

PREFACE

The 1990s have seen a growing recognition of women's rights as human rights and as an integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The promotion and protection of the human rights of women will, however, remain a challenge to all countries in the 21st Century. The need for nation states to play an active role in consolidating the gains made by women in the area of women's rights so that women fully enjoy their social, economic, political, civil and cultural rights on the same basis as men will be even greater.

Judges are strategically placed to provide leadership and effectively contribute towards advancing women's rights at the national level by ensuring that their decisions reflect governments' commitments to international human rights standards relevant to women's rights. Judges can make a significant impact by relying on international human rights standards when interpreting statutes and fundamental rights. International standards can then inform decision-making in litigation at all levels, whether or not they have been incorporated into domestic legislation.

As part of a strategy to support the role of the judiciary, in 1994 the Gender and Youth Affairs Division in collaboration with the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Division, the Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges' Association and the Commonwealth Foundation, initiated a series of judicial colloquia on using international human rights standards in domestic litigation. The Caribbean colloquium was the fourth and last in the series. It was attended by female and male Chief Justices; Judges of the Supreme Courts, Courts of Appeal, and High Courts; lawyers; academics; researchers; representatives of UN agencies; regional organisations; and NGOs. Participants adopted the Georgetown Recommendations and Strategies for Action on the Human Rights of Women and the Girl-Child and also set up a Commonwealth Reference Group comprising of Chief Justices and senior judges from the four regions of Africa, Asia, Caribbean and the South Pacific to follow-up the implementation of the Georgetown Recommendations. A significant outcome of the judicial colloquia series is that some judges have been able to organise similar training for judges and magistrates in their jurisdictions.

This publication presents edited papers from the Caribbean regional judicial colloquium held in Georgetown, Guyana, 14–17 April 1997. It is intended to promote wider recognition and application of international and regional human rights norms relevant to the human rights of women and the girl-child by judges, magistrates, lawyers, and human rights activists.

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