



**OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR
SUPREME COURT, NASSAU**

In May of this year, the Honourable Madam Justice Nottage accepted an invitation from the Chief Justice to chair a committee that would consider and make recommendations as to how the delivery of services to the public in the Family Division of the Supreme Court and the equivalent work in the Magistrates' Courts could be improved. The starting point was the suggestion originally advanced by the Chief Justice in 2003 that:

There are categories of matters, family and labour are the obvious examples, where parties find that the several issues in the same dispute require the intervention of different courts. It is expensive and inconvenient for parties to have to initiate claims in different courts for jurisdictional and procedural reasons. For example, at present, the Supreme Court has jurisdiction in divorces and ancillary matters. Therefore, parties of limited means whose property is modest are faced with the expense of dealing with the post-suit stages of the matter before a judge of the Supreme Court.

It is proposed that in these matters special procedural tracks be created so that, while a matter would be required to be initiated in the proper court, as prescribed by the Rules Committee (but subject to the jurisdictional limits indicated above), that matter or any part of it may be referred by the presiding judge to the court at another level along the track without the parties having to initiate a new application. These tracks would remain open in either direction until the matter is finally disposed of.

The Attorney General and the Bar accepted the invitation to nominate members to the Committee and were represented by, respectively, Ms Sherece Gibson, Chief Counsel and Legal Draftsman and Mrs Ruth Bowe-Darville, Vice-President of the Bar Association. Other members of the Committee were the Chief Magistrate, Mr Roger Gomez and Acting Deputy Registrar of the Supreme Court, Mrs Marilyn Meeres who manages the Family Division. Mrs Grace Bostwick, Listing Officer, was co-opted to the Committee by the Chairman.

As a part of its work, the Committee visited the Family Court of Trinidad and Tobago which is regarded as the most innovative and effective in the delivery of these services in the Commonwealth Caribbean.

The Chief Justice has directed that the Report be circulated for public discussion and, in addition to members of the Judiciary, the Bar and the Government, the report is being made available to the press and will be posted on the Court's website: www.bahamassupremecourt.gov.bs. Members of the public are invited to submit any comments they may wish to make on the Report to the Registrar by 30 November.

It is intended that, beginning early in 2009, the recommendations will be implemented as resources allow.

Ernie Wallace
(Acting Registrar)
1 October 2008