TRIBUTE TO THE HONOURABLE JUSTICE IAN XAVIER FORTE, OJ, KC

Today we honour the memory of the Honourable Justice Ian Xavier Forte, OJ, KC, who departed this life on 4 June 2026 after a lifetime of distinguished service to the law and to the administration of justice throughout the Caribbean, including in the Cayman Islands.

Justice Forte devoted his professional life to the service of the law. His career was marked by excellence at every stage. He served with distinction as Director of Public Prosecutions in Jamaica, was elevated to Jamaica's Court of Appeal of Jamaica, ultimately serving as President of that Court. Throughout his career he earned the respect of colleagues, practitioners and litigants alike for his scholarship, independence, integrity and unwavering commitment to the rule of law.

The Cayman Islands were privileged to benefit from his wisdom and experience when he served as a Judge of Appeal of the Cayman Islands Court of Appeal from 2004 until 2011. During those years he brought to this jurisdiction the benefit of decades of appellate experience and a profound understanding of the principles that underpin the administration of justice. His judgments reflect careful thought, intellectual rigour and fairness. His presence on the Court strengthened the work of our appellate judiciary and contributed meaningfully to the development of Cayman Islands jurisprudence.

Justice Forte's legacy cannot be measured solely by the offices he held or the judgments he delivered. Across the Caribbean he was recognised as a mentor, teacher and guide to generations of lawyers and judges. Through his encouragement, example and counsel, he helped shape the professional lives of many who themselves would go on to occupy positions of leadership and distinction. His influence therefore extends well beyond the cases that bear his name and lives on in those whose careers he inspired and nurtured.

Those who knew Justice Forte personally remember something more. They remember a man of warmth, kindness and exceptional good humour. Despite the dignity of the high offices he occupied, he never allowed formality to obscure his humanity. He possessed a sharp wit, a ready smile and a gift for storytelling that made him delightful company.

Justice Forte exemplified the finest traditions of Caribbean jurisprudence. He combined intellectual excellence with humility, authority with courtesy, and judicial independence with compassion. His life stands as an example of public service at its very best.

On behalf of the judiciary and legal profession of the Cayman Islands, we honour his memory, express our gratitude for his service to this jurisdiction and the wider Caribbean, and extend our deepest condolences to his family, friends and former colleagues.

May he rest in peace.