

Ceremonial Opening of the JCPC Hearings

Your Excellency, Honourable Deputy Governor, Honourable Premier and Deputy Premier, Chief Justice, Retired Chief Justice, Honourable Deputy Speaker, Honourable Attorney General, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, President of CILPA, other distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, Thank you, Mr Attorney and Mr Bodden, for your kind welcome and your thoughtful remarks.

On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to thank all the people we have met since we arrived in the Islands for their warm, Caymankind, welcome. I would also like to express my particular gratitude to Mr Justice Doyle, who first raised with me the possibility of our sitting here, to Sir Anthony Smellie and Chief Justice Ramsay-Hale, who were both strongly supportive of the idea, and to His Excellency the Governor and the Government of the Cayman Islands, who provided essential support.

This is an important occasion in the history of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. It is a privilege for us to serve as the final court of appeal for the Cayman Islands. That means serving all the people of the Islands. Our work is important to life in the Islands, and to the prosperity of the Islands. That is a heavy responsibility, and one that we take very seriously.

So it is a priority for us to establish a strong relationship with the Islands. We want to get to know the Islands and the people of the Islands, to learn about life here and the challenges that you face. Since we arrived we have been spending time with members of the judiciary here, visiting places of interest, and learning about the economy and the social life of the Islands, and the challenges that people face. We were honoured to be able to take part in the Remembrance Service on Sunday, and were greatly impressed by the sense of community, by the fact that everyone was involved, from veterans and community leaders to cubs and brownies.

So we are learning about the Islands. But learning can be a two way process. We hope that our visit will also provide the people of the Islands with the opportunity to learn more about the Privy Council, about its role, and about its importance to the Islands.

One point that I hope they will learn is that the court is not as remote or inaccessible as they may have imagined. For example, we offer hearings online, so that lawyers here can address us from their offices in the Islands, without having to incur the time and expense involved in travelling to London. So there is no reason for the costs involved in travelling to the UK to be a barrier to justice.

Furthermore, the hearings that we hold in London are all streamed live on the internet, and can also be watched on catch-up. We are possibly the easiest court in the world to watch in action. We are only a few clicks away on a computer or a mobile phone.

Something else that the people of the Islands may be interested to know is that some of the most important cases for the development of the common law around the world, in countries such as Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Singapore as well as the UK, are decided by the Privy Council on appeal from the Cayman Islands. Even when we are sitting in London, we hear these appeals as a Cayman Islands court, applying the law of the Islands, and sitting under the Cayman Islands flag. Judgments that we issue in cases from these islands are cited by lawyers and courts around the world, demonstrating the quality of justice available in these islands, and supporting the excellent work done by the judiciary in the Islands themselves. This is particularly important to the prosperity of the Islands, as confidence in the legal system

is an important factor in supporting international investment and the financial services industry.

Visiting the Islands and holding hearings in George Town is the first step in strengthening the relationship between the Privy Council and the people of the Islands. I hope that members of the public will come to the court to watch the hearings, as they are entitled to do, or will watch them online on our website. But over the next few days we will not only be hearing appeals. We will be meeting the lawyers and judiciary of the Islands. We will be meeting students at the Truman Bodden Law School. We will be holding face-to-face discussions between members of the Privy Council and students from your schools. And we will be holding an initial meeting – the first, I hope, of many – with lawyers here who use the Privy Council, when we can discuss ways of making the administration of justice as efficient, effective and accessible as possible.

This is our first visit to the Islands. I hope that it will prove to be the first of many.

The court will now adjourn to Court 9.