integration of the Magistracy into the higher judiciary. This process of integration must happen. Courts exist for the purpose of delivering justice. There should therefore be no distinctions or impairments legally or otherwise in the realisation of this purpose. Yet, impediments persist within our OECS region. It is time that this lack of progress for full integration of the Magistracy be addressed once and for all.

The ECSC however, is doing what it can to facilitate the integration process and to date some progress has been made. In October 2022, the first launch of the Portal for the Magistracy took place in the Family Division of the Magistrate's Court in Antigua and Barbuda. This was followed shortly thereafter with the launch of the Portal in November for all Magisterial civil matters in the Territory of the Virgin Islands. And then, a few weeks later, with the launch for family matters in the District Court of Saint Lucia. We have also put in place uniquely crafted rules which govern e-filing and e-serving of documents in the Magistrates'/District Court in a manner best suited to the summary nature of these courts.

I am heartened by the fact that the launch of the Portal for the Magistracy has shown great promise for the future delivery of court services based on the enthusiasm displayed by court staff and practitioners alike. This, I imagine, has much to do with the fact that the Magistrates' Courts did not escape the wrath of the pandemic – which hampered much of its operations. This phase of the Portal's implementation is therefore, in my view, a critically important step towards widening access to justice and will undeniably create a more resilient justice system. It is my hope that this law year sees the implementation of the Portal in the Magistrates' Courts in the other 6 Member States and Territories. The plans to do so are already underway and I have no doubt that our committed implementation team will make it happen.

The next stage of Portal implementation will be the addition of the criminal case types at all levels of the judiciary. I know that this is anxiously awaited by all our stakeholders. I assure you that the Portal implementation team is hard at work in

making this a reality as well. When that happens, we will have completed the circle of linking the courts at all levels of the justice system. It is only then that we could feel some satisfaction at attaining at least one of our goals in the digitisation process. There are still other tides to navigate on our digitization journey not the least of which is finding a digital solution for the court's transcription process which has been plagued with delays leading to highly undesirable results. This is being actively pursued as the need is urgent.

BLENDED VIRTUAL AND IN PERSON HEARINGS

Together with the E-Litigation Portal, the Court has also navigated the difficulties presently being experienced by conducting many of its sittings virtually. Easy to use video-conferencing platforms such as Zoom have allowed many of our courts to conduct remote hearings fairly smoothly. Virtual hearings have suited the Civil and Commercial Divisions of the High Court quite well. Videoconferencing has also allowed the Court of Appeal to conduct its scheduled sittings for each Member State and Territory. This is even more so significant given the ongoing challenges with regional air transportation. It is truly remarkable that this week is the first time **since March 2020** that the Court of Appeal is conducting an in person sitting –having been no less busy sitting virtually. For our continued productivity in difficult times, these videoconferencing tools have been a boon.

That said, it is recognised that there is no perfect substitute for an in-person courtroom environment, particularly for trials where judges are sometimes required to observe

witnesses and manage juries. And so, with the relaxation of the social distancing protocols, we are gradually seeing a blended approach of virtual and in-person hearings being adopted across our Member States and Territories. I hope that going forward we will continue to see an increased reliance on this blended approach to court sittings and that eventually, trials in the court room will be fully resumed. It is also contemplated that this year will see the Court of Appeal conducting in-person sittings on a more frequent basis once air travel logistics can be ironed out. It has been far too long since we visited many of the Member States and Territories, and so we look forward with much enthusiasm to in-person sittings of the Court of Appeal becoming more commonplace. As we look forward, we will strive to embrace the innovations and lessons learned from the past two years. And, we will continue to do what it takes to meet new challenges to safeguard what is precious to all of us — a fair, impartial, and independent justice system.

LAUNCH OF FAMILY DIVISION

Concurrent with the ICT push last year was the establishment of the long-awaited Family Division in Antigua and Barbuda. Bringing this Division into existence was a monumental task. It required the input of several stakeholders. The Family Division is essentially a consolidation of the Magistrate's Court and the High Court in respect of family proceedings 'under one roof' – providing the public with what I consider as a 'one-stop shop' for resolving a myriad of family-related disputes and for accessing a number of social and family-related services in a uniform, user-friendly and consistent manner within a single space.

For years, the Court has considered specialised divisions as not merely desirable but necessary for increasing operational efficiency which will in turn improve customer satisfaction and build greater confidence in the justice system. The focus must remain on building the public's perception of the courts as not being a place, but a service. That said, the court needs adequate physical spaces for delivering that service. I renew my call to all Governments in the OECS to build proper purpose-built court facilities for the delivery of that service. This need is not being given the priority it deserves. At present, some Member States and Territories have separate Criminal and Civil Divisions of the High Court and some also have specialised Commercial Divisions. Fueled by the desire to improve efficiency in family proceedings, as well as to integrate the social services to enhance responsiveness, the Court put plans in place to establish specialised Family Divisions across the Member States and Territories – beginning with Antigua and Barbuda. I am reliably advised that, in the short time which has elapsed since the establishment of the Family Division in Antigua and Barbuda, it has seen tremendous success. I look forward to the establishment of other specialised Family Divisions to enable more efficient resolution of family and child-related matters in our region.

INTRODUCTION OF CRIMINAL MEDIATION PROGRAMME

Last year, I also announced that steps were being taken to introduce a framework for mediation in appropriate criminal matters, specifically, those which are summary in nature. This effort is well underway with much work done on a draft of a comprehensive Practice Direction for implementing the criminal mediation

programme. This programme is being designed to more meaningfully engage and positively impact on child and youth justice throughout the region. Critically, it aims to introduce diversionary measures for children and youth in conflict with the law. These measures are now needed in our societies, more urgently than ever before, as we continue to see an increase in young persons finding themselves before our courts for minor offences, even more serious ones- in many cases, running the risk of completely derailing their future prospects if convicted.

It is hoped and expected that the criminal mediation programme will foster greater utilisation of restorative justice practices in our Member States and Territories as, in many cases, what matters most is how we repair the damage that has been done. A regime of punishment is not always the answer, rather, a restoration of broken young lives ensures a more positive and lasting benefit to society. And so, through the implementation of this programme in the coming months, we hope to see a reduction in the rates of youth offenders as well as youth recidivism - benefitting our small island state societies in more ways than one. The implementation and sustainability of this program will need the full support of our governments' financial and other resources. The overall gains to be derived however, far outweigh the financial capital input. I think of it more as capital reallocation.

THE CIVIL PROCEDURE RULES REVISION

Last year, the Civil Procedure Rules Review Committee made significant strides towards completing the revision of the Civil Procedure Rules. This was no small task but we are almost at the finish line. The new Civil Procedure Rules are on target to

come into effect during the first quarter of this year. I very much look forward to the utilisation of the new amendments, which seek to modernise and simplify various aspects of civil practice. In large measure, the changes reflect the recommendations of the users of the rules. I also look forward to the imminent developments in our Eastern Caribbean jurisprudence, particularly in those areas of procedure, revamped or introduced by the new rules of court. Of note, will be the introduction of Judicial Settlements. This process complements mediation as an ADR tool for the early resolution of disputes. This should therefore improve clearance rates and reduce case backlog. Our judicial officers have already received training in conducting Judicial Settlement Conferences and it is my hope that this process will be embraced by legal practitioners and litigants alike. When the new Civil Procedure Rules take effect, I expect settlement conferences to happen across the length and breadth of the OECS.

I am exceedingly grateful to the Committee for their dedication to seeing this task through. I also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the teams from the IMPACT Justice Project as well as the Legislative Drafting Unit in Antigua and Barbuda for their support.

JUDICIAL SETTLMENT CONFERENCES PILOT PROJECT – COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA

The push toward Judicial Settlement starts immediately with the implementation of a "Judicial Settlement Conferences" pilot project for the Commonwealth of Dominica. This pilot project was implemented by way of Practice Direction No. 1 of 2023

applicable to Dominica. It aims to alleviate the considerable backlog of High Court civil cases in Dominica worsened by the impact of Hurricane Maria. The Practice Direction puts in place a framework where a judge or master can engage in and facilitate settlement discussions between parties. Once the ongoing settlement conference sensitisation has been completed, litigants in Dominica will have at their disposal another timely and cost-effective alternative to the conventional way of resolving civil disputes, in addition to mediation. I wish to express my gratitude to His Lordship, Justice Vashiest Kokoram, Judge of the Court of Appeal of Trinidad and Tobago and Her Ladyship, Justice Jacqueline Josiah-Graham who have been spearheading this initiative on the ground in Dominica.

THE CAJO 7th BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

It would be inexcusable if I were to omit from this address what was perhaps among the more significant events on the Court's calendar last year. In October 2022, the Court had the pleasure of hosting the Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers' 7th Biennial Conference. The CAJO Conference, which was held under the theme '*Caribbean Judiciaries in a Changing World'*, saw over 150 judicial officers from across the Caribbean gathered for three days in Saint Lucia, the host state of the Court's Headquarters.

The signal events on the Conference programme were keynotes by the Hon. Mia Mottley, SC, Prime Minister of Barbados and Professor Trevor Munroe, Executive Director of the National Integrity Action, Jamaica. Both keynote speakers examined

from different perspectives the role of the judiciary in the new and in many respects volatile landscape that is our changing world. By all accounts, their observations were quite inspiring, and thought provoking in respect of ideas for deepening judicial integration in our Caribbean region. Over three days, judicial officers broadened their understanding of areas on a wide range of legal and socio-legal topics. Given its sheer scale, the Conference required the help of several members of the staff of the Court's Headquarters, comprising our local organising committee, working alongside the CAJO Organising Committee to plan and execute. I take this opportunity here to thank the members of the local organising committee who, through their hard work and dedication to the task, helped to make the CAJO 7th Biennial Conference, by all accounts, a tremendous success.

WANING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Emerging from the CAJO Conference was an issue of great concern for our Caribbean democracies which I must touch on in this address. The issue of waning public confidence in the justice system has been increasingly affecting judiciaries across the globe, our judiciary included. Why is this a dire problem? Simply put, it is the trust and confidence of the public which gives courts their very legitimacy to dispense justice. Canon Reid Simon spoke about this in his well delivered homily. He spoke about delays in justice and challenged us to do what is just. When members of the public lose faith in the institution of the judiciary and its authority, they are more likely to take matters into their own hands. This is a most undesirable state of affairs which must be avoided at all costs.

And so the question is this: How can we, as judicial officers, be more responsive to what is emerging as a growing lack of confidence in the system's ability to meet the needs of ordinary people? In my view, we must do all that we can to promote public trust and confidence in the work that we do each day by continuing to faithfully perform the duties of your office; by adhering to ethical standards, and at all times striving to conduct yourselves with integrity and professionalism. This includes honouring time standards for delivery of decisions. Litigants must be able to feel, win or lose, that the system was responsive to their plight.

I must also mention that several measures aimed at promoting public confidence in the justice system have been implemented over the past few years. We have published Sentencing Guidelines which add transparency to the sentencing process. Very shortly, the Sentencing Guidelines Committee will be constituted for moving forward. We have also revised our Code of Judicial Conduct to incorporate modern ethical standards and time standards for the delivery of judgments by judicial officers. Both the Sentencing Guidelines and the Code of Judicial Conduct are drafted in simple language and made available to the public. Judgments and comprehensive case statistics are also routinely published on the Court's website. Please go online and pay us a visit. We have recently entered the social media space through our Facebook page to better engage with the public - just to name a few.

It is recognised however, that there is more to be done to build public confidence in the justice system, while simultaneously maintaining the court's independence and impartiality. Initiatives which the Court endeavours to embark on during this law year

include increased public education programmes. These will enable members of the public to better appreciate what the Court can and cannot do and better equip them to manage their expectations accordingly. Also in the pipeline, is a special project aimed at auditing the work of the High Court Offices for areas of improvement. The Court Offices are in every respect the doorways to the Court. We hope to attract the necessary funding needed to undertake this project. An updated and detailed strategic plan for the Court is also in process and will include public participation. These measures, we hope, when pulled together, will help the Court to more ably navigate the changing tides, with the full support and confidence of the people it serves.

NEW JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS

As with institutions which must keep pace with the changing times, appointments end and new ones made. Permit me to officially welcome to the High Court bench Her Ladyship, The Hon. Mde. Jacqueline Josiah-Graham, who was appointed as a High Court Judge on 1st September 2022 assigned to the Commonwealth of Dominica; Her Ladyship, The Hon. Mde. Tamara Gill who was elevated to the post of High Court Judge assigned to St. Kitts and Nevis effective on 1st January 2023; and Her Ladyship, The Hon. Ms. Ingrid Mangatal-Munroe who was appointed to act as a Judge of the Commercial Division of the High Court in the Territory of the Virgin Islands effective 1st January 2023. I also warmly welcome Master Alvin Pariagsingh and Master Carlos Michel who were appointed as Masters of the High Court in May and September 2022

respectively. I extend best wishes for an enlightening and mutually beneficial tenure on the Bench of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court.

Last year, the Court also bade farewell to two judicial officers in the persons of His Lordship, The Hon. Adrian Jack, High Court Judge [Ag.] of the Commercial Division in the Territory of the Virgin Islands and Master Charon Gardner-Hippolyte. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Justice Jack and Master Gardner-Hippolyte for their service to the Court and by extension to the people of the OECS. I wish them the very best in their future endeavours. I also wish to thank the many persons who assisted the court by taking up acting judicial appointments over the last year.

Last year also, it was with great sadness that, we mourned the passing, in September 2022, of prominent jurist, Retired Justice Errol Thomas. Justice Thomas joined the Bench as a High Court Judge in 2002. He faithfully served until his retirement in 2013, and thereafter in a number of Member States in an acting capacity. He also acted as a Justice of Appeal from time to time. He served the Court with distinction. We are grateful to him for his significant contribution to our jurisprudence and extend our deepest condolences to his family.

On a more cheerful note, I must recognise the efforts of the persons who have ensured that this Court has adhered to its mandate for the last 55 years and their commitment to soldier on into the future. Firstly, the judicial officers of this Court, including of course our Magistrates, who work tirelessly every day, often under less-than-optimal conditions and with insufficient resources, but who continue to ensure that justice is

done. Secondly, and behind the scenes, the Registrars and support staff working at various levels at the Court's Headquarters and constituent court offices in each of the Member States and Territories do yeoman's work. I have remarked many times that their vital contributions often go unnoticed. This lack of recognition should cease. I can only thank them for all that they have done and continue to do in making the Court the institution it is today. I also cannot overlook the tremendous support of the OECS Bar Association and the constituent Bar Associations of the Eastern Caribbean. I thank you for remaining devoted to the cause of justice and the development of the legal profession in our region.

It is also important that I recognise our external partners and stakeholders. All that we have accomplished could not have been done without additional support from them. I wish to express our unyielding gratitude to the JURIST Project, IMPACT Justice, the United States Embassy and the British High Commission, UNICEF, UN-Women, the University of the West Indies, UNDP, USAID, and particularly the Governments of our Member States and Territories for their continued support for the Court's mandate of improving access to justice across and at all levels of the justice system. To all those persons and organisations who I have not specifically mentioned, your support has not gone unnoticed, and we are forever grateful for your assistance.

We recognise that while the Court has made great strides in its 55 years, we have only glimpsed the shores of our destination. And so, we will continue to sail purposefully towards that destination - through unexpected storms and waves of change and without doubting for a moment that the Court will remain resilient no

matter how rough the tide. Like a sailor in rough seas, it is my hope that the Court will emerge stronger and better equipped to ensure equitable access to justice and to deliver effective justice to the people of this region. I pray that The Almighty God will guide us and give us the courage to stay the course. May the sails of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court continue to fly high as we navigate through the changing tides towards a justice system of the future.

I now hand over to our Master of Ceremonies, His Lordship, The Hon. Mr. Ermin Moise.

Thank you.

Dame Janice M. Pereira, DBE, LL.D
Chief Justice

Tuesday, 10th January 2023

High Court of Justice, Anguilla