

**Technical Report
of the
Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Foreign Trade and Immigration
2021**



Prepared by: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration

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Message from the Minister



Hon. Eamon Courtenay
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration

Belize is navigating an international system that is deeply interconnected but in a state of fragmentation. Global crises are multiplying from climate change to the COVID 19 pandemic and from irregular migration to the war in Ukraine, but the response of the international system has been inadequate. Current circumstances pose significant though not insurmountable challenges for Belize. In this context the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration advances and promotes Belize's interests and priorities in support of the Government's national development agenda.

The John Briceño Administration won the November 2020 General Elections, convincingly, with a mandate to transform Belize. However, the new administration inherited a depressed economy with a public debt above 130% of GDP, rising COVID-19 cases and an unacceptably high poverty rate exceeding 50% of the population.

In response the MFAFT&I embarked on focused diplomatic efforts to secure the newly available COVID 19 vaccines for Belizeans, which underpinned the incremental re-opening of the country and the nascent economic recovery. The Ministry moved to strengthen bilateral partnerships in support of Belize's economic recovery including promoting trade, empowering women entrepreneurs, and pursuing cooperation in the areas of tourism, climate change and education.

Belize's high level of indebtedness, the adverse impacts of climate change and our inability to access concessionary development financing severely constrain government's fiscal space to investment in transformative development projects at the pace required. The Ministry, therefore, has redoubled its efforts to demand reforms of the international financial architecture to revise the criteria for accessing concessionary financing, for ambitious climate action and for adequate debt relief initiatives.

Our advocacy at the multilateral level is strengthened by regional efforts through our participation in CARICOM, SICA, CELAC, the OAS and other groupings of developing countries. At the same time, the Ministry manages the process for seeking a peaceful and final resolution of Guatemala's unfounded claim to Belizean territory at the International Court of Justice. The process is proceeding according to schedule. Additionally, the Ministry continues to work with Guatemala to strengthen bilateral relations and to maintain peace and confidence along the border pursuant to the Agreement on Confidence Building Measures.

Much has been accomplished to support Belize's post pandemic recovery and to maintain Belize's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Ministry will continue to play its key role in rebuilding the national economy and revitalizing the hopes and aspirations of Belizeans by providing them with opportunities and benefits through international collaboration with our partners in development. As a small, peace-loving country, diplomacy is Belize's only effective tool in a complex international system.

Abbreviations

AZ	Adjacency Zone
ACP	African-Caribbean-Pacific
ACS	Association of Caribbean States
BAHA	Belize Agricultural Health Authority
BBS	Belize Bureau of Standards
CABEI	Central American Bank for Economic Integration
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CSME	CARICOM Single Market and Economy
CET	Common External Tariff
CELAC	Community of Latin America and Caribbean States
COP	Conference of the Parties
CBM	Confidence Building Measures
EDF	European Development Fund
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EPC	Export Promotion Committee
EU	European Union
GOB	Government of Belize
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IBU	International Boundaries Unit
ICDF	International Cooperation and Development Fund
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IFCG	Investment Facilitation Coordinating Group

IOM	International Organization for Migration
IUU	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated
LDC	Less Developed Country
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MIP	Multi-indicative Programme
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MFAFT&I	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration
MMS	Monitoring Mechanism for Sugar
MN	Million
MVI	Multi-vulnerability Index
NCM	Non-Conforming Measures
NTNC	National Trade Negotiating Commission
NTP	National Trade Policy
NDICI	Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument
OAS	Organization of American States
PM	Prime Minister
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PSA	Partial Scope Agreement
ROC	Republic of China
SICA	Central American Integration System
SIDS	Small Island and Low-Lying Developing States
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSC	South-South Cooperation
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement

UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
USA	United States of America
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive Summary

In the global context of a raging COVID-19 pandemic and efforts to secure a vaccine to contain the virus, vaccine diplomacy, the sourcing of vaccines through collaboration with bilateral partners and multilateral agencies was the principal focus of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration's (MFAFT&I) work in 2021. Through the Ministry's efforts the initial doses of vaccines from a bilateral partner entered the country, and by year's end culminated in securing 60% of the country's vaccine.

Returning to the constitutive work of the MFAFT&I, in terms of strengthening bilateral relations, MFAFT&I kept up a robust schedule of bilateral engagement starting with countries in the immediate region of Central America, the Caribbean, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and North America, and with representatives of regional and international organizations and integration mechanisms such as the Central American Integration System (SICA), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Mesoamerica Project, Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), and United Nations (UN) agencies. These took the form of direct bilateral engagements in Belize, whilst others occurred on the margins of regional and international meetings.

Another form of deeper engagements was through official visits, specifically the MFAFT&I hosted H.E. Lisandro Rosales, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Honduras. In June, MFAFT&I supported Prime Minister (PM) Briceño on his official visit to Guatemala, marking his first such visit since assuming office. This was followed by a subsequent visit to Mexico in September 2021. In addition, the MFAFT&I hosted its first in-person Diplomatic Week, with participation of over fifty (50) foreign diplomats and representatives of international organizations.

A second component of the MFAFT&I's work is advocacy, representing and advancing Belize's interests at the regional and multilateral level. The MFAFT&I has thus supported and formed part of delegations headed by PM Briceño in regional and international meetings such as, SICA and CARICOM Heads of Government and State, Summit of CELAC, the OAS General Assembly, the

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), and the Conference of the Parties (COP26) Summit. Certain serious challenges that Belize faces at the national level require international cooperation to effectively address, including climate change and financing for development. In this regard, Belize uses multilateral platforms to build awareness of the impact of climate change on vulnerable countries and to demand ambitious climate action. Regarding the inaccessibility of development financing, Belize has joined efforts to promote the development and use of a Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) which will take account of vulnerability, not just income to determine access to concessionary financing.

A principal outcome of strengthening bilateral relations was the increased flow of international cooperation through projects and programs which support national development. Engagements with developing countries formed a major share of said outreach and was reflected in a significant increase in south-south cooperation (SSC). For example, with the Republic of China (ROC), Taiwan alone three (3) MOUs supporting cooperation activities in varied thematic areas were signed.

The Belize – Mexico Bi-National Cooperation Program saw its midterm review with a subsequent strengthening of support for agricultural development. With India, there were direct vaccine donations, and additional support to the Ministry of Health and Wellness' Covid-19 national response plan. Cooperation in health was also forthcoming from engagements with large traditional partners, such as Canada, USA, Japan, European Union (EU), and the United Kingdom (UK), amongst others.

The MFAFT&I also facilitated educational opportunities in terms of scholarships and training for Belizeans from several countries and organizations. Additionally, the first ever Belize-Canada Bilateral Consultation was convened resulting in Canada's pledge to contribute CAN\$1mn to the OAS Office in the Adjacency Zone. Altogether, international cooperation through strengthened bilateral relations generated more than BZ\$ 50mn in 2021 alone.

A fifth key component of the MFAFT&I's work is the final and peaceful resolution of Guatemala's claim on Belize's territory. With the case now at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), sustained

bilateral engagement with Guatemala is essential in keeping the relationship cordial, leading up to the ruling of the ICJ. As such, there have been several meetings at the technical and ministerial level culminating in the official visit to Guatemala by PM Briceño. Importantly, and consistent with the 2005 Confidence Building Measures, May 2021 saw the reactivation of the Belize-Guatemala Joint Commission.

A sixth priority area was supporting economic rebuilding efforts through trade. This included strong advocacy and representation at the regional level to secure existing markets for Belize's exports being challenged by leakages in CARICOM's Single Market and Economy (CSME); deeper engagement with Guatemala by expanding an existing trade agreement to provide preferential markets for Belizean producers; bringing into effect trading arrangements with the UK; and the Republic of China on Taiwan; and exploring prospective trading arrangements for non-traditional exports with neighbors. In parallel to these activities, on the domestic front, the MFAFT&I has moved to shore up partnership with the private sector in a structured format. Furthermore, at the policy level, the MFAFT&I is working on implementing specific measures to enhance trade facilitation with a view to simplifying processes and reducing costs for the private sector.

Underpinning the work of the MFAFT&I is the need for an efficient and effective Ministry. To ensure the successful execution of the MFAFT&I's work program in 2021 Belize posted a high calibre cadre of ambassadors to Belize's nine embassies and missions overseas. Similarly, at headquarters the MFAFT&I has reorganized its staff to be fit for purpose and has embarked on capacity building to strengthen staff at headquarters.

Vaccine diplomacy, strengthening of bilateral relationships with strategic partners, increasing the flow of international cooperation, maintaining peaceful relations with Guatemala, and trade were critical in advancing Belize's foreign policy objectives. Similarly, much effort went into representing and advancing Belize's interests at the regional and multilateral level, safeguarding, and enhancing preferential market access for Belize's traditional and new exports. Continued institutional strengthening has also been consistent with the MFAFT&I's mission of "formulating

coordinating and implementing foreign policy initiatives, addressing national economic, social and security issues”.

Even though the global health crisis dominated the foreign policy agenda, the MFAFT&I was nonetheless able to achieve balance by also focusing on other key priority areas. Having attained a sufficient level of vaccines in stock, the focus is shifting to securing paediatric vaccines for the population of 5–11-year-olds. Due to the constant mutation of the COVID-19 virus and the need for booster shots, vaccine diplomacy will remain a constant focus of the MFAFT&I in the immediate future.

Introduction - A Concise History: From Belize Independence Secretariat to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration

The MFAFT&I has grown from a staff of ten (10) persons at headquarters; and five (5) diplomatic posts to a staff of approximately eighty (80) persons at headquarters, 18 overseas missions and 50 consulates worldwide, working from its headquarters at the Leigh Richardson Building since May 2021. Throughout its history, the MFAFT&I has been led by eight (8) Foreign Ministers, from both administrations, with the most recent being the Honourable Eamon Courtenay, along with the Hon. Ramon Cervantes as Minister of State.

This technical report, of the accomplishments of the MFAFT&I from January-December 2021, is intended to follow-through within the context of #planBelize 2020-2025 and its mantra of transparency and accountability. Our work is fundamentally guided by the Constitution, #planBelize and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is aimed at being Bold, Brilliant and Belizean; and to “Build Back Better” in a post-COVID world.

In the first hundred days the MFAFT&I prioritized the re-organization and redirection of itself to refashion its international relations to meet the new realities and promote a foreign policy that advances Belize’s development needs. The Ministry re-evaluated the regional and international scene and devised a new strategy that is performance-driven to keep up with rapidly changing global realities.

In short, the achievements of the MFAFT&I contained in this report fall under seven (7) pillars, namely: 1) Vaccine Diplomacy, 2) Strengthening of Relations with Bilateral Partners, 3) Multilateral Relations, 4) Belize-Guatemala Relations, 5) International Cooperation, 6) Foreign Trade and 7) Institutional Strengthening.

Mission Statement and Priorities of the Ministry

Vision

To enhance the quality of life of Belizeans through the proactive and effective promotion, protection, and coordination of Belize's interests in the bilateral, regional, and multilateral diplomatic and consular spheres.

Mission

To formulate, coordinate and implement foreign policy initiatives, addressing national economic, social and security issues while ensuring the preservation of national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Strategic Priorities

1. Pursue trade, investment, tourism, scientific and cultural opportunities for Belize abroad.
2. Strengthen and consolidate the Ministry by reviewing its structures and institutions and by professionalizing its human resources.
3. Strengthen our outreached programs with the Belize diaspora.
4. Foster integration with CARICOM and SICA and other regional partners.
5. Coordinate the Implementation of trade agreements (WTO plus others).
6. Increase cooperation with traditional and non-traditional development partners.

Main Achievements of the Ministry by Programs

Vaccine Diplomacy

During 2021 much of the Ministry's focus was on vaccine diplomacy. Specifically, working to source vaccines to fight COVID-19 through collaboration with bilateral partners and multilateral agencies. The first doses of vaccines were shared by Barbados, which received a generous donation from the Government of India. Subsequently, a larger and direct donation was received from India through its Vaccine Maitri Initiative. This was followed by donations from other cooperating bilateral partners such as: Mexico, United Arab Emirates (UAE), UK, African Medical Supplies Platform, and the USA. Continuous engagements with bilateral partners and regional and international institutions on vaccine diplomacy resulted in other forms of support to the COVID-19 National Response Plan, and overall health system, such as India, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, Canada, European Union, USA, UAE, UN agencies, SICA, CARICOM, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), among others. The EU was among the first to allocate funds to support developing countries during the start of the pandemic and was flexible with its program of support to Belize, to allow for reallocation of funds to ongoing programs in the health sector.

As can be expected, the UN Resident Coordinator's Office was instrumental in supporting the country's efforts to respond to the pandemic through strengthening of the health sector. This was done through donations of equipment, and medical supplies directly relevant to the response to COVID-19, as well as through studies measuring the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on the people and country and keeping the spotlight on the effects of the pandemic on the most vulnerable.

By December 2021, the MFAFT&I was successful in sourcing 60% of the total vaccines received, conservatively estimated at Bz\$ 20,000 mn. The MFAFT&I's Vaccine Diplomacy successfully buttressed the vaccination program by the Ministry of Health and Wellness resulting in the vaccination of 209,662 persons (48.7%) receiving one dose and 196,206 (45.6%) having been fully

vaccinated. Furthermore, 23,768 or 50% of the population ages 12-15 were also fully vaccinated. Today, the MFAFT&I's focus has shifted slightly to securing paediatric vaccines for the population of 5–11-year-olds, and securing additional doses for booster shots considering the lingering COVID-19 and its evolving variants.



Vaccine donations were received from India, USA, UK and Mexico

Strengthening of Relations with Bilateral Partners

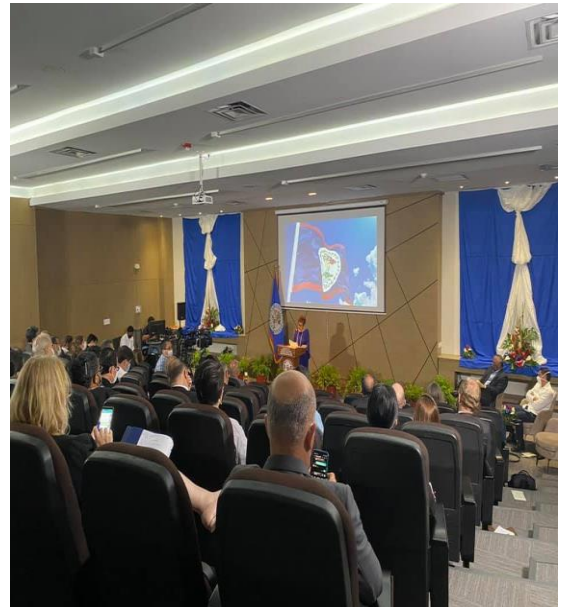
The strengthening of engagement with bilateral partners remains a fundamental aspect of the work of the MFAFT&I. During 2021 this was done through in country bilateral meetings, on the margins of regional and international meetings and conferences, the MFAFT&I's annual Diplomatic Week, Joint Commissions, political dialogues, and official visits.

Early in 2021, the MFAFT&I convened its first bilateral consultation with Canada during which matters on the bilateral agenda such as the COVID-19 pandemic, cooperation in the justice sector, seasonal workers' program, and educational opportunities for Belizeans, were discussed.

In September 2021, and in keeping with the gradual re-opening of the country, the MFAFT&I hosted the first in-person Diplomatic Week in two years. A total of thirty-one (31) non-resident diplomats accredited to Belize attended; in addition to UN agencies, the European Union (EU), and other resident international agencies. September 2021 was particularly special since it marked Belize's 40th Anniversary of Independence.

Diplomatic Week 2021 was the first opportunity for the diplomatic and consular corp. to formally meet the PM, Hon. John Briceño, after the November 2020 General Elections. They also met the newly appointed Governor General, H.E. Froyla Tzalam, the first indigenous woman to ever hold this high office throughout the Commonwealth. The diplomatic and consular corp. also benefitted from a briefing on the foreign policy direction of the Briceño Administration. Additionally, several bilateral meetings were held with various countries to strengthen bilateral relations.

During Diplomatic Week, the annual political dialogue was held with the European Union in which at least seven (7) non-resident European diplomats participated. During the meeting, information was shared on the economic recovery efforts of both parties, the state of play with vaccines for the COVID-19 virus, update on the implementation of the 11th Education Development Fund (EDF) Program 2014-2020, and progress on the new financing cycle, the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) 2021-2027. Views were exchanged on regional and global issues such as climate change, COP26, security, and stability in the region.



Diplomats accredited to Belize attend Diplomatic Week activities



Annual Political Dialogue: Belize-European Union

In terms of deeper engagement, several notable state visits occurred during the reporting period. The Ministry supported PM Briceño's historic state visit to Guatemala, in June 2021, the first such visit by a PM of Belize. This was followed by a visit to Mexico by PM Briceño in September 2021.



State visits to Guatemala and Mexico by Prime Minister Briceño

The MFAFT&I hosted an official visit in October 2021 from H.E. Lisandro Rosales, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and International Cooperation of Honduras. Minister Courtenay and Secretary Rosales held a bilateral meeting aimed at promoting and strengthening fraternal and cordial bilateral relations and cooperation in areas of agriculture and food security, the fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, tourism, air transport and services, and migration. Both Ministers called for the operationalization of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent. Minister Courtenay further briefed Secretary Rosales on Belize's preparation for the Conference of the Parties 26 (COP26).

The two Ministers signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the Establishment of a Mechanism for Bilateral Political Consultation. This MOU seeks to serve as a forum for coordination and bilateral negotiations, which will be informed through an integrated approach, in the areas of political and economic cooperation. Minister Courtenay handed over to Secretary

Rosales the title for a parcel of land for the construction of the permanent location of the Embassy of Honduras in Belize, located in Embassy Square, Belmopan.



Visit of the Foreign Minister of Honduras, H.E. Lisandro Rosales

Multilateral Relations

Regional and multilateral engagements are important to advance Belize's foreign policy priorities. Given the nature of the challenges we face and the limited fiscal space to respond, international coordination and cooperation are essential. Through regional engagements Belize sought to build alliances and coalitions to amplify voices and demand clear actions at the global level. At multilateral level, Belize joins with other like-minded countries to build awareness and support for needed responses to the challenges we face as well as ensure that the global responses agreed to are to the benefit of Belize.

The Ministry supported Belizean delegations participating in regional meetings and summits of the Central American Integration System (SICA), during the first part of 2021. A primary focus of those meetings was the regional situation of unprecedented levels of irregular migration originating primarily from the northern triangle countries. Extra-regional migrants from Africa, Haiti, Venezuela, and Cuba were also moving through the region posing a challenge to the management of migration in other Central American countries.

SICA Member States held meetings with the USA, the primary destination for irregular migrants as well as with Mexico. These meetings resulted in a better understanding of the scope of the challenges, improved coordination as well as USA bilateral support through the International Organization for Migration (IOM). SICA also championed COVID 19 vaccine equity, several SICA member states continue to have challenges in the uptake of vaccines which hinders their economic recovery.

The major challenge to Belize's development is climate change, therefore climate action is a high priority for Belize's foreign policy. The Ministry supported the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management and the Office of the Prime Minister in the development of a CARICOM Declaration for COP26 which outlined the region's demands. Said declaration formed Belize's terms of engagement at COP26. Some progress was made but not enough on the critical issues of emissions reduction by 2030 and climate finance. Small Island Developing States (SIDS), like Belize, played an important role in galvanizing global attention and demanding action.

The MFAFT&I actively participated in several high-profile undertakings at COP26, October-November 2021, Glasgow, Scotland, UK. At the COP26 Summit, Belize took a leadership role in championing the concerns of SIDS, inclusive of climate financing for mitigation and adaptation. Belize made headlines with its world-leading Blue Bonds for Ocean Conservation program, which simultaneously cut the country's national debt by over \$500 mn, while at the same time providing for significant maritime conservation financing and actions over the next few decades.



Prime Minister Briceño leads Belize’s active role at COP26

Belize has long been demanding reform of the eligibility criteria for access to concessionary financing which is now primarily determined by income. Belize and SIDS have made the case that vulnerability should also be considered. To this end, the UN has agreed to finalise the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) and make recommendations for its use. This would significantly change Belize’s fiscal situation and help to prevent the accumulation of unsustainable debt from private creditors in the future. Belize used the UN platform and its political dialogue with the EU, Canada and USA to seek support for the MVI.



PM Briceño and delegation at the UN

Within the wider region of Latin America and the Caribbean, Belize participated in several meetings of CELAC with a view to supporting the renewal of regional solidarity. Through CELAC, Belize was able to access therapeutics for COVID-19 care as well as significant tranches of vaccines. CELAC is also promoting regional self-sufficiency in health to avoid the impact of nationalistic practices, protectionism, and supply chain disruptions that impeded access to personal protective equipment (PPE) and vaccines during the pandemic.

Belize-Guatemala Relations

Resolving peacefully and finally, Guatemala's territorial, maritime and insular claim to Belize has been a top foreign policy priority over the last 40 years.

Belize and Guatemala agreed in the 2008 Special Agreement to refer through referendum to our respective peoples the question of whether Guatemala's claim should be resolved at the ICJ. In 2018 and 2019, the peoples of Guatemala and Belize, respectively, both delivered a resounding yes to that question. The case was lodged at the ICJ in June 2019. Guatemala submitted its memorial to the Court in December 2020.

Over 2021, Belize's Agent and Co-Agent to the ICJ worked assiduously with our international lawyers to finalize Belize's counter memorial for submission to the Court by June 2022.

While the judicial process is on track, challenges abound on the ground in the border areas especially on our western border, but also occasionally on the southern and maritime borders. There has been an increase in agricultural encroachments and cattle grazing into Belize's forested protected areas, the establishment of illegal settlements, and poaching of endangered birds and animals by Guatemalan civilians in Belizean territory. These constant illegal crossings into Belize have resulted in serious deforestation and destruction of our biodiversity. Our security forces and forestry rangers are doing their best to deter these activities, but the sheer relentlessness, and remote locations, make their task more difficult. From time-to-time tensions arise between our authorities and Guatemalan civilians and sometimes between the authorities and governments.

The set of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) agreed between Belize and Guatemala in 2005 is the basis which the Ministry uses for addressing these constant challenges. The Ministry engages its diplomatic partners constantly to apprise them of the challenges and to ensure that all are aware of Belize's position that the CBMs remain valid and in force, notwithstanding that the matter is before the ICJ.

The Organization of American States (OAS) Secretary General, through his Special Representative and the Office of the OAS in the Adjacency Zone (AZ), continues to play an instrumental role in supporting the two countries to maintain their commitments under the CBMs. The Ministry successfully lobbied Canada for financial support to the OAS AZ Office in 2021.

With regard to strengthening bilateral relations with the Republic of Guatemala, Hon. Eamon Courtenay and H.E. Pedro Brolo Vila, Guatemalan Foreign Minister, met at the Office of the OAS in the AZ in March 2021 to exchange updates on efforts to reactivate the Belize-Guatemala Joint Commission. Minister Courtenay and Minister Brolo also reviewed the implementation of the Belize-Guatemala Partial Scope Agreement (PSA) with a view to enhance trade between the two countries. Further, the ministers reiterated their commitment to the PSA and its potential to increase trade, economic growth and development; and underscored the need to revitalize the administrative institutions of the PSA to ensure that the agreement functions smoothly.



Belize-Guatemala bilateral meeting at the Office of the OAS in the AZ

Minister Courtenay and Minister Brolo also reaffirmed the importance of adherence to the 2005 Agreement on a Framework for Negotiations and CBMs. In May 2021, the MFAFT&I re-activated the Belize-Guatemala Joint Commission. Said Commission received reports on the status of implementation of four (4) of the thirteen (13) agreements that were signed between the two countries in Placencia, December 2014. Those four (4) agreements related to the recovery of stolen cultural artifacts, sustainable tourism, movement of students, and seasonal workers.



Meeting of the re-activated Belize-Guatemala Joint Commission



Meeting of Foreign Ministers Courtenay and Brolo

International Cooperation

There was renewed emphasis on strengthening international cooperation with much of it directed at bolstering GOB's COVID-19 National Response Plan and support to strengthening the health sector. Notwithstanding, the MFAFT&I discharged this mandate with a heightened awareness of the need to follow-up on every potential lead considering the heavy debt burden which Belize bore at the time. The MFAFT&I set a target of tripling international cooperation to Bz \$25 mn and by the end of December 2021, with vaccine diplomacy alone, that target had been surpassed.

Within the UN, the year-long process for the new UN Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework 2022-2026 began in 2021. This is the framework for cooperation between Belize and the UN agencies and is considered indispensable for planning and implementation of the UN development activities towards fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda. In addition, the MFAFT&I began the coordination of Priority 2 of the EU's Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) with its focus on Promotion of Trade and Investment based on a Green Model with Central America, while building confidence to reduce tensions at the border with neighbouring Guatemala. This priority received €6 mn to support a program of activities for 2021-2027.

Also noteworthy during this period was the level of support received via SSC, which continues to complement the traditional North-South flow. For instance, the 2021-2025 MOU between Belize and the ROC, Taiwan saw a substantial increase in total funds allocated to Belize over the previous cycle.

For instance, Minister Courtenay and H.E. David Kuan-Chou Chien, Ambassador of Taiwan to Belize signed a Letter of Intent to support women and youth entrepreneurs. This 15-month project, entitled Enhancing the Economic Empowerment of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean in the COVID-19 Post Pandemic Era valued at Bz\$3.4 mn. This project seeks to promote women's entrepreneurship and social inclusion through financial and technical collaborations with relevant national institutions and Taiwanese experts. Women and youth-led micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) will benefit from extensive professional and vocational training, business

incubation programs, financial relief counselling, and a bolstered national network for MSME support.

Thus far, during the 1st phase, October 2021-January 2022, a total of US\$492,195 was spent, or approximately 1/3 of the funds allocated for this project. The project has supported eight (8) institutions across the country, from Orange Walk to Punta Gorda (including Caye Caulker); vocational training for one hundred and fifteen (115) women in sewing, cake decorating, hairdressing, digital literacy, sea salt and seaweed and banana fiber; provided startup funds for nine (9) businesses; and capacity building for fifty (50) trainers.



Belize’s robust bilateral program with Taiwan

There was also the India-UN Development Partnership Program, valued at a little under USD1.0 mn, which focused on supporting the health sector in the procurement of essential medical equipment and other supplies; project implementation began in 2021.

A scale up in engagements at all levels with Mexican officials including at the Head of State and Government, resulted in prospective big ticket economic initiatives such as Tren Maya and a trade arrangement to facilitate Belize's exports into Mexico. On the technical cooperation side, the midterm evaluation for the IX Technical and Scientific Program 2019-2020 was conducted. It showed that despite the pandemic, technical training and support were provided to all stakeholders, namely, the Ministry of Agriculture, Belize Agricultural Health Authority, Statistical Institute of Belize, and the Belize Bureau of Standards. In terms of agricultural support, a few field trainings are pending since these are best carried out physically and COVID-19 had limited travelling. The X Technical and Scientific Program will be developed in June 2022.

In late 2021, the Embassy of the USA in Belize reached out to the MFAFT&I regarding the possibility of Belize being supported by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). The MCC is a bilateral US foreign aid agency that partners with developing countries who are "committed to good governance, economic freedom and investing in their citizens." This prospective support was in addition to the cooperation provided by the US in areas of security, human rights, migration, and other areas of mutual interest.

A key cooperation program remains the securing of scholarships, training and internships provided through bilateral partners, regional and international organizations. The MFAFT&I secured scholarship and training opportunities for Belizeans in various fields from several countries and organizations including: Chile, Taiwan, Cuba, Colombia, Mexico, Serbia, Romania, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Qatar, Thailand, India, South Korea, Indonesia, Japan, the Erasmus Mundus Program, OAS, IAEA, among others.

Approximately, one hundred and sixty (160) Belizean students have already accepted scholarships offered by the OAS during the reporting period. From this cohort, ninety (90) Belizean students

(56%) accepted scholarships for master's courses and sixty-five (65) Belizean students (41%) were matriculated in professional development and capacitation courses.

Foreign Trade

With the commitment to open new markets for the private sector, during 2021 the MFAFT&I worked closely with the ROC Taiwan for the completion of the legal process to bring the Economic Cooperation Agreement into force in January 2022. Belizean exporters now have access to preferential tariff treatment for a wide list of products including: sugar, beef, turkey, tilapia and other fish fillets, lobster and shrimp, cheese, beans, dried fruits, corn meal, cassava starch and flour, soya products, orange juice concentrate, sauces, jams and jellies.

In terms of securing existing regional markets, the MFAFT&I worked with the sugar industry to establish a CARICOM Monitoring Mechanism for Sugar (MMS) to secure and safeguard Belize's interest in sugar exported to the CARICOM Market. The implementation of a MMS puts in place arrangements to ensure that, where extra-regional imports of refined sugar are being contemplated, regional producers are given the opportunity first to supply. Only where regional suppliers are unable to supply will Member States be authorised to exempt the payment of the Common External Tariff (CET).

The MFAFT&I participated fully in the negotiations carried out through the regional grouping of the Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM) with the UK to secure preferential market access to the UK's market for Belize's traditional exports of sugar, banana, and other exportable products. The process was completed with the ratification of the CARIFORUM-UK Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which transitioned the UK's trade obligations as a member of the EU into a stand-alone EPA with CARIFORUM following Britain's exit from the EU in 2021.

Closer to home, and with Central America, the MFAFT&I successfully activated the Belize-Guatemala Administrative Commission established under the PSA in August 2021 along with its technical subcommittees on food, plant and animal health, custom's rules of origin, technical

barriers to trade and transport. With the desire to re-invigorate the trade between the two countries, two (2) new technical committees were established: the Investment Facilitation Coordinating Group (IFCG) and the Export Promotion Committee (EPC). Importantly, the Administrative Commission agreed to expand the product coverage under the Belize-Guatemala PSA and seeks preferential market access into Guatemala's market for one hundred and fifty (150) products of Belizean origin. Within the same year, in November 2021, the MFAFT&I launched the first round of negotiations with Guatemala to be followed by a second and third round in early 2022.

The MFAFT&I continues discussions with Mexico, with the intention to deliver on the agreement between PM Briceño and President Obrador to formalize trade relations. In February 2021, following a technical meeting, Belize and Mexico agreed on several points, including technical exchanges on legal and technical hurdles that the parties can resolve through cooperation; the conclusion of a possible MOU on Trade and Investment Cooperation; and a commitment by Mexico to explore possibilities for facilitating the exportation of Belizean goods. These discussions are expected to pick up steam in 2022.

In recognition of the need to diversify the economy away from trade in goods and tourism services, the MFAFT&I continued to support the development of the national services sector. Through support of a project led by the CARICOM Secretariat, Belize will strengthen capacity to map and catalogue the regulatory status quo and to identify Non-Conforming Measures (NCMs) affecting trade in services and investment. This initiative will provide the necessary guidelines to negotiate services liberalisation with third countries, including Mexico, in conformity with said CARICOM policy.

Consistent with #planBelize, the MFAFT&I reactivated the National Trade Negotiating Commission (NTNC) to provide a forum for tripartite dialogue on trade and trade related matters. The NTNC has met at least three (3) times since it was launched in May 2021 to deliberate on trade matters inclusive of trade negotiations with Guatemala and Mexico. The private sector, academia, and non-governmental organisations can now participate in important trade and trade policy-related matters through a structured mechanism.

On trade facilitation, important to improving competitiveness, the MFAFT&I successfully transitioned from policy framework to implementation of the Trade Facilitation Implementation Roadmap. This Roadmap ensures Belize's implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). The objective of the TFA is to reduce time and costs associated with clearance of goods at border points. In addition, a National Committee on Trade Facilitation was constituted to implement said roadmap. This roadmap is proving useful as a policy instrument for accessing donor funds to support implementation and several projects are expected to materialize in early 2022.

Institutional Strengthening

During the reporting period, the MFAFT&I assembled and posted a high calibre cadre of resident ambassadors to Belize's embassies and missions overseas including: Mexico, the USA, the OAS, Canada, Taiwan, the UK, Belgium and the EU, Cuba, Guatemala, El Salvador, and the UN headquarters. The MFAFT&I has sought to maximize Belize's diplomatic outreach and enhance its relations with the world. Regionally, we appointed our first SICA Ambassador and maintained our ambassadorial presence in CARICOM through our non-resident CARICOM Ambassador. Similarly, at headquarters the MFAFT&I has reorganized its staff to ensure that the Ministry's work program is successfully and efficiently executed.



Belize names ambassadors to the UN and Taiwan

In line with the Ministry's commitment to support the strategic placement of eminent Belizeans in international organizations, H.E. Dr. Carla Barnett was elected as the first woman and Belizean to

assume the post of Secretary General of CARICOM in August 2021. Elsewhere in the region, Ms. Anita Zetina was appointed as Secretary General of the Social Integration Council of SICA in January 2021.

For the first time in Belize's post-Independence history, the country's foreign and trade policy is being undertaken from our new headquarters at the Leigh Richardson Building, Belmopan, since March 2021. The Leigh Richardson Building has quickly become a landmark in the nation's capital.



The MFAFT&I operates from its new headquarters in Belmopan

Future Priorities

The programmatic focus of the Ministry elaborated above will remain unchanged, except for Vaccine Diplomacy, which will largely depend on the trajectory of the COVID-19 virus. As the country focuses more on rebuilding the economy, the MFAFT&I will reflect this priority through scaled-up engagement with its bilateral partners, optimizing on every and all opportunities for international cooperation and foreign trade; and continued advocacy and representation at the multilateral level to reduce the barriers to growth and development for small countries. In addition, while work will continue on the preparation of Belize's Counter-Memorial for submission to the ICJ, attention will also remain on keeping the country's engagement with Guatemala cordial and peaceful.

Staffing and Organization

The work of the MFAFT&I is implemented through four (4) directorates: Foreign Policy, Cooperation, Protocol and Consular Matters. The Policy, Consular and Protocol Directorates are comprised of a cadre of foreign service professionals who are assigned responsibilities either on a geographic or thematic basis, as appropriate.

Heads of Mission (High Commissioners and Ambassadors, Consul-Generals, Permanent Representatives) report to and receive direction from the Ministry through the Chief Executive Officer and Directorates. In most cases, their policy, thematic, geographic or administrative issues are responded to by foreign service officers and clerical and support staff at headquarters.

The current process of the Belize-Guatemala Territorial Differendum necessitated the establishment of the Office of the Agent and Co-agent to prepare the GOB's submissions to the ICJ. As well as the establishment of an International Boundaries Unit (IBU) to support the work of said office.

Lessons Learned

The year 2021 was a year of lessons on all fronts for the Ministry. Generally, though, there were a few key lessons that were not necessarily new or unique to the MFAFT&I. These may be considered recurrent lessons, and endemic to most ministries. These are:

- Succession planning
- Adequate resources
- Cadre of highly skilled young professionals
- Flexibility with access to financing to support initial investment opportunities and advocacy
- Effective and prompt communication with key ministry stakeholders such as Office of the Prime Minister, and Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment.

Succession planning continues to be a challenging lesson to contend with and is reflected in the quality and number of personnel post-election. As such, there was a need to find the appropriate balance between the staffing at headquarters and at embassies abroad; and also the urgent need for careful succession planning to ensure seamless operations on both ends.

The need for adequate resources both to hire young professionals, and to do so in a timely fashion, was another lesson learned during this period. The rules of hiring and the administrative processes involved can take a long time and affect productivity in the long run. In addition, the relatively low level of remuneration means the attrition rate will always be high as the Ministry may be used as an entry point for getting experience and then moving on. The work of the Ministry has expanded significantly particularly because of the global challenges in the last two (2) years, but there has not been a proportional increase in the human resources to keep pace with the increased workload.

Global developments come at small countries hard and fast and are seldom the result of deliberate actions on our part. Quick response and mobilization are often necessary to ensure that any negative impacts are ameliorated, and that Belize actively participates in the solution finding stage of such events. To this end, communication between the key ministries in control of resources is critical to ensure the level of support and to reduce response time to the challenges at hand.

Looking Forward

The thrust of #planBelize is centred around our government's plan to rebuild a better Belize that works for everyone. The objective is to ensure that the Government grows the economy, reduces poverty, and that such growth is sustainable and inclusive.

Since the work of the MFAFT&I continues to grow in scope there will be the eventual need to employ more technical persons to adequately keep up with the growing demands of a rapidly evolving world, and to provide effective representation for Belize's national interests at home and abroad.

Annex 1 - COMMUNIQUÉ
ISSUED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE FORTY SECOND REGULAR MEETING
OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN
COMMUNITY,
5-6 JULY 2021

The Forty-Second Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was held virtually on 5-6 July 2021. Chair of the Conference, the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Honourable Gaston Browne presided over the proceedings.

Other Members of the Conference in attendance were: Prime Minister of The Bahamas, the Rt Honourable Dr Hubert Minnis; Prime Minister of Barbados, Honourable Mia Amor Mottley, Q.C; MP; Prime Minister of Belize, Honourable John Briceño; Prime Minister of Dominica, Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit; Prime Minister of Grenada, Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell; President of Guyana, His Excellency Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali; Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Most Honourable Andrew Holness; Premier of Montserrat, Honourable Easton Taylor-Farrell; Prime Minister of St Kitts and Nevis, Dr the Honourable Timothy Harris; Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr. the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves and President of Suriname, His Excellency Chandrikapersad Santokhi; and Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley.

Saint Lucia was represented by Ambassador to the Caribbean Community Her Excellency Elma-Gene Isaac.

Associate Members in attendance were: Bermuda represented by Deputy Premier Honourable David Burt; Cayman Islands represented by Premier the Honourable G. Wayne Panton; and the Turks and Caicos Islands represented by Premier the Honourable Charles Missick. British Virgin Islands was represented by Deputy Premier, Honourable Dr Natalio Wheatley.

OPENING CEREMONY

Secretary-General Ambassador Irwin LaRocque, immediate past Chair Dr the Honourable Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and Chair of Conference the Honourable Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda addressed the Opening Session.

The speakers all addressed concerns about the on-going COVID-19 Pandemic in particular the inadequate supplies of vaccines and the risk to lives and livelihoods of not being inoculated. They also expressed solidarity with the Member States which had been affected by recent natural disasters.

The Heads of Government and the Secretary-General welcomed the incoming Secretary-General Dr Carla Barnett who assumes office on August 15, 2021.

The Secretary-General, speaking at his last Regular Meeting of the Conference, thanked the Heads of Government for their support during his tenure and expressed his pride at being allowed to serve the Community.

Both Heads of Government praised the Secretary-General for his achievements during his tenure and spoke highly of his performance particularly during the difficult time which the Region has been experiencing.

All the Statements are available at www.caricom.org.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN HAITI

Heads of Government received a report on the situation in Haiti from the Expert Group which they established at the 32nd Intersessional Meeting in February 2021 and agreed to issue the attached statement.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Heads of Government received an update on the situation in St Vincent and the Grenadines in the aftermath of the eruption of the La Soufrière volcano and the recent flooding in Guyana and Suriname. They also received a report from the countries affected by the recent passage of Hurricane Elsa, in particular Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines.

Heads of Government expressed their solidarity with the affected states.

They reiterated that the need for strengthening resilience was a central theme for Member States in view of the Region's complex multi-hazard environment.

Heads of Government noted that the 2021 hurricane season has already commenced with an expected eighteen named storms of which eight are forecast to become hurricanes and four major hurricanes.

Heads of Government recognised the critical role that regional institutions have played and continue to play in the response to regional emergency events. In that regard they commended the sterling work of the Seismic Research Centre of The University of the West Indies (The UWI) in providing timely and accurate scientific advice to the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines with respect to the eruption of the La Soufrière volcano.

Heads of Government expressed appreciation to the Region's development partners for the financial and technical support which continues to be provided to the Regional Response Mechanism led by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) in support of Member States.

Heads of Government agreed to lobby development partners for continued support in view of the ongoing response and the requirements for recovery going forward.

COVID-19

Heads of Government considered a range of issues emanating from a report by the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) on the situation with respect to the COVID-19 virus. The most

critical of these was the continuing need for equitable access to vaccines as well as how to treat with the emerging COVID variants.

They expressed their determination for the Region to achieve herd immunity of 80 per cent coverage before the end of 2021 and, to this end, agreed to redouble their efforts to acquire adequate supplies of vaccines.

Heads of Government expressed appreciation to the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr the Honourable Keith Rowley, CARPHA, and the CARICOM Secretariat for the work undertaken to acquire vaccines.

Heads of Government further expressed appreciation to the Governments of Third States, Regional Organisations and the community of International Development Partners (IDPs) for their financial support and donations of vaccines to the Caribbean Community.

Heads of Government thanked the United States of America for its offer of vaccines and looked forward to a speedy conclusion to the negotiations for their delivery.

Heads of Government agreed that equity of access to COVID-19 vaccines is still of utmost importance to CARICOM Member States and as such efforts to achieve same should be pursued with PAHO/WHO, Third States, and the Facilitation Council for the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator to address this matter.

Heads of Government mandated the CARICOM Secretariat to continue to collaborate with CARPHA, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), regional nursing, medical and allied health professional bodies and institutions, to identify strategies and policy guidelines to address vaccine hesitancy, using an evidence-based approach.

Heads of Government urged that employees co-operate with employers to ensure a safe working environment either through vaccination or regular testing.

Heads of Government emphasised the importance of citizens being inoculated so that Member States could achieve herd immunity, recognising that no one is safe until everyone is safe.

They also mandated the CARICOM Secretariat to mobilize resources to support the implementation of communication and other initiatives to address vaccine hesitancy at the regional and national levels.

ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

Heads of Government recognised that Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) is a silently expanding global threat with potentially devastating health, social and economic impacts for the Region.

Heads of Government noted that AMR occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change over time making manageable infections harder to treat with existing medicines, therefore increasing the risk of disease spreads, severe illness and death.

Heads of Government also recognised that the economic impact of uncontrolled AMR would be catastrophic as it places sustainable food production and safety at risk. They further noted that environmental conditions affect disease transmission and that AMR and climate change are inextricably linked and can severely impact the tourism and travel sector.

In response to the challenge, Heads of Government agreed to establish multi-sectoral AMR national action plans in line with the One Health approach including integrated AMR surveillance systems for the human, animal, plant and environmental sectors.

CSME

Heads of Government recognised that the implementation of the CSME requires the commitment of each Member State.

They also recognised the importance of the internal mechanisms including strengthened governance and accountability structures in Member States for effective implementation.

Heads of Government agreed that all Member States would commit to enhanced public education programmes to better inform stakeholders of the benefits of the CSME.

Heads of Government issued a Declaration on the CSME which is attached.

CARICOM DEVELOPMENT FUND (CDF)

Heads of Government welcomed the appointment of Mr Wendell Samuel of St Vincent and the Grenadines as Chair of the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF).

TOURISM

Heads of Government, recognising the need to re-open economies while balancing the health and economic livelihood of Community Nationals, agreed that new protocols for health, safety, visitor management and sanitization measures were of utmost importance in encouraging the resuscitation of the sector.

Heads of Government received the first report on a *Draft Joint Tourism Policy for CARICOM: COVID-19 Emergency Plan for the period Q3 2021 to Q4 2022* prepared by the Interim Tourism Working Group (ITWG) which they established earlier this year.

They endorsed the recommendations of the Group with respect to building the COVID-19 Health Safety Risk Resilience and enhancing CARICOM Destination Capacity among others.

Heads of Government agreed to consider proposals to reduce taxes on intra-regional travel for a pilot period of six months.

Heads of Government agreed to consider the use of a Vaccination Passport for vaccinated persons travelling by air and sea, supported by a Digital Vaccination Database, possibly based on the Barbados model in the first instance.

Heads of Government also agreed to consider proposals to create a regional travel bubble for a pilot period of six months taking account of previous lessons learnt.

Heads of Government further agreed on the need for further consultation on the development of a harmonised Policy for cruise ships covering both vaccinated and unvaccinated persons.

In this regard, Heads of Government mandated the CARICOM Secretariat, in collaboration with CARPHA and other relevant regional security agencies to convene a high-level meeting with cruise lines to agree on the minimum health and safety requirement for the resumption of cruise sailing in the Caribbean.

Heads of Government commended the work of the ITWG comprising representatives from the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), the CARICOM Secretariat, the Organisation of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission and the Governments of The Bahamas, Jamaica, and Saint Lucia.

FOOD PRODUCTION AND FOOD SECURITY

Heads of Government considered an update from the Lead Head of Government responsible for Agriculture; Agricultural Diversification and Food Security in the CARICOM Quasi Cabinet, His Excellency Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of Guyana on the work of the Special Ministerial Taskforce (MTF) on Food Production and Food Security established at the Thirty-Second Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government.

Heads of Government welcomed the actions so far taken to advance the CARICOM agri-food systems agenda, including agreement by the Taskforce on terms of reference, an implementation plan, and on priority commodities for heightened investment by the regional private sector.

In that regard, Heads of Government welcomed the recent engagement of the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on the CARICOM Single Market and Economy with the Special Ministerial Taskforce and the CARICOM Private Sector Organisation Inc. (CPSO), and agreed that priority attention be accorded to the determination of the quantum of investment required and the attendant implementation timelines.

Heads of Government also received an initial presentation on transport and logistics aspects and agreed that priority attention be given to proposals to incentivise private sector partnership in addressing transport and logistics requirements for implementation of the agri-food systems agenda and to inviting expressions of interest in this regard.

SINGLE ICT SPACE – ROAMING CHARGES

Heads of Government welcomed the Report on the outcome of the initial engagement with the two principal telecommunications providers in the Region on the issue of the elimination of roaming charges in the Region.

Heads of Government endorsed the Governance Framework and the composition of the Negotiation Team led by Mr Selby Wilson of the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) and also endorsed the projected timelines and action proposed in relation to the negotiations.

TAX TRANSPARENCY, BLACKLISTING AND DE-RISKING

Heads of Government stressed that the blacklisting and de-risking phenomena remain as serious threats to the economic security of CARICOM Member States.

Heads of Government acknowledged the excessive economic pressure exerted on CARICOM States by the European Union through the continuous inclusion of several Member States on blacklists with respect to non-cooperative tax jurisdictions and High Risk Third Countries with Strategic Anti-Money Laundering / Countering Financing of Terrorism (AML/ CFT) Deficiencies.

Heads of Government considered issues concerning the recently announced decision by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for a minimum global corporate tax rate and agreed to meet in special session before the end of July to discuss this matter.

Heads of Government welcomed the efforts of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) to facilitate a more transparent, inclusive and mutually beneficial relationship through dialogue and consultation within the framework of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement which links members of the OACPS to the EU.

Heads of Government while recognising that the US Anti-Money Laundering Law (AMLA) 2020, enacted on 1 January 2021, presents a more structured risk-based approach to the conduct of correspondent banking relations, noted that it can potentially worsen the regulatory landscape for CARICOM banks.

Heads of Government further agreed to continue efforts to strengthen their AML-CFT frameworks and will pursue a more effective engagement with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)/Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) and other standard setting bodies towards this end.

ENGAGEMENT WITH PRIVATE SECTOR, LABOUR AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Heads of Government engaged with representatives of the CARICOM Private Sector Organisation and the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC) on behalf of civil society.

Heads of Government noted the presentations of the two organisations and the issues raised in their statements including the impact of and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Heads of Government urged them as leaders in civil society to assist in the drive for the Region's citizens to be inoculated against the COVID-19 virus for the Community to achieve herd immunity.

CRIME AND SECURITY

Heads of Government received a confidential security brief from the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS). They expressed concern at the new challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

REVIVAL OF REGIONAL AIR TRANSPORT POST-COVID

Heads of Government noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the tourism sector and regional air transport.

They mandated the Secretariat to compile a list of fees and taxes which are applicable at the Region's airports and agreed to the convening of a Special Meeting of the Conference during the week of 12 July 2021 for urgent discussions on the matter of travel taxes.

Heads of Government also agreed to request the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) to provide technical support for this effort.

BORDER ISSUES

Belize-Guatemala Relations

Heads of Government received an update on the progress of Guatemala's Territorial, Insular and Maritime Claim (Guatemala/Belize) at the International Court of Justice.

They expressed concern that the undertaking by both countries and the Organization of American States (OAS) to engage in the design and development of a mechanism of co-operation for the Sarstoon River remains outstanding and urged both countries and the OAS to reinvigorate their efforts to this end.

Heads of Government also urged Belize, Guatemala and the OAS to continue implementing fully the existing Confidence Building Measures. They expressed support for the crucial role of the OAS in the process aimed at resolving the dispute, arising from Guatemala's claims on Belize; and further called on the international community to continue supporting the OAS Office in the Adjacency Zone.

Heads of Government reaffirmed their unwavering support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of Belize.

Guyana-Venezuela Relations

Heads of Government received an update on the most recent developments in the controversy between the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

They noted that Guyana had begun to prepare its Memorial for submission on 8 March 2022 in accordance with the schedule set by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to hear the case on the merits of Guyana's application concerning the validity of the Arbitral Award of 1899 and the related question of the definitive settlement of the land boundary between the two countries.

Heads of Government reiterated their full support for the ongoing judicial process that is intended to bring a peaceful and definitive end to the long-standing controversy between the two countries and urged Venezuela to participate in the process.

Heads of Government reaffirmed their firm and unwavering support for the maintenance and preservation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Guyana.

UPDATE ON COMMISSION OF INQUIRY IN THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Heads of Government reiterated support for the Government and People of the British Virgin Islands and agreed to issue the attached statement.

INSTRUMENTS FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNATURE

Recalling the decision taken at its Eighteenth Special Meeting to amend the definition of CARICOM national in Article 32(5)(ii) of the Revised Treaty to make it clear that paragraph 5(ii) applied to Montserrat only, Heads of Government adopted the Protocol to amend Article 32 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy.

Antigua and Barbuda and Montserrat signed the Protocol.

CARIBBEAN REGIONAL POST-COTONOU DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION PROGRAMMING

Heads of Government endorsed the priorities for Caribbean Regional Post-Cotonou Programming, identified by the Council of Ministers of CARIFORUM.

Heads of Government agreed to expand the priorities to include Transportation and Health.

Heads of Government also agreed that CARIFORUM internal consultations and dialogue between CARIFORUM and the European Union (EU) on a Caribbean Multi-Annual Programme, Post-Cotonou, should be intensified.

Heads of Government further agreed that CARIFORUM should negotiate for continued access to bilateral grant resources through national Multi-Annual Indicative Programme, based on vulnerability, for those CARIFORUM States being denied access to bilateral grant resources.

SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH

Heads of Government noted the current situation regarding the renewal of the Right Honourable Patricia Scotland, Q.C., for a second term as Secretary-General of the Commonwealth.

Heads of Government also noted that the Secretary-General has been viewed as a champion of developing countries and of the interests of small states during her tenure.

Heads of Government expressed their broad support for the renewal of the term of office of the Secretary-General.

SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY

Heads of Government expressed their deep appreciation to the outgoing Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community, Ambassador Irwin LaRocque. They lauded his commitment and his hard work to advance the regional agenda despite the challenging circumstances during his tenure. They expressed the hope that his knowledge and experience would continue to be available to the Community and they wished him well in his future endeavours.

Heads of Government welcomed the imminent succession to the post by Dr Carla Barnett on August 15 and looked forward to working with her in continuing the quest for the sustainable development of the Community.

ANNEX 2 - The Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR) of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was held virtually on the 6-7 May 2021, under the Chairmanship of the Honourable Eamon Courtenay, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belize.

The COFCOR was attended by Honourable E. P. Chet Greene, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Trade of Antigua and Barbuda; Senator Dr. the Honourable Jerome Walcott, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados; Honourable Dr. Kenneth Darroux, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Business and Diaspora Relations of the Commonwealth of Dominica; Honourable Oliver Joseph, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Affairs of Grenada; Honourable Hugh Todd, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Guyana; His Excellency Dr. Claude Joseph, Prime Minister a.i. and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship of the Republic of Haiti; Senator the Honourable Kamina Johnson-Smith, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica; Honourable Mark A.G. Brantley, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Aviation of the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis; His Excellency Albert Ramdin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation of the Republic of Suriname; and Senator the Honourable Dr. Amery Browne, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

His Excellency Reuben Rahming, Ambassador to The Bahamas to CARICOM, represented The Bahamas; Her Excellency Elma Gene Isaac, Ambassador to CARICOM to Saint Lucia, represented Saint Lucia; and His Excellency Allan Alexander, Ambassador of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to CARICOM represented St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

OPENING CEREMONY

Remarks were delivered by Ambassador Irwin LaRocque, Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community, His Excellency Dr. Claude Joseph, Prime Minister a.i and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship of the Republic of Haiti, outgoing Chair of the COFCOR, and the Honourable Eamon Courtenay, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration of Belize, the Chair of the COFCOR.

(The statements are available at www.caricom.org)

COORDINATION OF FOREIGN POLICY

CARICOM Foreign Minister re-emphasised the importance for the Region to speak with one voice through the coordination of foreign policy, and the need to find new and more effective ways to strengthen the existing coordination mechanisms while recognising the sovereign right of Member States. It was noted that there continues to be successful coordination but the increasing complexity of international issues requires that it be enhanced. In that regard, the COFCOR agreed to increase the frequency of its meetings. This would enable Ministers to address in a timely fashion new developments and challenges facing the Community and to shape Community responses and policies.

CANDIDATURES

The COFCOR reiterated the importance of CARICOM's effective participation in international fora, including through the pursuit of increased CARICOM representation in relevant organisations. In this regard, Foreign Ministers considered and endorsed a number of CARICOM candidatures to the United Nations (UN), the Organisation of American States (OAS) and other international and regional organisations. They also deliberated on the requests from Third Countries for CARICOM's endorsement of their candidates to multilateral bodies.

BILATERAL RELATIONS

The COFCOR noted the progress made in the strengthening of relations with a number of Third States and groups of states since its last Meeting. In so doing, it reaffirmed the importance of CARICOM's relations with its traditional partners and the need to continue to expand the Community's outreach to other regions and so develop its relations with non-traditional partners and groupings.

The devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and addressing its public health and economic effects, in particular the need for equitable access to vaccines and to economic recovery financing, were among the Community's priority concerns discussed and for which assistance was sought.

Ministers discussed relations the African Union. They reaffirmed their readiness for a CARICOM-AU Summit as soon as practicable.

The COFCOR expressed its continued concern that the US embargo against Cuba has a significant adverse impact on the socio-economic development of Cuba and the well-being of the Cuban People. Foreign Ministers reiterated CARICOM's support for the termination of the long-standing US economic, financial and commercial embargo against Cuba and agreed to continue to advocate in this regard.

MULTILATERAL AND HEMISPHERIC RELATIONS

United Nations (UN)

The COFCOR noted the developments regarding pursuit of the Financing for Development (FfD) agenda and the challenges associated with expanding public health expenditures while applying fiscal containment measures in line with the economic downturn arising from the COVID-19 Pandemic. Foreign Ministers commended the Honourable Prime Minister of Jamaica who joined with the Prime Minister of Canada and the UN Secretary-General to launch an initiative that has resulted in a menu of over 250 policy options to address Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and beyond.

The COFCOR agreed on the need for global solutions to the various challenges facing Small Island and Low-Lying Coastal Developing States, particularly in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COFCOR also agreed that the Community should continue to prioritise the

implementation of the SAMOA Pathway in a robust manner, including the launch of a strong COVID-19 economic recovery related appeal to the international community and,, in particular the G20, asking for the expansion and extension of the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI). The COFCOR encouraged the consideration of innovative debt relief measures such as debt swaps, debt buybacks, and State Contingent Debt Instruments to ease the economic fallout of the pandemic.

They also agreed to continue to advocate against –

- the designation of CARICOM Member States as high-risk territories thereby resulting in the ongoing loss of correspondent banking relationships (CBRs); and
- the unilateral actions to blacklist some Member States as non-cooperative tax jurisdictions.

The COFCOR welcomed the convening of a Food Systems Summit as part of the Decade of Action to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) being hosted by the UN Secretary-General in October 2021 and encouraged the highest level of participation from Member States.

The COFCOR agreed to continue to advance a common regional position, at the fourth and final Inter-Governmental Conference for the development of an Internationally Legally Binding Instrument on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity Beyond Areas of National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) scheduled for 16-27 August 2021.

Organisation of American States (OAS)

The COFCOR received an update on the issues of strategic importance to the Caribbean Community before the Organisation of American States (OAS). Foreign Ministers welcomed the CARICOM Framework Strategy entitled *Vulnerability to Resilience* put in place by the OAS Secretary-General with the assistance of the CARICOM Caucus. Ministers expressed concern over the limited resources allocated to areas identified as priority to CARICOM and agreed that every effort should be made to ensure that adequate resources are allotted to these areas. Foreign Ministers agreed to raise this matter at the Fifty-First OAS General Assembly, scheduled to be hosted this year by Guatemala. They also reiterated their commitment to the work of the hemispheric body. The COFCOR commended the work of the CARICOM Caucus in Washington D.C.

Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)

The COFCOR reviewed a synopsis of the 2021 Work Programme of the CELAC PPT Mexico and commended the PPT Mexico and CELAC for advancing priorities related to recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic on the health and economic fronts.

Association of Caribbean States (ACS)

The Council welcomed the assumption to office of His Excellency Rodolfo Sabonge as the new Secretary-General of the ACS and agreed that CARICOM Member States should continue to act strategically within the Association.

Foreign Ministers commended the coordination efforts in the Greater Caribbean in response to the pandemic.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The COFCOR agreed that COP26 should be the COP of Ambitious Action and that it must result in greater speed in scaling up climate finance flows to SIDS via the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) finance mechanisms, the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund. Foreign Ministers also reiterated their support to the Government of Antigua and Barbuda as Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

In preparation for COP26, the COFCOR emphasised the need for Member States to engage in wide-ranging consultation with stakeholders at the national and regional levels.

BORDER ISSUES

Belize-Guatemala Dispute

The COFCOR received an update on developments between Belize and Guatemala, including in respect of the case, arising from Guatemala's territorial, insular and maritime claim, that is now before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for final and definitive resolution, in accordance with the Special Agreement to Submit Guatemala's Claim to the ICJ.

The COFCOR urged Belize, Guatemala and the OAS to respect and implement fully the Confidence Building Measures as agreed under their Framework Agreement of 2005, pending a resolution of the case before the ICJ. They further urged both countries and the OAS to reinvigorate their efforts to engage in the design and development of a mechanism of cooperation for the Sarstoon River, which remains outstanding.

The COFCOR recognises and supports the OAS' crucial role in the process aimed at resolving the dispute, arising from Guatemala's claims on Belize, and called on the international community to continue supporting the OAS Office in the Adjacency Zone.

The COFCOR reaffirmed its unwavering support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of Belize.

Guyana-Venezuela Controversy

Foreign Ministers received an update on the most recent developments in the controversy between the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. They noted that Guyana had begun to prepare its Memorial for submission on 8 March 2022 in accordance with the schedule set by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to hear the case on the merits of Guyana's application concerning the validity of the Arbitral Award of 1899 and the related question of the definitive settlement of the land boundary between the two countries.

Foreign Ministers reiterated the expression by CARICOM Heads of Government of the Community's full support for the ongoing judicial process that is intended to bring a peaceful and definitive end to the long-standing controversy between the two countries and urged Venezuela to participate in the process.

Foreign Ministers remained very concerned about the threatening posture of Venezuela and reaffirmed their consistent support for the maintenance and preservation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Guyana.

ADVANCING REGIONAL PRIORITIES: CARICOM AGRI-FOOD AGENDA

The COFCOR affirmed the strategy adopted at the Thirty-Second Inter-sessional Conference of CARICOM Heads of Government (February 2021) for the advancement of the CARICOM Agri-Food Systems Agenda with priority attention to regional food and nutrition security. Ministers agreed to include the Agenda among the priority issues for engagement with relevant partners and in international fora, including the UN Food Systems Summit and the Summit of the Americas.

UNCTAD XV

The COFCOR received a report from Barbados on preparations for UNCTAD XV and noted that the Conference, which was scheduled to be held in Barbados in 2020, will now be held virtually on 3 October 2021.

Foreign Ministers commended Barbados for its continuing efforts to convene this important Conference and affirmed their commitment to work collectively with Barbados in ensuring that CARICOM SIDS specific issues are reflected in the outcome of UNCTAD XV.

*Caribbean Community Secretariat
7 May 2021*

**Annex 3 - Dialogue on Regional Migration (Central America and Mexico, a Transit
Region)
Virtual Meeting
25 August 2021**

Canciller, Lisandro Rosales
Foreign Ministers of Central America
Undersecretary Maximiliano Reyes Zuniga
Other Official Representatives
Ladies and Gentlemen

Greetings

I take this opportunity to congratulate Lisandro and his team for convening this dialogue on regional migration, for establishing an important space for us to exchange ideas, experiences, and lessons learnt on this age-old phenomenon.

Central America and Mexico, by virtue of geography, is a bridge to North America and therefore the site of some of the most complex movements of people in the world. Every day we witness our citizens making that treacherous trek to the borders of the United States of America. We also see our citizens taking advantage of regular routes of immigration, building significant diaspora communities, and contributing to the development of their adopted homes.

We have also seen Central America become a transit area for extra-regional migrants generally heading North. We can only anticipate that these trends will intensify because of the social and economic crises arising from the pandemic.

In Belize, we are both a destination and transit country for migrants. Over the last two decades, migrants from Central America have quietly changed our country's demographics. Reliable estimates are that migrants account for about 15% of Belize's population.

Human compassion demands that Belize offers refuge to the persecuted, that we offer opportunities for a better quality of life to those on the margins, but can we? Colleagues, the socio-economic fabric of Belize is stretched thin. Worn out by offering quality social services to tens of

thousands of migrants from the '70s, frayed by the costs associated with floods from the rains of Eta and Iota, and by COVID-19 and drought.

The Belizean people are truly faced with a Hobson's choice on the issue of migration.

Migration will forever be a defining feature not just of our region's story, but of the world, as it has always been throughout human history. In addressing the drivers of migration, our primary focus should not be to stop migration. Rather, we must reduce the adverse factors that motivate people to move out of necessity in unsafe, often desperate, and dangerous conditions while enabling migration that is safe, orderly, and regular.

We can no longer afford to drag our feet and wring our hands about engaging in serious dialogue amongst ourselves and with the governments of destination countries on the adverse factors and effects of regional migration. Governments of destination countries have unabashedly sought to protect their own interests and have unhesitatingly declared our peoples unwelcomed. They have devised and supported various schemes all aimed at stopping migrants from reaching their shores. This political reality underscores the need for a regional approach that sees the harmonization of our national laws, policies, regulations, and procedures across Central America rooted in the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Whilst we have acknowledged that migration of our citizens within Central America and Mexico and from the region to up north is driven by factors we have identified. The time has passed for us to summon the courage to accept responsibility for our own shortcomings. We must fight endemic corruption, curtail misspending of public resources, substantially scale-up implementation of sustainable pro-poor policies, and adopt creative policies to grow our economies to provide jobs for our people. It lies within our power to address the migration crises we face. We must match that power with moral fortitude.

I commend our actions at the international level where we have been strong advocates for the enhancement of the global framework for the treatment of migrants as reflected in the 2018 *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* which supplements the New York Declaration

for Refugees and Migrants by providing a “cooperative framework consisting of 23 objectives, implementation as well as follow-up and review.” Tellingly, and for obvious reasons, the second objective of the Global Compact does not place inordinate focus on stopping migration, but on “minimizing the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin”.

Colleagues, achieving that objective rests largely with us. Our people deserve that we create the necessary “political, economic, social and environmental conditions for [our] people to lead peaceful, productive and sustainable lives in their own country and to fulfill their personal aspirations.” We must seize the day and meet that challenge.

And while there has been progress regionally, such as the MIRPS and the platform provided by the Regional Conference on Migration, there is a desperate need to fill the political vacuum that has been noticeably quiet on migration.

We welcome this organic approach and suggest that this should be the first of many dialogues that will enable us to hold frank discussions amongst ourselves and to identify and implement solutions to the adverse factors and effects of migration.

Our actions in the next few months will test our commitment to migrants, among our region’s most vulnerable. Will we provide the assistance and support to them to ensure their security and wellbeing, and the conditions to build livelihoods free from violence and insecurity in their own countries? Or will we fail them yet again and force them to move, to migrate, to live in misery?

The choice is clear!

Annex 4 – Directory of Heads of Mission/Permanent Representatives



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