



**EASTERN CARIBBEAN SUPREME COURT
ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN JUDGES (ECAWJ)**

Message from ECAWJ for International Day of Women Judges

and

International Women's Day 2026

The Eastern Caribbean Association of Women Judges (ECAWJ) embraces and celebrates with the rest of the world the remarkable achievements of women judges and women as a whole on the two days designated on the global calendar to do so.

The theme for International Day of Women Judges 2026 (10th March), set by the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ), is "Women Judges on the Bench and Beyond: Protecting Access to Justice". As female judicial officers, we are challenged to take leadership roles in our courts, institutions and communities, working to strengthen public trust, uphold the rule of law and expand access to justice for all, especially for the vulnerable and marginalised.

Under this theme, ECAWJ takes the opportunity to use this platform to highlight the need for improved access to justice for victims of gender-based violence. It is apparent that among the poor, illiterate, and at risk, there is a distinct unawareness of the avenues available to seek redress in the courts. Even in the face of evident physical injuries, complainants are often turned away at police stations with advice to seek protection orders. Many see this as a cost they cannot afford, under the mistaken belief that legal costs must be incurred to shield themselves from harm. Complainants must be seized of the information in order to make the necessary applications without the services of a legal practitioner. Further, legal aid services are available in several instances. To ensure access to justice for all, ECAWJ encourages public education in a manner that reaches those in need of protection from abusers. In addition, training for police officers and relevant agencies is critical. Knowledge is the key to ensuring that access to justice is maintained.

Celebrated on 8th March, this year's theme for International Women's Day is "Give to Gain". It is a call to build gender equality by investment in, and support for, women. By contributing to the advancement of women, the world gains. The "Give to Gain" campaign suggests ways to advance women for the entire

year. Giving can take many forms: donations, respect, justice, knowledge, a voice, resources, protection, celebration, mentoring, training, role models, time, sponsorship, to name a few.

As we approach our third year of existence, ECAWJ salutes our members - women judges, magistrates, registrars, court administrators among others of the Member States and Territories of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (ECSC). We remember and acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our dear departed female colleagues including Justice of Appeal Ola Mae Edwards and High Court Judges, Justices Sylvia Bertrand, Suzie d'Auvergne, Monica Joseph and Clare Henry.

This year's celebratory events include a Fireside Chat – "The Women Behind the Scales" on 12th March 2026 with current sitting judicial officers, all women of strength, integrity and focused dedication to their work on the Bench. In a "real talk" session, our distinguished Ladies will share their experiences as to how they have been able to manage their work objectives with their lives off the Bench as female judicial officers in the unique circumstances of the ECSC. The Magistracy is represented in the esteemed line-up. All are invited to attend this lively event via Zoom.

Following on from last year's weeklong step challenge which was aimed at promoting health and well-being among our members, we are going bigger and better as we hold each other up with a team challenge in 2026. We have invited teams of ten (maximum) from each Member State and Territory to compete in a five-day step challenge from 10th to 14th March. The teams will comprise of female judicial officers, members of the court staff and the Bar Associations. Let's go Ladies! Step it up!

In addition, members in the individual Member States and Territories will participate in activities to commemorate both women's days. We expect and encourage that activities will include social events, donations to charitable organisations that cater to the needs of women and girls, mentorship, visits to schools and other relevant institutions, enlightening on access to justice.

Some of our members will also join in activities put on by our umbrella associations, the Caribbean Association of Women Judges (CAWJ) and the IAWJ.

ECAWJ extends sororal greetings in celebration of two most significant days in honour of women judges and women worldwide. Happy International Day of Women Judges to all judicial officers of the Eastern Caribbean, the region and beyond! Happy International Women's Day to all women and girls throughout the Member States, the entire Caribbean and the world at large!