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**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**Guyana completes first Judicial Colloquium on  
the Rights to Equality and Non-discrimination**

The Justice Institute Guyana and the Equal Rights Trust (UK) in collaboration with the Supreme Court of Guyana hosted a two day judicial colloquium on the rights to equality and non-discrimination on 4th and 5th April. According to the Hon. Mr Justice Carl Singh, O.R., C.C.H. Chancellor of the Judiciary, *“The colloquium organised by the Justice Institute Guyana with the Supreme Court collaboration was a meaningful opportunity for all of us judges in the Supreme Court.”*

The Hon. Mr Justice Carl Singh, O.R., C.C.H. Chancellor of the Judiciary, the Hon. Chief Justice Mr Ian Chang, Justice Roy and Justice Yonette Cummings-Edwards of the Court of Appeal, the judges of the High Court and visiting judges from England, Canada and the Caribbean Court of Justice engaged in peer to peer discussion on national and international law governing equality and non-discrimination.

The colloquium opened with an introduction by Melinda Janki, Executive Director of the Justice Institute Guyana and by Dr Dimitrina Petrova Executive Director of the Equal Rights Trust. The welcoming address was delivered by the Hon. Mr Justice Carl Singh, O.R., C.C.H. Chancellor of the Judiciary. In the keynote remarks His Excellency Robert Kopecky, Ambassador of the EU Delegation noted that Guyana is

one of the few countries outside of Western Europe to have an anti-discrimination legal framework that is close to comprehensive.

The opening of the colloquium was well attended and included members of the diplomatic corps, the judiciary, magistrates, senior counsel and other members of the legal profession. The keynote address at the opening of the judicial colloquium was delivered by the Right Hon. Sir Stephen Sedley, a retired judge of the English Court of Appeal and a Privy Councillor, who concluded his address by observing that, *“non-discrimination and equality law is today fundamental to all democratic societies. Guyana, with its constitutional guarantees and its statutes, is privileged in this respect. But laws are no good if they are not made to work, and making them work is what our colloquium is about.”*

Commenting on the colloquium, Melinda Janki stated that, *“The right to equality is fundamental to a democratic society. Respect for the rule of law means that everyone has to be protected against arbitrary decisions, especially decisions that are made on the basis of prejudice against someone because of race, gender, political opinion, religion, sex, sexual orientation and so on.”* The colloquium included presentations by Melinda Janki, Mr Michael Ellman an international human rights lawyer and a member of the board of the Justice Institute Guyana, Dr Dimitrina Petrova, and Jim Fitzgerald head of advocacy at the Equal Rights Trust.

The keynote speech on the second day was delivered by the Hon Madam Claire L’Heurueux Dube, a retired judge of the Supreme Court of Canada who addressed the question of the judiciary as an agent of change. This theme was also considered by Justice Adrian Saunders of the Caribbean Court of Justice who spoke about remedies and sanctions. In delivering the closing remarks, Justice Yonette Cummings Edwards noted that the judicial colloquium had been of benefit to the judiciary.

The judicial colloquium was funded by EU Delegation under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. It was supported by the FIDH Charitable Trust and the Guyana Bar Association. The Justice Institute Guyana is an independent impartial legal institute and is not connected to any political party or

political movement. The Justice Institute Guyana works to promote respect for the rule of law and to increase access to justice. The Equal Rights Trust is an independent international organisation whose purpose is to combat discrimination and promote equality as a fundamental human right and a basic principle of social justice. The Equal Rights Trust is based in England.

For further information please contact the Justice Institute Guyana on 641 4533.