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## Press Release

### **New Commonwealth model law set to improve judicial appointment process**

**11 Dec 2015** - Senior judges from all Commonwealth Caribbean jurisdictions will meet in Grand Cayman to discuss the constitution and operation of judicial services commissions, responsible for the appointment and removal of judges, magistrates and other legal officers. They will consider a new model law that sets out good practice in this area.

The meeting, organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Cayman Islands Judiciary, will take place from 14 to 16 December. Helen Kilpatrick, Governor of the Cayman Islands and Anthony Smellie, its Chief Justice will attend.

The model law, drafted by the Secretariat, will serve as a benchmark against which jurisdictions throughout the Commonwealth will be able to compare, contrast and improve constitutional, legal, institutional and practical arrangements for judicial appointments and disciplinary processes. The draft is based on recommendations made at consultative meetings held in Zambia, Malaysia and New Zealand.

“Strengthening judicial service commissions is fundamental to ensuring an independent judiciary - a cornerstone of democracy. Creating this model law is an important step towards establishing good practice in judicial appointments and discipline. It provides for fair, independent and transparent procedures,” said Mark Guthrie, Rule of Law Legal Adviser at the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Participants at the meeting will draw on their experience to determine whether the draft law represents a working model for use throughout the Commonwealth. It is accepted that some provisions in the draft may not be relevant in certain jurisdictions and will need to be adapted and amended as necessary.

The model law will promote the Commonwealth (Latimer House) Principles. Adopted in 2003, these principles support the separation of powers. Principle IV on the *Independence of the Judiciary* states: “An independent, impartial, honest and competent judiciary is integral to upholding the rule of law, engendering public confidence and dispensing justice.”