

Technical Report  
of the  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
Foreign Trade and Immigration  
2022/2023



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
AND FOREIGN TRADE



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## Message from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration



**Hon. Eamon Courtenay**

**Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration**

It is my pleasure to share with you the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration's (MFAFT&I) technical report 2022. As you will see, Belize is keen on enhancing its presence in the international community to advance the country's strategic foreign policy objectives, through the strengthening of existing bilateral partnerships, and making new bilateral partnerships.

In 2022, Belize established diplomatic relations with Nepal, the Republic of Kenya, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Republic of Moldova. These newly formed relationships will enhance Belize's stature in the international community; as well as open new avenues for Belize to pursue bilateral cooperation.

The Climate Crisis and the Russia-Ukraine War continue to be leading global issues. The negative effects of the illegal war include high inflation and supply chain challenges across the globe. With

Russia being a significant global energy supplier, and Ukraine being a powerhouse in grain production and export; the conflict has stymied supply of two major commodities linked to global food prices. Belize has therefore repeatedly called for the cessation of hostilities.

COVID-19 recovery remained a key priority on the national agenda where cold chain equipment and infrastructure upgrade was received as a part of UNICEF's work to strengthen the national cold chain system to aid in routine immunization and COVID-19 vaccination to children and families in remote and vulnerable communities in Belize. This critical equipment has improved the country's ability to respond to future pandemics and current vaccination needs. On the question of gender equality, Belize continues to enjoy cooperation from the Republic of China (ROC) Taiwan for support towards the capacity building of women entrepreneurs in Belize.

In just two years after inheriting a significantly depressed financial condition in Belize's economy, with a public debt above 130% of GDP and high poverty rate exceeding 50%, the Briceño Administration, through its mandate to transform Belize has seen a decrease in public debt to less than 70% by the end of 2022 and the poverty rate has fallen by approximately 15%.

On the foreign trade front, the Ministry has ramped-up its engagement with Mexico and Central America. The objective remains expanding the Belize-Guatemala Partial Scope Agreement (PSA), negotiating a permanent trade agreement with our northern neighbour, Mexico, negotiating a PSA with El Salvador, and increasing Belize's exports to CARICOM.

Finally, it is important to note that these achievements would not have been possible without the very dedicated, professional hardworking staff of the Ministry. It is important to underscore the need for continuous capacity building of staff to sustain the quality of service being rendered to the public.

## Abbreviations

ACP	African-Caribbean-Pacific
BAHA	Belize Agricultural Health Authority
BBS	Belize Bureau of Standards
BCIP	Belize Country Implementation Plan
BDF	Belize Defence Force
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBM	Confidence Building Measures
CCCCC	CARICOM Climate Change Centre
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CED	Customs and Excise Department
CELAC	Community of Latin America and Caribbean States
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CESO	Canadian Executive Services Organization
CET	Common External Tariff
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CNN	Cable News Network
COFCOR	Council for Foreign and Community Relations
COMISCA	Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican Republic
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSO	Civil Society organizations
CSME	CARICOM Single Market and Economy
DAOC	Diplomatic Academy of the Caribbean
DCGE	Dynamic Computational General Equilibrium
DGFT	Directorate General for Foreign Trade
ECA	Economic Partnership Agreement
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EDF	European Development Fund
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
ESW	Electronic Single Window
EU	European Union

FSO	Foreign Service Officers
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoB	Government of Belize
HRC	Human Rights Council
IBU	International Boundaries Unit
ICDF	International Cooperation and Development Fund
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
LAC	Latin America and Caribbean
MFAFT&I	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MMS	Monitoring Mechanism for Sugar
Mn	million
MVI	Multi-vulnerability Index
NCM	Non-Conforming Measures
NTNC	National Trade Negotiating Commission
NTP	National Trade Policy
OAS	Organization of American States
OZA	Adjacency Zone
PM	Prime Minister
PPT	Pro-Tempore Presidency
PSA	Partial Scope Agreement
ROC	Republic of China
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SICA	Central American Integration System
SIDS	Small Island and Low-Lying Developing States
SPS	Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary
TCGA	Toledo Cacao Growers Association
TE	Trade Economists
TRS	Time Release Study
UK	United Kingdom



UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UN-GOB	United Nations-Government of Belize
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WTO	World Trade Organization

## **Executive Summary**

The gradual slowdown of the pandemic and the move to full re-opening of the Belizean economy occurred between the first and second quarter of 2022. While vaccine diplomacy dominated the MFA's agenda in the previous reporting period, in 2022, the thrust was supporting the national sustainable economic growth path. Activities towards this end included the inaugural exports of Belizean goods under Belize's second bilateral trade agreement with the Republic of China, Taiwan, the development of a robust cooperation programme, continued active engagements in regional and multilateral discussions on matters integral to Belize's development such as climate change, rising cost of living crisis, and development financing. Furthermore, during the reporting period, and albeit at a reduced rate, the Ministry continued sourcing vaccines for support to the Ministry of Health and Wellness booster shots.

A major development influencing the work of the Ministry was the passage of Hurricane Lisa which made landfall in Belize City early November 2022. Through the Foreign Assistance Committee, the Ministry took the lead in reaching out to the international community in seeking immediate humanitarian relief for the many Belizeans adversely affected by Lisa. By the end of FY 22/23, Bze \$ 5 mn through mostly grant relief funding was received, in addition to in kind donations consisting of food supplies, building materials, and other relief supplies. Of note, the Ministry supported, for the first time, the conduct of a Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) carried out in concert with UN, IADB, and the European Union. The Assessment is important in the macro-context of emphasizing the urgent need to advance work on loss and damage for SIDS countries, who are unduly affected by the adverse impacts of climate change.

Returning to its core functions, the Ministry maintained active engagements with traditional and new bilateral partners, both at home and abroad, as well as with regional and multilateral organizations. The Ministry, both at headquarters and through its embassies abroad provided support to Prime Ministerial Visits, other high level Belizean Delegations representing Belize abroad, and consular services to Belizeans overseas in distress. High level visits by PM Briceno included visits to Taiwan, Brussels, Guyana, Cuba and Venezuela.

In country, the Ministry supported Presidential Visits of H.E. Manuel Lopez Obrador of Mexico, and H.E. Miguel Díaz Canel, as well as visits from high-ranking representatives of regional and hemispheric institutions, such as of the OAS, SIECA, and SICA. Furthermore, as part of the activities forming the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, Belize welcomed an official visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. The Ministry maintained its rigorous support of Belize's participation in regional, hemispheric and multilateral intergovernmental organizations such as the Central American Integration System (SICA), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Mesoamerica Project, Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), Organization of American States (OAS), United Nations (UN), Association of Caribbean States (ACS) in among others.

In terms of the rotation chair of the two regional platforms Belize belongs to, in December 2022, Belize assumed the Presidency Pro Tempore of SICA for the first semester of 2023, providing the space for Belize to lead with the reaffirmation of the importance of this regional platform amongst SICA member states and with extra-regional partners. This followed on the heels of the Chairmanship of CARICOM in the first semester of 2021.

This reporting year saw another milestone in the number and quality of bilateral engagements, particularly during the Ministry's traditional Diplomatic Week, in which close close to 30 bilateral meetings were held with principally non-resident ambassadors, and high level representatives from international and regional organizations. During most of these meetings, the Ministry inter alia, pressed its bilateral partners, for their acceptance, support, and use of the Multi-vulnerability Index (MVI) in treating with the structural challenges encountered in the financial system by SIDS countries, the far reaching effects of the war in Ukraine on energy and food prices, and the existential threat of climate change on already vulnerable countries.

Additionally, the number of formal engagements on or around Political Dialogue and Cooperation increased, and exchanges were held with traditional partners such as the European Union, Mexico, and El Salvador and for the first time partners such as Qatar, Peru and Japan. The Ministry co-led in the evaluation of the UN system programme of cooperation through the Joint National Steering Committee held towards the close of 2022. All these engagements serve to strengthen bilateral relations and in some instances, resulted in the design of new cooperation programmes in areas such as housing, infrastructure support, and agriculture.

Through strengthened bilateral relations, the Ministry continues to see increases in projects and programmes channeled through international cooperation. While the humanitarian relief efforts associated with Hurricane Lisa took center stage as it relates to resource mobilization, the Ministry was able to strengthen certain aspects of its cooperation programme. For example, with Korea and for the first time, the Ministry, with support from the UN, accessed Korea's Global International Organization Cooperation Programme with grant funding support of USD 3 mn aimed at strengthening the national statistics configuration. While this initiative formed the center piece of relations with Korea, the Ministry mobilized support for strengthening of internet technology in several ministries, along with a technical training programme targeting officials in priority areas identified by the GoB. Several projects with India and Japan are expected to materialize early in the subsequent reporting year. Importantly, progress was made on streamlining the project design and implementation process with one of Belize's most important development partners, the Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) and its International Cooperation Development Fund (ICDF).

The efforts to strengthen the institutional framework for the projects and programmes realized through international cooperation saw a push in the right direction with support to the proposal for the establishment of an International Cooperation Council. The inaugural meeting of the Council is expected to be held in the first quarter of FY23/24.

## **Introduction**

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, eighteen (18) overseas missions and fifty (50) consulates worldwide. Since May 2021, the MFAFT&I operates from its headquarters at the Leigh Richardson Building in Belmopan. 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.

This technical report, of the accomplishments of the MFAFT&I from April 2022 to March 2023, 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,” while simultaneously “Building Back Better” in a post-COVID world.

In short, the achievements of the MFAFT&I contained in this report fall under ten (10) sections, namely: 1) Strengthening and Expanding Relations with Bilateral Partners, 2) Territorial Disputes, 3) Regional Relations, 4) Multilateral Relations, 5) Belize-Guatemala Relations, 6) International Cooperation, 7) Main Achievements of Belize’s Missions Abroad, 8) Foreign Trade, 9) Administrative Matters, and 10) Future Priorities and Looking Forward.

## **Vision, Mission Statement and Strategic Priorities**

### **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 Belizeans.
2. Strengthen and consolidate the Ministry by reviewing its structures and institutions and by professionalizing its human resources;
3. Foster integration with CARICOM and SICA and other regional partners;
4. Coordinate the implementation of trade agreements with the World Trade Organization (WTO) plus others;
5. Increase cooperation with traditional and non-traditional development partners.

## **Strengthening and Expanding Relations with Bilateral Partners**

A recurring objective of the MFAFT&I is to strengthen Belize's existing bilateral partnerships and expand ties with new bilateral partners. In 2022, 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.

## **Establishment of Diplomatic Ties with New Bilateral Partners**

Belize established diplomatic relations with four (4) new countries in 2022. The governments of 1) Belize and Nepal established diplomatic relations in April 2022; 2) Belize and Kenya established diplomatic relations in June 2022; 3) Belize and the Republic of Moldova established diplomatic relations in August 2022; and 4) Belize and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia established diplomatic relations in September 2022. The establishment of diplomatic relations with four (4) new countries

was a step towards expanding Belize’s global network of allies. Other inherent benefits include access to potential new markets for Belize, the strengthening of bilateral cooperation and increased people to people contact.

### **New Bilateral Partners - 2022**



Hon. Eamon Courtenay, Foreign Minister of Belize, and H.E. Raychelle Omamo, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kenya (June 2022).

H.E. Carlos Fuller, Permanent Representative of Belize to the UN and H.E Gheorghe Leucă, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Moldova (August 2022).





H.E. Carlos Fuller, Permanent Representative of Belize to the UN and H.E. Amrit Bahaur Rai Permanent Representative of Nepal to the UN (April 2022).

Hon. Eamon Courtenay, Foreign Minister of Belize, and Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (September 2022).



### **Engagement with Existing Bilateral Partners - 2022 Appointment of a US ambassador to Belize**

On September 29, 2022, the USA Senate confirmed H.E. Michelle Kwan as the new US ambassador to Belize. Her appointment in 2022 was consequential because a US ambassador had not been accredited to Belize since 2017. During H.E. Kwan's first meeting with Minister Courtney, they discussed the shared commitment to work together to tackle bilateral and regional issues of mutual concern. The US remains one of Belize's most strategic partners in the region. Kwan's appointment is beneficial in strengthening relations between the US and Belize in the years to come.





H.E. Michelle Kwan presenting copies of her Letters of Credence to the Hon. Eamon Courtenay.

### **Belize and Japan Hold First Bilateral Consultation**



Belize and Japan held their first bilateral consultation on January 11, 2023. Belize has aimed to strengthen engagement with strategic third countries such as Japan. The consultative meeting allowed both parties to review the state of their bilateral relations and existing domestic and foreign policies. Other important issues covered in the meeting included post-COVID-19 economic recovery, Belize's Amnesty Programme, climate change, financing for development, and regional and international matters of mutual interest.

H.E. Amalia Mai, Chief Executive Officer for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, and H.E. Kazuhiro Iryu, Japan's Ambassador to Belize

### **Diplomatic Week 2022**

The MFAFT&I hosted its annual diplomatic week in September 2022 which provided the opportunity for Belize to engage with important stakeholders and bilateral partners on pertinent current issues such as climate change, the environment, human security, and trade. During

diplomatic week, diplomats accredited to Belize, resident, and non-resident, attended the event. Several new ambassadors presented their letters of credence. Additionally, Foreign Minister Courtney held bilateral meetings with the diplomats to explore new avenues for cooperation as well as to strengthen bilateral ties. Minister Courtney also held a bilateral meeting with the UN-Habitat Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean during diplomatic week. Overall, the MFAFT&I diplomatic week is an important forum for Belize to strengthen bilateral and multilateral relationships.

**Diplomats accredited to Belize attend Diplomatic Week activities 2022.**



## **Annual Political Dialogue 2022: Belize-European Union (EU)**

The Ministry held its annual political dialogue with the EU on September 20, 2022. Belize's delegation was headed by the Hon. Eamon Courtenay, whereas the EU was headed by H.E. Marianne Van Steen. Twelve (12) ambassadors from the EU (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, The Netherlands, Romania, and Sweden) participated.



The meeting focused on the pillars of political matters, development cooperation, trade, and investment. Some of the primary items of discussion centred on the post-Cotonou framework, Belize's request for a Schengen visa waiver, a review of the progress and process of implementation of projects and programmes under the 11<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund (EDF), the EU-Belize Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027, the EU-EPA agreement and the multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI).

Additionally, information was exchanged on national challenges such as the Belize-Guatemala dispute, the effects of the COVID pandemic on Belize's economy and global issues such as access to climate financing for developing countries and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Belize and the EU share common values and will continue to collaborate on multilateral issues with a view to finding mutually beneficial solutions.

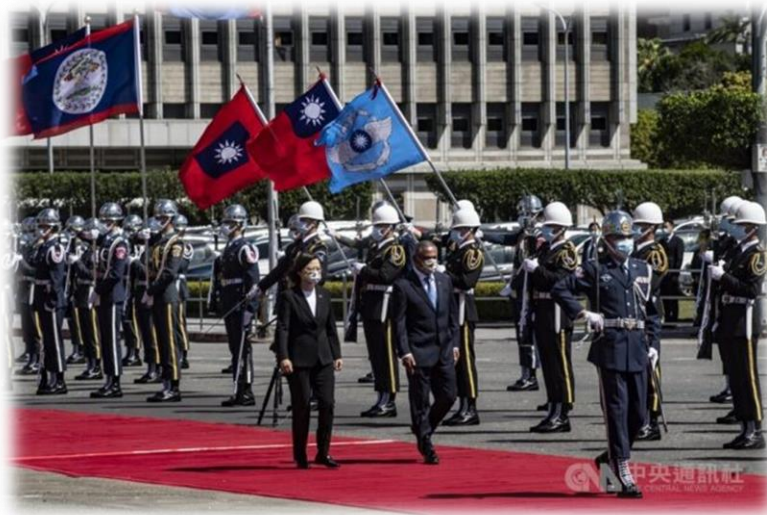


**State Visits**

State visits symbolize the deepening of bilateral relations between countries and provide a high-level political platform for countries to reaffirm and consolidate their friendly relations. In 2022, the Ministry supported Prime Minister Briceño’s official state visits to Taiwan, Cuba, and Venezuela.

**Taiwan**

PM Briceño visited Taiwan in March 2022. During his visit, PM Briceño and delegation attended an investment, trade, and cooperation conference, visited the International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF) offices, and met with Belizean students in Taiwan. The state visit also focused on strengthening cooperation in trade, investment, healthcare, and women’s empowerment.



President  
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Clouds with  
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and

Tsai Ing-wen  
PM Briceño with  
of Propitious  
Special Grand  
his role in fostering  
deepening the

bilateral relations between Belize and the Republic of China (ROC) Taiwan. Belize remains one of the thirteen (13) sovereign states, twelve (12) of which are UN Member States, which maintain full diplomatic relations with Taiwan; and continues to support Taiwan’s international participation in multilateral forums.

## Cuba

In April 2022, PM Briceño led a delegation for a state visit to Cuba which comprised the Hon. Eamon Courtenay, the Hon. Kareem Musa, Minister of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries and the Hon. Kevin Bernard, Minister of Health, and Wellness. The purpose of this visit was to strengthen bilateral ties and to follow-up on existing agreements in health and education, among others.



The Belize delegation visited BioCubaFarma, which produces the country's biotechnology and pharmaceutical products and equipment, and the Centro Fidel Castro.

While in Cuba, PM Briceño also met with the famous Cuban artist, Jose Fuster, who unveiled a mural dedicated to Belize. Cuba's culture and art have

permeated into Belize's society through cooperative efforts and educational initiatives.

Cuba remains one of Belize's longstanding bilateral partners and the two countries celebrated twenty-seven (27) years of friendship in 2022. Further, Cuba granted eleven (11) scholarships to Belizeans for the academic year 2023-2024, starting February 2023. This includes, eight (8) in Medicine, one (1) bachelor's degree of Health Technologies in the field of Nursing, and two (2) postgraduate scholarships for the graduates of the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM). The scholarships are intended for applicants under the age of twenty-five (25), from low-income



families and with a level of education equivalent to Cuban pre-university education.

Many Belizean students are graduates of Cuban universities. The scholarships represent a flagship initiative of Cuba to assist in the delivery of healthcare in the region. As of December 2022, two (2) students were selected for the postgraduate scholarships and nine (9) scholarship recipients remain. Very importantly, Belize rejects the economic, commercial, and financial blockade against Cuba as well as Cuba's designation as a State sponsor of terrorism. Belize has called for the lifting of these unjust policies on multiple occasions. Notwithstanding, Belize remains committed to its bilateral partnership with Cuba.

At the 9<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Americas held in June 2022, PM Briceño publicly denounced the exclusion of Cuba and Venezuela from the summit.

## **Mexico**



On May 7, 2022, the President of the United Mexican States, H.E. Andrés Manuel López Obrador, undertook a working visit to Belize where he held a bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister, Hon. John Briceño and respective delegations.

As a result of the visit, there was the signing of a Letter of Intent by the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Marcelo Ebrard Casaubon, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration of Belize, Hon. Eamon Courtenay for the implementation of the “Sembrando Vida”

project in Belize. The project is benefiting rural producers with training of agro-pastoral production systems, thereby contributing to food security and job creation.

The governments of Belize and Mexico also had discussions on the establishing other “Escuela Mexico” secondary schools in Belize, as well as, to hold technical meetings to explore the feasibility of linking the “Tren Maya,” one of the main transportation projects for south-eastern Mexico, with Belize. Other areas of interest included increasing commercial exchange and strengthening air connectivity through the negotiation of the Air Transport Agreement, to promote tourism and economic flows. The Mexican President also announced a Presidential Decree which allows for a list of Belizean products to enter the Mexican market.

Mexico welcomed Belize’s forthcoming signing of the Agreement of the Latin American and Caribbean Space Agency (ALCE), thus joining twenty (20) countries to explore, research and advance technology activities in the space field. Our friendly neighbours also recognized Belize’s successful work during the Chairmanship of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the valuable contribution in bringing Mexico and the Caribbean closer together.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador thanked the Government and people of Belize for their warmth, hospitality, and the attention given to him and his entourage during his working visit.

### **Reciprocal Visit by Cuban President to Belize**



After PM Briceño's visit to Cuba in 2022, the Ministry coordinated the President of Cuba's reciprocal visit to Belize on February 12, 2023. The visit of H.E Miguel Diaz-Canel Bermudez, President and First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba, was historic since it was the first such visit by a Cuban head of state to Belize.

During the visit, Belize and Cuba signed two bilateral agreements:

1. A Memorandum of Understanding for the Exchange of Migratory Alerts and Security Information
2. A Cultural Cooperation Agreement.

The President of Cuba attended a special sitting of the National Assembly and engaged in bilateral meetings with H.E. Dame Froyla Tzalam, Governor General of Belize, and Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño and delegation. Cuba thanked Belize for its support against the longstanding economic, commercial, and financial blockade, and its designation as a state sponsor of terrorism, and committed to strengthening bilateral cooperation with Belize in the area of health.

## **Venezuela**

On November 25, 2022, PM Briceño made his state visit to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. PM Briceño's visit to Venezuela was especially significant due to the strong bonds between the two countries. The two leaders held discussions on the Petrocrisis debt re-structuring with Venezuela agreeing to a reduction of Belize debt amounting to between two hundred and fifty-seven million dollars (257 mn) to three hundred and twenty-seven million dollars(327 mn).The two leaders also discussed development priorities for the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) regions, strengthening regional cooperation through CARICOM and the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States (CELAC) and issues of mutual interest.



Belize and Venezuela signed a Joint Declaration during the visit as a sign of the countries' commitment to strengthen bilateral relations. Both countries have also indicated that they will pursue and conclude agreements in other areas of cooperation such as trade, energy, tourism, communications, air connectivity, education, culture, and housing.

The high-level discussions also focused on resuming the Petrocaribe agreement between Belize and Venezuela. The new Petrocaribe agreement is intended to cover petroleum products. President Maduro also discussed a second Programme with PM Briceño called "Petrocasa;" an infrastructure programme to aid in rebuilding homes in Belize affected by natural disasters caused by climate change.

PM Briceño expressed Belize's commitment to its bilateral partnership with Venezuela and stated that Belize would continue to support and cooperate with Venezuela in the future.

## **Visits by State Officials to Belize**

### **Costa Rica**

The MFAFT&I hosted an official visit from H.E. Rodolfo Solano Quirós, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship of the Republic of Costa Rica, at the Leigh Richardson Building in Belmopan, in January 2022.

Hon. Eamon Courtenay and H.E. Rodolfo Solano Quirós signed Joint Declarations for the Establishment of a Strategic Alliance for Comprehensive Cooperation, and the Preservation of the Oceans and Seas. Also, they discussed pursuing areas of international cooperation, Belize's CARICOM chairmanship, SICA, trade, FDI, health, tourism, the environment, and climate change. Furthermore, the Ministers signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Climate Change Cooperation and Tourism.



Hon. Eamon Courtenay and H.E. Rodolfo Solano Quirós.



Royal Visit, March 19-26, 2022



Some of the highlights of 2022. Belize was the first stop of the Royal tour by the Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Prince William, and Kate Middleton, from March 19-26, 2022. The visit marked the Platinum Jubilee, celebrating Her Majesty The Queen's 70 years of service as a monarch. During the Royal tour, Their Royal Highnesses had the opportunity to visit historic Mayan sites, engage and interact with the Garifuna community and explore the country's rich culture and biodiversity.

## Qatar

In June 2022, the Ministry welcomed H.E. Dr. Ahmad Hassen Al-Hammadi, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar, to Belize as part of a regional tour. The visit saw the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the Establishment of Political Consultations, which enabled the convening of the first Political Consultation Meeting.



## Panama

Panama's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Ana Luisa Castro Novey made an official visit to Belize on July 14, 2022. H.E. Castro Novey met with her counterpart Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the MFAFT&I, H.E. Amalia Maito discuss areas of bilateral cooperation. H.E. Mai and H.E. Castro Novey discussed the implementation of the Bilateral Cooperation Framework Agreement and the reactivation of the Agreement for the Promotion of Education, Cultural and Sporting Exchange. They also discussed other priority areas for cooperation as well as strengthening the trade and investment framework by revising the 1985 MOU signed between the Ministry of Commerce of Belize and the Ministry of Commerce and Industries of Panama.



## State Funeral for the late Queen Elizabeth II - September 16-19, 2022



Since Belize remains a constitutional monarchy, the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, our Head of State, was a sad occasion. H.E. Dame Froyla Tzalam, Governor General of Belize, attended the state funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, from September 16-19, 2022. Additionally, our High Commission in London also attended.

## El Salvador



Belize and the Republic of El Salvador held the Second Binational Commission Meeting at the vice-ministerial level on December 2, 2022. H.E. Mai met with H.E. Mira, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of El Salvador. They discussed issues of mutual interest and expressed intentions to develop cooperation projects in the areas of economy, trade and commerce, tourism, culture, security, migration, and agriculture, among others. A Joint Communique was signed committing to identify opportunities in security, tourism, agriculture, and migration that will enable the implementation of training programmes, which contribute to the betterment of the people of both nations. The meeting also conducted a general review of the status of different legal instruments under negotiation such as the Cooperation Agreement between the Ministry of National Defence and Border Security of Belize and of National Defence of El Salvador, MOU between the Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations of Belize and Ministry of Tourism of El Salvador and the Memorandum of Understanding between the Belmopan City Council and the Embassy of El Salvador in Belize. Both sides agreed to work together to conclude them as soon as possible.

## **Peru**

On December 5, 2022, MFA's Director of International Cooperation, Ms. Orla Kantun Coleman hosted the First Joint Commission Meeting for the Bilateral Agenda between the Government of Belize and the Government of the Republic of Peru. The meeting approved the new Bilateral Cooperation Programme 2022-2024 which included three (3) initial projects to be implemented in agriculture, gastronomy and archaeology.

## Visit by the Secretary General of the Central American Economic Integration System (SIECA)



The Secretary General of the Central American Integration System (SIECA), H. E. Francisco Lima Mena, and his delegation paid an official visit to Belize from August 29-30, 2022. During his visit H.E. Mena met with members of the Spanish Lookout Chamber of Commerce and visited a few of Belize's key production facilities in Spanish Lookout; namely, Quality Poultry Chicken's processing plant and Western Dairies milk processing plant.

The Secretary General also had a bilateral meeting with Hon. Courtenay to discuss the feasibility of Belize participation in SIECA, as an observer, under the Council of Ministers (COMIECO). The prospects for Belize to participate in selected elements of SIECA were also discussed, including the Central American Payment System and the Trade Facilitation platform through their 2035 Mobility and Logistics Master Plan.

SG Mena met with the National Trade Negotiating Commission (NTNC) to discuss economic integration advances in Trade Facilitation and opportunities for improving and expanding trade relations with Central America.

## Multilateral Relations

The MFAFT&I has also done substantial work to advance Belize's multilateral engagement at the global level and promote its foreign policy. The global challenges of today can no longer be solved through unilateral solutions; therefore, it is imperative for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), like Belize, to engage in Regional and International Organizations.

The current international system is highly integrated and interconnected, making international cooperation and coordination a necessity. This globalized system presents Belize with new opportunities to pursue foreign and national interests. Belize has sought to strengthen regional alliances and actively engaged with other countries at the multilateral level. The focus of Belize's multilateral engagements, at this time, include bringing awareness to the various challenges facing SIDS and garnering support that will benefit Belize and the wider region.

## Regional and Multilateral Engagement

### **Belize 2022 Chairmanship of The Caribbean Community (CARICOM)**

Belize assumed the six-months rotating chairmanship of CARICOM in 2022. The Forty-Eight Meeting of the Community Council (CARICOM) of Ministers met virtually on January 14, 2022, and was chaired by the Hon. Eamon Courtenay. CEO Mai was also present for the virtual meeting. The discussions focused on: the Plan of Action for CSME Implementation, reform of the CARICOM Secretariat, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the political, humanitarian, and security situation in Haiti.

The Hon. Eamon Courtenay and H.E. Amalia Mai at the virtual meeting of The Forty-Eight Meeting of the Community Council (CARICOM) of Ministers.



**Thirty-Third Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)**

The MFAFT&I supported and coordinated the Thirty-Third Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM held from March 1-2, 2022, in San Pedro Town, Belize. PM John Briceño served as Chair and presided over said Conference. The heads of government discussed several topics of importance including climate change, regional food security, economic recovery post-COVID-19, improving vaccination rates across the region, and advancing the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). The Heads of Government also released a joint statement on the war and humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. The leaders in the region strongly condemned Russia for its military invasion of Ukraine.



CARICOM Heads of Government at the Thirty-Third Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM

**Agreements signed by Belize at the Thirty-Third Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)**

Agreement	Parties
Agreement on the Return or Sharing of Recovered Assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bahamas</li> <li>• Belize</li> </ul>
Protocol to Amend Article 32 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community including the CARICOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belize</li> </ul>



Single Market and Economy (with respect to the definition of a CARICOM national)	
Protocol to Amend the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy to Allow Enhanced Cooperation among Member States and to Address Related Issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Barbados</li> <li>● Belize</li> <li>● Dominica</li> <li>● Grenada</li> </ul>

### The Ambergris Caye Declaration

The Ambergris Caye Declaration was adopted during the Conference of the Heads of Government of CARICOM. The declaration outlined CARICOM’s priorities on Climate Change. The goal of the declaration for 2022 was “to initiate a roadmap from ambition to action with milestones for governments and non-state actors alike with COP27 as [the] first waypoint on the path to 1.5°C”. The declaration affirmed Caribbean Countries’ commitment to endorse the deliverables of the Paris 2030 agenda and to keep global temperatures below 1.5°C.

### IV CARCOM-SICA Summit 2022

Belize has long been viewed as a bridge between CARICOM and SICA because of the country’s geographical location and being a Member State of both regional blocs. Belize hosted the fourth CARICOM-SICA Summit held on March 3, 2022, in San Pedro, Belize. The Summit was



consequential and symbolic of the country’s role in bringing both sub-regions closer. The Heads of Government discussed the COVID pandemic, climate change, and strengthening relations across

the two subregions. The outcome of the Summit culminated in the Joint Declaration of San Pedro which outlined commitments to strengthen cooperation between CARICOM and SICA on climate change, foreign policy consultation, public health, trade and investment, disaster prevention and comprehensive risk management, security, and socio-economic matters of regional and hemispheric importance. The UN Secretary-General was not able to attend the summit in person, but he made some special remarks in March 3, 2022.

### **CARICOM-Cuba Summit 2022**

The MFAFT&I supported PM Briceño's attendance at the Eighth Summit of Heads of State and Government of CARICOM and the Republic of Cuba held on December 6, 2022, in Bridgetown, Barbados. The Summit was held in conformity with the Havana Declaration signed at the first Summit in 2002. The Declaration specified December 8, 2023, of each year as Cuba-CARICOM day. Cuba remains a strong and cordial bilateral and multilateral partner for Belize.

CARICOM-Cuba relations have remained constant throughout the years as well. The leaders discussed the impacts of COVID-19 and Cuba reaffirmed its commitment to assist in bolstering the health systems of its CARICOM partners. They also identified disaster risk management as an area of cooperation given the damage countries in the region experience during the hurricane seasons.



Finally, the meeting concluded with the Barbados Declaration which reaffirmed commitments to deepen CARICOM-Cuba cooperation. The Declaration also called attention to the economic blockade imposed on Cuba, the need for a MVI and other issues faced by the region such as climate change.

## CARICOM Meetings 2022

Country/ Organization	Event
<b>CARICOM</b>	In April 2022, FM Courtenay, MFAFT&I and Chair of the CARICOM Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR), co-chaired the II Meeting of the CARICOM - Canada Foreign Ministers' Group along with Hon. Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada.
<b>CARICOM -EU</b>	In May 2022, FM Courtenay, MFAFT&I and Chair of CARICOM's COFCOR, co-chaired the EU-CARICOM Ministerial Meeting in Panama City to discuss the future and development of the CARICOM-EU partnership.
<b>CARICOM - SICA</b>	In May 2022, FM Courtenay attended the CARICOM-SICA-EU Ministerial meeting in Panama.
<b>Commonwealth</b>	In June 2022, FM Courtenay attended CHOGM and met Hon. Nanaia Mahuta, Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand within the margins of the CHOGM 2022, to discuss the Commonwealth and cooperation in climate change action and Indigenous peoples' affairs.
<b>Guyana</b>	In July 2022, Belize and Guyana signed a MoU on renewed and enhanced Bilateral Cooperation.
<b>Canada</b>	In July 2022, H.E. Ms. Rajani Alexander, High Commissioner of Canada to Belize, presented her Letter of Introduction to FM Courtenay and discussed ways to further to strengthen the relations.
<b>Barbados</b>	In September 2022, H.E. Mr. David Comissiong, High Commissioner of Barbados to Belize, presented his Letters of Credentials to FM Courtenay. FM Courtenay indicated that Belize looks forward to the continued strengthening of Belize-Barbados relations.
<b>Diplomatic Week</b>	In September 2022, during the Ministry's annual diplomatic week FM Courtenay and CEO Mai met with several Ambassadors from Vietnam, Malaysia, Australia, and Jamaica.

## The Central American Integration System (SICA)

The Ministry continued to support Belize’s involvement in meetings and summits of the Central American Integration System (SICA) throughout 2022. The meetings in 2022 covered topics such as climate and energy security, health, migration and environmental issues, agriculture, trade, and social development. In November 2022, Belize received the President Pro-Tempore of the Central American Security Commission (CSC) of SICA; in December 2022, Belize received the Pro-Tempore presidency of the Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMISCA); and in December 2022, Belize received the Pro-Tempore Presidency (PPT) of SICA from the Dominican Republic. Belize’s work as PPT of SICA commenced in January 2023. The theme for Belize’s presidency was “Interregional Unity: Enhancing Human Security and Environmental Resilience” to focus on: migration, food security and climate change.



The President of the Dominican Republic, H.E. Luis Abinader, handing over the Pro-Tempore Presidency of SICA to Prime Minister Johnny Briceño, during the 56th Meeting of Heads of State and Government of SICA.

## **SICA Secretary General Visit - SICA Secretary General, H.E. Werner Isaac Vargas Torres, met with Hon. Eamon Courtney, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belize to discuss strengthening regional integration**

The recently appointed Secretary General of SICA, H.E. Werner Isaac Vargas Torres, met with Hon. Eamon Courtney on September 21, 2022, to discuss strengthening regional integration with member countries. The meeting was a part of the work agenda of the Secretary General to discuss the GS-SICA's work plan. The Secretary General consulted SICA members states and other actors in order to formulate the GS-SICA Work Plan for the period 2022-2026.



## **LVI Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of SICA 2022**

Hon. Eamon Courtney attended the 56th Regular Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of SICA member states. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Dominica Republic, H.E. Roberto Álvarez, led this session in his capacity as PPT of SICA. The purpose of the meeting was to approve the proposed agenda and the thematic contents for the 56<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting of Heads of State and Governments of SICA.

The Ministers proposed that leaders address issues related to the pillars of SICA such as: democratic security, strengthening of regional institutions, climate change and comprehensive risk management, and economic and social integration.



## LVI Ordinary Meeting of Heads of State and Government of the Member Countries of the Central American Integration System 2022



PM John Briceño attended the 56th Ordinary Meeting of Heads of State and Government of SICA in 2022. The leaders discussed the continued efforts to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic across

the region, climate change, and inflation on food products, among other things. The meeting concluded with the Declaration of Santiago de Los Caballeros. This Declaration detailed the initiatives and commitments made by SICA member states in the areas of security, migration, environment, tourism, transport, economy, health, and food.

### International Multilateral Engagement

#### CELAC

Belize has been actively participating in the meetings of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) to expand its scope and explore new area of cooperation with non-traditional partners in the southern hemisphere. Belize, as a member of CELAC, is looking for new opportunities within the newly revamped organization which seeks to expand trade and attract investments to optimize the trade environment. Within the member states of CELAC, Belize has been working to expand its cooperation programmes to identify areas of interest in line with Belize's national development agenda, including health, education, agriculture and food security and the

empowerment of women and youths. The Ministry will continue to work closely with member states of CELAC in preparation for the EU-CELAC Summit scheduled to take place in Brussels, Belgium in July 2023.

## **IX Summit of the Americas**

PM Briceño attended the Ninth Summit of the Americas which was held from June 6-10, 2022 in Los Angeles, U.S.A. The Summit of the Americas brought together leaders from the countries of North, South, and Central America, and the Caribbean. The Summit was hosted under the theme “Building a Sustainable, Resilient, and Equitable Future.” The key issues discussed were the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, democracy, and the lack of equitable access to economic, social, and political opportunities for those from the most vulnerable regions.

In June 2022 Foreign Minister Eamon Courtenay participated in the Regional Government Policies to Advance Integration of Migrants and Refugees held within the framework of IX Summit of the Americas, Minister was able to participate in the panel discussion and elaborate on Belize’s Amnesty Programme.

Belize was lauded by leading media houses in the U.S.A. such as Cable News Network (CNN) and the New York Times after PM Briceño’ speech. A highlight of the PM’s speech was when he stated that

“The power of the Summit of the Americas is the space it provides for all the countries of the Americas to dialogue and agree on joint actions. The Summit belongs to all the Americas.

It is therefore inexcusable that all countries of the Americas are not here, and the power of the Summit is diminished by their absence. It is incomprehensible that we would isolate countries of the Americas which have provided strong leadership and contributed to the hemisphere on the critical issues of our time.”





PM Briceño's speech brought attention to the exclusion of Cuba and Venezuela from the summit, and underscored Belize's commitment to multilateralism.

### **The Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection**

Belize joined several other countries on the margins of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, to commit to the Los Angeles declaration on Migration. The Declaration seeks to mobilize the entire region around bold actions that will transform the approach to managing migration in the Americas. The Declaration is organized around four key pillars: (1) stability and assistance for communities; (2) expansion of legal pathways; (3) humane migration management; and (4) coordinated emergency response. Belize has committed to this declaration under the first pillar, through the Government's ongoing Amnesty Programme to regularize Central American and CARICOM migrants who have been living illegally in the country for a specified time.

### **Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting**

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) took place from June 20-25, 2022, in Kigali, Rwanda. PM John Briceño and FM Eamon Courtney attended the meeting. During CHOGM22, Minister Courtney met with H.E. Ahmed Khaleel, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs of Maldives; Hon. Nanaia Mahuta, Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand; Hon. Vincent Biruta, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and International Cooperation of Rwanda; and Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India to discuss various areas of mutual interest, bilateral cooperation, and the MVI.

Belize also established diplomatic ties with Kenya during CHOGM22. Minister Eamon Courtenay met with H.E. Raychelle Omamo, Cabinet Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Kenya, to establish diplomatic relations. PM Briceño also met with President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, H.E.



Julius Maada Bio of Sierra Leone. Discussions with the two leaders focused on developing bilateral relations and cooperation.

Belize's High Commissioner to the UK was also present at CHOGM22. H.E. Therese Rath participated alongside FM Courtenay in the Commonwealth Small States Ministers Meeting. They received updates on the latest work and research on small states from the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Additionally, Commonwealth leaders discussed climate change, global conflicts, the COVID-19 pandemic, governance, human rights and the rule of law, sustainability, trade, ocean protection, sustainable blue economies, energy, and natural resources, health, youth participation, technology, and innovation. Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño endorsed, alongside other Commonwealth Heads of Government, a Leaders' Statement and a Communiqué which committed to close collaboration to address the crises of the pandemic, climate, debt, food, and energy insecurity and to reform and renew transformative actions for recovery from the pandemic; and further recognized the effects of global insecurity on food, energy, and climate.





### Meeting of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers

Hon. Eamon Courtenay, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration delivered a statement at the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers Meeting at Marlborough House in London



on March 15, 2023. Minister Courtenay emphasized the importance of protecting Human Rights for migrants and asylum seekers. He called upon members of the Commonwealth to revisit and re-evaluate their policies and position on the treatment of migrants and asylum seekers as well as their

commitments and legal obligations to the Refugee Convention and Protocol. Minister Courtenay also used the opportunity to provide the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers with an update on the territorial dispute between Belize and Guatemala. The Commonwealth consist of states that continue to reaffirm support for Belize’s territorial integrity and sovereignty of Belize.

## **Conference of Parties- COP 27-2022**

Climate Change continues to pose a major challenge to the development of SIDS like Belize. For this reason, combatting climate change through multilateral efforts remains a high priority of Belize’s foreign policy. In 2022, MFA supported the delegation from the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management that attended COP 27 held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. Hon. Orlando Habet led the delegation. Notably, Minister Habet highlighted Belize’s intention to sell its carbon credits. The carbon credits are generated under the REDD+ mechanism approved by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and are issued based on the rate that countries efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. The carbon credits are worth between \$50 million and \$100 million. Belize intends to use the revenue generated from the carbon credits for conservation and climate change adaptation efforts.



## **The Loss and Damage Fund**

The CARICOM Ministerial statement ahead of COP27 highlighted the issue of Loss and Damage which was highlighted in the Climate Change Convention and the Paris Agreement. CARICOM endorsed the adoption of “Funding Arrangements to address Loss and Damage.” Countries at COP27 adopted a final agreement to set up a Loss and Damage Fund that will provide developing countries with access to funds to address costs incurred from extreme weather events caused by climate change. Prior to the Loss and Damage Fund, climate financing has focused primarily on

cutting carbon dioxide emissions and building climate change resiliency in vulnerable communities. The Loss and Damage Fund is different because it is meant to specifically cover the cost of damages incurred from climate related weather events. Belize welcomed the establishment of the Fund and has been lobbying for bilateral partners in the developed world to support and adopt the loss and damage initiative at COP28, scheduled to be held in November 2023.

## **United Nations First UN-GOB Joint Steering Committee**

CEO Mai and H.E. Birgit Gerstenberg, UN Resident Coordinator, co-chaired the first UN-GOB Joint Steering Committee Meeting in November 2022. The meeting was held at the Leigh Richardson Building in Belmopan. The UN is working with the Government to ensure that Belize achieves its SDG goals outlined in the Country's 2022-23 implementation Plan. The meeting was held to discuss the UN Multi-Country Sustainability Cooperation Framework 2022-26.

The UN steering committee will monitor the progress of the five-year cooperation framework. The partnership between the UN and Belize continues to play an essential role in the development of Belize. On December 1, 2022, CEO Mai and UN Resident Coordinator, H.E. Birgit Gerstenberg, signed the Belize Country Implementation Plan (BCIP) 2022-2023. The country implementation plan outlined the core activities that will contribute to the fulfilment of the 2030 agenda goals.



The UN-GOB Joint Steering Committee had representation from all UN agencies and a wide cross-section of GOB officials.



the BCIP 2022-2023

CEO Mai and H.E. Gerstenberg, signed

## **Territorial Disputes**

### **Update on Belize-Guatemala territorial dispute**

The pursuit of a peaceful resolution to the territorial dispute with Guatemala remains the top foreign policy priority for Belize since it involves the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. On June 3, 2022, Belize delivered its counter-memorial to the Registrar of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. Belize's counter-memorial makes a robust defence of the country's sovereignty over its entire territory including islands and the pertaining maritime areas in accordance with international law.

Guatemala submitted its Memorial on December 8, 2020; and its Reply in December 2022. Whereas Belize submitted its Counter-memorial in June; and has until June 2023 to submit its Rejoinder, after which the Court will set a date for oral hearings.

Although the judicial proceedings are continuing smoothly, serious challenges continue along Belize's western border and on the southern and maritime borders. These challenges include agricultural encroachments, illegal cattle ranching, deforestation, poaching and destruction of Belize's biodiversity and watersheds. A particularly troubling development is the illegal settlement of Guatemalans in Belizean territory, while Guatemalan authorities refuse to cooperate on the safe and orderly relocation of its nationals to Guatemalan territory.

### **OAS in the Adjacency zone- Confidence Building Measures (CBM)**

The Ministry continues to serve as the intermediary between the BDF and the OAS Office in the Adjacency Zone. The interactions are based on the CBMs agreed between Belize and Guatemala in 2005. Under the CBMs, the Ministry's role is to relay requests made by the BDF to verify any breaches of the CBMs. After conducting field verifications, the OAS then submits a report of their findings which provides a definitive response to the BDF's request for verification. In 2022, the OAS verified approximately 44% of the BDF's request. Although legal proceedings continue before the ICJ the CBMs remain in full effect.

### **Belize-Honduras dispute over the Sapodilla Cayes**

On November 16, 2022, Belize instituted proceedings against Honduras at the ICJ, concerning sovereignty over the Sapodilla Cayes. The Sapodilla Cayes have formed part of the territory of Belize since the nineteenth century. Initially as part of the settlement of Belize and later the colony of British

Honduras, and since 1981 as part of the independent state of Belize. Belize maintains its position that under international law, Belize is sovereign over the Sapodilla Cayes.

### **OAS Secretary General visits Belize**

Belize welcomed H.E. Luis Almagro Lemes, Secretary General of the OAS, in August 2022. During a meeting held at the Leigh Richardson Building, H.E. Almagro Lemes was updated on the ongoing ICJ case as well as current developments in Belize-Guatemala relations. Belize also highlighted current challenges at the border that contravene the spirit of the CBMs, including illegal encroachments by Guatemalans into Belizean territory.

Belize indicated that illegal encroachment had led to deforestation of Belize's national parks and protected areas. Belize also noted that there has been evidence of illegal logging, gold panning and poaching of endangered species within its territory. As such, Belize called upon the OAS to continue monitoring the situation at the borders and to engage with Guatemalan authorities to strengthen the CBMs. The OAS continued to be a key agent in the Adjacency Zone to minimize tensions.

PM John Briceño attended said meeting along with: Hon. Ramon Cervantes, Minister of State in the MFAFT&I; CEO Mai, H.E. Lynn Young, Belize's Ambassador to the United States and Permanent Representative to the OAS, and Hon. Oscar Mira, Minister of State in the Ministry of National Defence and Border Security.



## **SUPPORT TO THE NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH PATH THROUGH FOREIGN TRADE**

During this reporting period, the Ministry supported national efforts aimed at stimulating economic growth through dedicated attention to bolstering existing preferential markets, expansion of existing preferential markets, and embarking on negotiations of new markets for Belizean exports.

Regarding the bolstering of existing preferential market, within the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) the focus remained on establishing and operationalizing the CARICOM Monitoring Mechanism for Sugar (MMS). The MMS reinforces Belize's trade interests and its right to sell sugar in the CARICOM market through a transparent and participatory mechanism for tracking sugar imports into the regional market, thereby reducing the possibility for leakages, and allowing Belizean producers first option in satisfying regional demands. With the MMS fully in place, 2022/23 saw a marked increase in Belizean sales of sugar on the CARICOM market - attesting to the success of the Ministry in safeguarding Belize's existing trade interests on this market.

During the period 2017-2022, trade peaked over the 2019 figure, with total trade at BZ \$146.8, of which total exports comprised BZ \$88 mn, highlighting the importance of CARICOM's market to Belizean producers, the potential for more fulsome exploitation of existing opportunities, and justifying the continued safeguard of this market.

### **Mexico Presidential Decree**

Following intense engagement Belizean and Mexican officials to embark on formal trade arrangement, President Obrador announced the unilateral and temporary granting of preferential access into Mexico's market. This access is for exports from Belize and several other countries which do not yet benefit from a legal trade framework with Mexico. This exciting announcement was made during President Obrador's visit to Belize in May 2022. In the interim, the Ministry continues with the internal preparations of assessing the possible impact on the Belizean economy, of a permanent trading arrangement with Mexico.

### **Trade and Services**

By far, a major win in the push to open new markets for Belizean exports was the coming into effect of the Economic Cooperation Agreement between Belize and the Republic of China (Taiwan) in



January 2022. This marks Belize's second only bilateral trade arrangement. Belizean exporters of lobster, animal feed, pepper, sauces, jams and jellies wasted no time in accessing this premium market in Asia. At the first year only, USD 5 mn were derived from export sales, which is projected to increase significantly during the next few years with shrimp, and sugar sales. Following the agreement to expand the existing goods traded preferentially under Belize's first Partial Scope Trade Agreement with Guatemala, negotiations were successfully launched. The Ministry remains engaged with Guatemala as there is a willingness on both sides to conclude negotiations and there is commitment to resume negotiations as soon as the situation allows.

In parallel with these advancements on export markets, the Ministry continues to support strengthening of the trade ecosystem trade, in particular facilitation services, through implementation of its National Trade Facilitation Plan (NTCF). Already, Bz\$ 3 m grant funding has been mobilized from the CDB and the EU to support activities under the plan. The NTCF seeks to reduce time and cost to import/export goods through systemic reform across all border agencies and facilitate the ease of doing business. The three key interfacing agencies, Customs and Excise Department, the Belize Bureau of Standards (BBS), and the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) continue to lead in the implementation of these projects. Through this support, the much-desired Electronic Single Window for Trade (ESW) is nearing a reality as the Feasibility Study is expected to be completed very soon.

The growing importance of the non-financial services to Belize's economic growth and development has provided the push for the Ministry to continue its work on developing the capacity to map and catalogue the regulatory regime of the various service sectors. In addition to providing baseline information on Belize's service regime, this information will bolster the negotiating capacity of GoB in future negotiations in trade in services. Furthermore, this research will prove useful to Belizean service providers in accessing the available service markets within CARICOM, UK and the EU.

## **International Cooperation**

### **International Cooperation Programmes**

In this reporting year, the Ministry expanded programmes of cooperation with various countries through various methodologies including grant aid, technical support, humanitarian relief and a range of capacity building programmes and scholarships offered to Belizeans. There were also

engagements in new areas of support, including in the national statistical system, the use of internet technology in the public sector domain and strengthening of the trade ecosystem.

As the pandemic waned, the Ministry supported efforts of full reopening of the country through the continued sourcing of vaccines to bolster the ongoing programme of vaccination conducted by the Ministry of Health. It continues active political engagement at the regional and multilateral level to support development of global frameworks and agreements aimed at addressing future pandemics. With support of its network of embassies there was greater engagement with the international community for support of the country's pathway to sustainable economic recovery.

By November 2022, the Ministry was engaged to recover from another crisis, the passage of Hurricane Lisa, which easily became the new foremost point for resource mobilization. The hurricane triggered the activation of the Foreign Assistance Committee chaired by the MFAFT&I. Belize's diaspora, bilateral, multilateral and non-state actors responded with immediacy and generosity to the humanitarian relief efforts. Monetary resources amounted to Bz \$5.4 mn thus far, and this figure does not reflect the in-kind donation, supplies and technical resources received.



### *Cooperation with Extra-Regional Partners*

On international cooperation programmes, the Ministry scaled up engagements with extra-regional partners, such as Qatar, Peru, Japan and Korea. Much aid came from the Asian region, which not only informs on the strong bi-regional relations, but also that south-south cooperation remained a key contributor to the Ministry's work. Of particular note is Korea's cooperation programme. In record time, it incorporated US \$2.2 mn in approved grant funding for this reporting year and various technical trainings, servicing projects in priority thematic areas of Belize development,

including digital transformation and institutional strengthening of the Ministry. A bilateral framework for cooperation, which would stand as the basis of Belize-Korea relations, was also tabled for agreement, and should conclude by the subsequent reporting year.

While these relationships were fostered, cooperation programmes with longstanding, traditional partners were strengthened. The Ministry supported the establishment of several cooperation frameworks with Guyana, Mexico and Cuba in broad areas of development and mutual interest. Cuba and Belize signed unto four agreements in this period alone. Mexico's *Sembrando Vida* project promises integral support for rural farmers, while Guyana and Belize have secured a successor cooperation agreement spanning several sectors.

Several projects with India and Japan are expected to materialize early in the upcoming reporting year. Importantly, progress was made on streamlining the project design and implementation process with one of Belize's most important development partners, the Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) and its International Cooperation Development Fund (ICDF).

## **UN Multi-country Sustainable Development Framework**

Further ongoing agendas included the continued facilitation of the UN Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework (UNMSDCF) 2022-2026 through its first year of accomplishments. This is the UN cooperation framework for the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, and is considered indispensable for planning and implementation of the UN development activities towards the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda. As part of the national reporting and monitoring requirements of the framework, the Ministry co-chaired the cycle's first UN-GOB Joint National Steering Committee (UN JNSC) ensuring that the implementation remains government led.

## **EU Multiannual Indicative Programme**

Other large cooperation frameworks include the EU's Multiannual Indicative Plan (MIP). The Ministry coordinated Priority 2 of the framework, worth €6 mn to support the 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. The MIP has since received national validation from stakeholders in Belize and is with the EU for final vetting. Implementation begins in 2024.

Support from the United States' Millennium Challenges Cooperation (MCC) compact is also upcoming. 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.

## **Scholarship Programme**

Scholarships, trainings and internships continued to play a key role in furthering the bilateral relationship with international actors, particularly non-traditional partners. The MFAFT&I secured these 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, and the Organization of American States (OAS), IAEA, among others.

## **International Cooperation Council**

On the horizon for international cooperation is the proposal for the establishment of an International Cooperation Council (ICC). This aims to streamline the management of international cooperation in Belize. The Ministry is thereby supporting inter-governmental coordination and the strengthening of the institutional framework for the projects and programmes realized through international cooperation. The inaugural meeting of the Council is expected to be held in the first quarter of FY23/24.

## **ARCAL Communication Strategy Workshop | 12 - 16 December in San Ignacio, Belize**

A regional meeting was held to update the Communication Strategy of the Regional Cooperation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean (ARCAL) for the period 2023-2024. The Communication Workshop was held from December 12 to 16, 2022 in San Ignacio, Belize under the framework of ARCAL and the technical cooperation project *Strengthening Regional Cooperation*. The meeting was supported by the

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Secretariat, with the aim of strengthening the communication and visibility of ARCAL throughout the region.

The event was spearheaded by Ms. Eva Ciurana Casademont, Programme Management Officer of the IAEA Secretariat; Ms. Alexya Perez, host country event coordinator, National Liaison Assistant of IAEA for Belize, and support to the National Coordinator of ARCAL of Belize; and Ms. Rommy Casanueva, Focal Point for ARCAL Communication. Present at the event were representatives from 13 ARCAL member countries, including: Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay.

From this meeting, the results were: 1) the production of the Strategy for Communication for the ARCAL Agenda 2030, 2) the Communication Plan 2023-2024, 3) the initiation of the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of ARCAL, 4) the Digital Strategy for ARCAL, and 5) the inclusion of gender in the communication strategy of ARCAL.

In Belize, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration is the national counterpart for IAEA and ARCAL, where the NLO/NCA and NLA's service ARCAL projects with counterparts from the: Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise (MAFSE), the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA), Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management, Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Attorney General's Ministry, and the University of Belize (UB).

### **Third Round of Migratory Talks between Belize and Cuba**

The III Round of Migratory Talks between Cuba and Belize took place on October 13 and 14, 2022, in Havana. The new Memorandum of Understanding for the Exchange of Migratory Alerts and Security Information between the immigration authorities of both countries is currently under negotiation. The MOU will allow for early and timely alerts between the migratory authorities of both countries on specific situations that arise concerning travellers or their documentation.

## **Youth, Sport, and Transport visit to Cuba**

On December 6, Minister of Youth, Sports and Transport, Gilroy Usher, arrived in Havana as the head of a delegation from Belize with the purpose of strengthening exchanges in the sports field. Minister Usher was received by the vice-president of the National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation (INDER), Mr. Omar Venegas.

The purpose of the visit was to seek Cuba's support with its anti-doping laboratory, where a contract was signed to receive the services. Minister Usher and the delegation also visited the National Volleyball School and the Escuela Superior de Formación de Atletas de Alto Rendimiento Giraldo Córdova Cardín, where they partook in working meetings with authorities of the Cuban sports organization, among other activities.

## **Mexico - “Sembrando Vida” Project**

Through the MFAFT&I, the Government of Mexico initiated the Sembrando Vida “Sowing Life” Project in Belize, with the Ministry of Agriculture as the country’s implementing partner. The Sembrando Vida Project offers support for rural farmers throughout the country and is being administered in other Central American countries including El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. Some 2000 Belizean farmers throughout Belize will benefit from the project. Farmers will receive economic assistance, tools, seeds, fertilizer, and technical assistance. The Programme aims to assist farmers from vulnerable areas of the country to produce their own food, sell any surplus and achieve food security. The project will also include hiring extension officers to work with the beneficiary farmers to offer help with crops, planting, biofertilizer production, and bio-forestry. Belize’s participation in Sembrando Vida is part of the commitment made by President Manuel Lopez Obrador during his official visit to Belize.

## **Colombia - Agriculture Scholarships**

Through Proyecto Mesoamerica, for which H.E. Amalia Mai is the Presidential Commissioner for Belize, thirty (30) farmers received scholarships for a 90-day agriculture training Programme in Colombia for Leaders in Rural Communities.

## Women Economic Empowerment Project

The Project, *Enhancing the Economic Empowerment of Women in Latin America, and the Caribbean in the COVID-19 Post Pandemic Era: Technical Assistance for Women's Employment, Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion*, began implementation in October 2021 by the MFAFT&I and the Embassy of Taiwan, through the Taiwan-ICDF in Belize. In 2022, a total of forty-four (44) new projects totalling BZD \$2.4 million were approved with implementation set to continue into 2023.

The Ministry's continued oversight of the Women Economic Empowerment Project, ran in partnership with the Government of the Republic of China, Taiwan through Taiwan ICDF, has so far approved a total of 44 new initiatives, totaling Bz\$ 2.6 mn. The project has supported retooling and retraining of skills for over 300 women, in areas such as sewing, entrepreneurship, food processing and digital literacy. It has provided business training to over 50 women owned MSMEs with almost Bz \$45,000 seed funding having been disbursed.

On the more routine aspects of the Ministry's programme of cooperation, comprised mostly of grant funding, the Women Economic Empowerment Project being done in partnership with the Government of the Republic of China, Taiwan, and ICDF, saw its first full year of implementation. Over the reporting period, a total of 44 new initiatives have been approved, totaling Bz\$ 2.6 mn. The project has supported retooling and retraining of skills for over 300 women, in areas such as sewing, entrepreneurship, food processing and digital literacy. It has provided business training to over 50 women owned MSMEs with almost Bz\$ 45,000 seed funding having been disbursed. The project is set to conclude at end of 2023.

Additionally, a Framework Agreement on Technical Cooperation was signed between Belize and Taiwan, which seeks to consolidate existing technical cooperation agreements under one framework, and at the same time, remove existing bottlenecks in the project design and approval process. This is an improvement in the governance mechanism of international cooperation of the Ministry with one of its principal development partners, as it provides for the MFA to exercise a coordinating role over existing and new projects, consistent with its portfolio responsibilities.

Implementation was coordinated through several government and non-government institutions including: BELTRAIDE, the Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA), ITVET, the Sarstoon

Temash Institute of Indigenous Management (SATIIM), and the National Women's Commission (NWC), to name a few. The project has assisted with providing vocational training for over five hundred (500) women, with classes ranging from sewing and entrepreneurship to food processing and digital literacy, with trainings being carried out in every district. Start-up funds have also been disbursed for fifty (50) women owned MSME's and capacity building sessions for one hundred and fifty (150) professionals.

Events for this year:

- i. Closing Ceremony for BTIA Vocational Training in Caye Caulker, January 26, 2022
- ii. Closing Ceremony for SATIIM Vocational Training in Punta Gorda - March 10, 2022
- iii. Closing Ceremony for PPF Capital Training in Belize City - April 29, 2022
- iv. Closing Ceremony for BELTRAIDE Vocational Training in Orange Walk - June 2, 2022
- v. 3rd Project Handing Over Ceremony at MFA Belize City - June 2, 2022
- vi. Handing Over Ceremony for Angel Funds at MFA HQ - August 22, 2022
- vii. Closing Ceremony for ITVET administrative training in Belize City - September 6, 2022
- viii. Closing Ceremony for BELTRAIDE MSME Enhancement in Belize City - November 25, 2022

## **Hurricane Lisa**

The passage of Hurricane Lisa in early November 2022 triggered the activation of the Foreign Assistance Committee chaired by the Ministry. Belize's diaspora, bilateral partners, regional, multilateral, and non-state actors responded with immediacy and generosity to the humanitarian relief appeals. Grant funded monetary sources alone amounted to Bz\$ 5.4 mn, and this does not reflect the relief supplies and technical resources received thus far. The Ministry remains grateful to partners such as Taiwan, Japan, USA, EU, UN, However, the damage and loss sustained by Hurricane Lisa, and the needs required to move towards greater climate resilience is incomparable to the humanitarian relief generated.

In collaboration with other lead ministries, the MFA enlisted the support of the UN in the conduct of a Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) that was done jointly with the EU and the IADB. The PDNA is a first for the country following a natural disaster. The PDNA confirms the social sector sustained the largest damages (housing, education, culture) with housing being the hardest hit with damages of Bz\$ 54.3 mn.



The country's needs for recovery from Hurricane Lisa have been quantified at Bz\$ 212 mn. The Report provides a real time example of the challenges faced by small countries in treating with vulnerabilities arising from climate change, the consequent effects from the lack of progress in multilateral negotiations on climate financing and adaptation, and the ease of falling into the debt cycle as Belize remains ineligible for concessionary financing and is forced to borrow on commercial terms to recover from climate disaster.

## **Cooperation with Asia**

Belize's robust engagement with bilateral partners is reflected in the continued expansion of its cooperation programme. For example, cooperation programmes with Japan, India, and Korea have been significantly strengthened. With Japan, the opening of an Embassy of Japan in country has facilitated deeper engagement between the two countries with positive outcomes. The programme of cooperation with Japan's has been carefully designed in consultation with government stakeholders to reflect GoB priorities in such areas as agriculture, blue economy, human resource strengthening, human rights and health. During the reporting period year, Japan supported the Ministry of Health and Wellness with the provision of cold chain equipment which will directly expand the safe storage of vaccines for the country. Four cold storage units for agricultural products (potatoes and onion) in four districts, with a view to improving product quality and extending shelf life. Through IDB, Japan is supporting the Ministry of Blue Economy for the conduct of studies on feasible programmes to support sustainable growth in the Blue Economy. In the pipeline is a review of the state of the Belize City Swing Bridge, to determine the best modality for future cooperation. Japan is steadily resuming the deployment of its volunteers to Belize to fill the human resource gaps identified by Belizean stakeholders.

The outcome of sustained efforts with Korea resulted in a robust and diverse cooperation programme. For the first time, through joint efforts of Ministry staff, Korean officials and UN, Korea's Global International Organization Cooperation Programme was accessed, resulting in grant funding of USD 3 mn aimed at strengthening the national statistical system. This support was additional to strengthening of other sectors such as internet technology in four ministries, increasing the fleet of vehicles for protocol use, along with a targeted programme of human resource strengthening in key areas prioritized by GoB, and provision of scholarships on a meritorious basis.

The Ministry continues to advocate for the reopening of the Korea International Cooperation Office (KOICA) in Belize, which is anticipated to occur in the medium term.

During the reporting period, the Ministry invested much in cultivating relations with the Government of India which has emerged as a strong voice for the global south in recent years. Through cooperation programmes with SICA and CARICOM, India has provided a Line of Credit to member states of each regional platform, with USD 240 mn allocated to SICA, and USD 150 mn to CARICOM respectively. The Ministry is actively engaged with India on the possibility of accessing these lines of credit on a differential rate considering the acknowledged vulnerabilities of Belize, as a SIDS country. Furthermore, and in advance of positive consideration, the Ministry, in coordination with relevant ministries, has prepared project proposals in support of E-Governance, Blue Economy, Women and Youth Empowerment in Climate Smart Agricultural Entrepreneurship, Rural Electrification using Microgrids, and Climate Change Adaptation.

India continues to provide its short-term training of Belizean officials across different priority sectors such as IT, justice system, and law enforcement, health, and sustainable development. This, along with longer term opportunities for studies abroad offered to deserving Belizeans.

## **Main Achievements of Belize's Diplomatic Missions, 2022**

This section seeks to highlight some of the main achievements by Belize's missions overseas in 2022. Belize's missions essentially pursue Belize's foreign policy goals and national interests as well as service the consular needs of Belizeans in their respective area of jurisdiction. Each diplomatic mission is unique and the work that they undertake reflects the diverse scope of activities, although their goal is to provide effective diplomatic representation, protect and promote Belize's interests in a manner that will accrue benefits to all Belizeans, as per #planBelize.

### **1. Permanent Mission of Belize, New York**

#### **Climate Change**

In New York, the Permanent Mission of Belize maintained its leadership role in climate change negotiations during 2022, serving as one (1) of the Vice Presidents of COP 28. The delegation co-

facilitated two (2) agenda items on finance and one (1) on mitigation which established a work Programme to enhance efforts to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

Belize coordinated negotiations on adaptation on behalf of the thirty-nine (39) Member States of AOSIS during 2022 and will continue to do so in 2023, and at COP 28. Belize assumed a seat on the Board of the Adaptation Fund and a seat on the Adaptation Committee. In this regard, the most important achievement was the establishment of a new financing facility to support vulnerable countries to address loss and damage incurred as a result of climate change.

The Permanent Representative (PR), H.E. Carlos Fuller, serves as the Chairman of the Climate Policy Advisory Committee of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) which provides inputs into the UNFCCC negotiations, and advice to its members on climate change.

The PR also represents AOSIS on the Advisory Committee of the Systematic Observation Financing Facility (SOFF) which was established to strengthen meteorological services in SIDS and LDCs. As a result, Belize was selected as one (1) of the first group of countries to receive support to strengthen its monitoring and data processing systems with grant funding.

## **ECOSOC**

Belize assumed its position on ECOSOC in January 2022 and was elected to its Committee on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) for a four (4) year term. It also serves on the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti which advocates for support for that country within the UN system.

## **Other UN Processes**

In February 2023 Belize played a major role in finalizing the treaty for the protection of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). Members of the delegation served as technical coordinator for CARICOM and chaired negotiations on two thematic areas.

Further, Belize takes the lead for CARICOM on Indigenous People's issues and collaboration with UN institutions. Belize also coordinates issues on financing for development on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

In 2022, Belize was represented by high level delegations at: 1) 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 2) International Migration Review Forum 2022, and 3) Transforming

Education Summit; all held at the UN Headquarters in New York. Additionally, Belize was represented at the 2022 UN Ocean Conference in Portugal; and 7<sup>th</sup> Our Ocean Conference in Palau, where the successful negotiation of the Blue Bond was highlighted.

## **2. Embassy of Belize, Washington, D.C.**

In Washington, D.C., June 2022, Belize participated in the Ninth Summit of the Americas with the theme *“Building a Sustainable, Resilient, and Equitable Future”* hosted in Los Angeles, California. The remarks of the Hon. John Briceño were a resounding success and received wide media coverage. Also, the Embassy participated in seven (7) Regular Meetings of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), and actively participated in the negotiation process of the five (5) declarations that came out of the Summit.

In October 2022, Belize participated in the 52<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) during which bilateral meetings were held with the Guatemalan delegation led by Minister Bucaro, the Secretary General of the OAS, and the Belize/Guatemala Adjacency Zone Office.

In January 2023, Belize began serving as the Vice Chair of the Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Affairs (CAAP), and Chair of the Working Group to Review the Scale of Quota Contributions and General Secretariat Structural Reform; to ensure the financial prudence and stability of the organization, and to work towards re-purposing the organization to meet the new and unprecedented challenges facing the Americas today.

### **CARICOM**

In terms of CARICOM matters, H.E. Lynn Young, was the coordinator of the CARICOM Caucus of Ambassadors in Washington, D.C. As the CARICOM Caucus Coordinator, Ambassador Young coordinated meetings between the CARICOM Caucus and representatives from the US State Department to discuss issues of importance to CARICOM and the United States.

### **SICA**

Since January 2023, Ambassador Young assumed the Presidency Pro-Tempore of SICA Ambassadors to the White House and to the OAS, therefore the Embassy is actively engaged with

its counterparts from SICA and works to foster and promote closer collaboration, cooperation, and exchanges between CARICOM and SICA.

### **Consular/Protocol Matters**

Ambassador Young visited and held productive meetings with consulates in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Miami. The Embassy continues its efforts to standardize processes across all consular services within the United States.

There was a serious back log of applicants after the closing of the New York Consulate, and temporary closure of consulates due to the pandemic. The priority for 2022 was clearing the back log before the old system was shut down to prepare for the new e-pic system. The Embassy successfully attended to all applicants prior to the necessary shut down of services August 2022.

The Embassy coordinated with the other consulates in the United States to keep consistent communication with the public, and successfully resumed services with the implementation of the new e-pics system February 2023.

### **Diaspora Outreach**

In terms of diaspora outreach, which is currently the responsibility of the Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations, Ambassador Young provided support by giving presentations at diaspora events held in the following seven (7) cities in the United States: Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Las Vegas, and Tampa.

The Embassy hosted a diaspora/independence celebration in September 2022. The meaningfulness of this event was enhanced by the presence of: Hon. John Briceño, Prime Minister, Hon. Eamon Courtenay, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Hon. Anthony Mahler, Minister of Tourism; Hon. Kevin Bernard, Minister of Health, and Wellness; H.E. Stuart Leslie, Cabinet Secretary, and other senior government officials.

The Embassy maintains an active social media presence and submits a monthly message from the Ambassador in the newsletter distributed from the Consulate in Miami.

### **3. Embassy of Belize, Guatemala City, Guatemala**

#### **Border Cooperation**

In Guatemala City, since 2022, the Embassy has led ad hoc binational working group meetings of border authorities in a forum that seeks to discuss and address border issues, specifically in the area of the Belize Western Border. Matters related to school children crossing, trade, immigration, tourism, customs, and security are examined, and the forum has yielded positive results through its collaborative approach among border agencies of both countries.

#### **Near Border Outreach**

The Embassy has also embarked on outreach to near border areas within Guatemala to develop linkages and networks aimed at dialogue and cooperation on themes of mutual interest. Since early 2022, encounters have been had with authorities from Petén (Melchor De Mencos, Flores) and Izabal (Puerto Barrios). These visits included meetings with the Governors, Municipal leaders, and National Police.

#### **New Official Border Crossing**

The GOB has constructed a road to Tree Tops and discussions are currently underway with key Guatemalan authorities for a second border crossing and road link from Guatemala to Belize via Tree Tops and Santa Cruz de Las Fronteras. It is envisioned that this second border crossing would enhance and regulate trade, improve commerce and tourism, and fundamentally improve logistics into Central America; and help mitigate illegal activity in said location.

#### **Peace Park Sculpture**

At the invitation of the Guatemalan Ministry of Culture, the Embassy spearheaded the donation of a Belizean sculpture to the Peace Park, which is a sport, recreational and cultural project that seeks to promote sports, healthy recreation and the appreciation of culture and heritage, as a means to prevent violence. The Belize sculpture, created by Mr. Gilvano Swasey, and donated utilizing funding from the Embassy and Headquarters, is in a prominent location along with other sculptures from Central America. The Peace Park is the first of its kind in Guatemala City and it is the first time that Belize is represented in Guatemala in such a manner. The park was inaugurated in March 2023 by the President of Guatemala.

### **Support to GOB Ministers**

During the reporting period, the Embassy provided support to 1) Hon. Rodwell Ferguson who undertook a working visit to meet with Guatemalan authorities of Transport, in June 2022; and 2) Hon. Louis Zabaneh during his participation in the OAS Ministers of Culture Meeting held in Antigua, in October 2022.

### **Administrative/Financial Reporting**

In 2022, the Embassy updated its financial management system in order to be compliant with GOB's Finance and Audit (Reform) Act, Chapter 15, Revised Edition 2020; and to improve accountability. In this regard, the Embassy received Audit Teams on two occasions in 2022. The Ministry of Education team conducted an audit of the Student Stipend account May 2022; and the Department of Audit conducted an audit of the Embassy's accounts from 2016-2022.

On instruction from the Ministry of Education (MOE), Belizean students studying in Guatemala are granted a semi-annual stipend. Funds are remitted to the Embassy by MOE for disbursement. Under the reporting period, all students approved by the Ministry of Education have received their stipends. In 2023, the Embassy also commenced updating its filing system to be in line with GOB's records management system.

## **4. Embassy of Belize, Brussels, Belgium**

In Brussels, the Embassy supported the participation of the Prime Minister of Belize, Hon. John Briceño, at the Fifteen European Development Days (EDD) Forum, in June 2022. During his main address at the Forum, Prime Minister Briceño highlighted the nature of the various international partnerships that exist between the EU and Belize, as well as how such projects have contributed to the further development of Belize. The participation of the Belize delegation in the EDD showcased to all that Belize is very much a regional player and a reliable partner for the EU.

Further, in September 2022, Prime Minister Briceño visited Berlin, Germany on a working visit to discuss the future of waste management and renewable energy in Belize, with respect to the urgent concern of the build-up of sargassum seaweed on the coastlines and beaches of Belize. During this

visit, Prime Minister Briceño also met with various officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany to discuss possibilities for deeper cooperation between Belize and Germany.

In late 2022, the Embassy of Belize recalibrated its efforts with respect to the lobbying of the European Commission, as well as EU Member States, for the grant of a Schengen visa waiver for Belizean passport holders. Consequently, Belize interfaced at the ambassadorial level with officials at the Directorate General for Home Affairs of the European Commission.

Much of the aforementioned paved the way for the visit of Foreign Minister Hon. Eamon Courtenay, who visited Brussels in February 2023. During this visit, Minister Courtenay was able to shine a spotlight on Belize's request for a Schengen visa waiver and held high level meetings with: Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium, Ms. Hadja Lahbib; the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Vice President of the European Union, Mr. Josep Borrell Fontelles; the Director General of the Directorate General for Home Affairs of the European Commission, Ms. Monique Pariat; as well as the Chair of the Delegation for Latin America of the European Parliament, Member of the European Parliament, Mr. Javi Lopez.

Following Minister Courtenay's visit, the Embassy has interfaced at the ambassadorial level with the following European Union Member States, all of whom have been receptive to Belize's political push to be granted a Schengen visa waiver: Czech Republic, Spain, Austria, Estonia, France, Finland, The Netherlands, Portugal, and Sweden.

Additionally, the Embassy has also undertaken considerable efforts to coordinate matters for the SICA group of Ambassadors based in Brussels during the current SICA presidency pro tempore of Belize. In February 2023, the Embassy convened a meeting between the SICA Secretary General, H.E. Werner Vargas Torres, and all the Heads of Mission of the SICA Member States in Brussels.

## **5. Embassy of Belize, Havana, Republic of Cuba**

### **Belize-Cuba Bilateral Relations**

The Embassy of Cuba actively participated in the preparations for the first official visit to Cuba by the Prime Minister of Belize on 27-30 April 2022, which was reciprocated on 12 February 2023 by the state visit by the President of Cuba H.E. Miguel Diaz- Canel Bermudez. Since the change of Administration in Belize in November 2020, there have been various Belizean high-level delegations to Cuba including the Minister of the Public Service, Constitutional and Political Reform Minister



and Peoples Constitution Commission. The main objective of the visit was information gathering on legal processes and information campaigns for constitutional reform and for referendums (Cuba has held two in four years) and for their constitution they consulted countries across the Americas, Asia, Africa and Europe for text and methods to adopt). This visit provided significant legal expertise and context for the Minister of the Public Service, Constitutional and Political Reform.

Belize continues to lead and support efforts to improve outcomes of the CARICOM-Cuba cycle of meetings which have become repetitive, with few new outcomes and generally lacking in communication. To increase the outreach and communication with other regional groups in Cuba, Belize, in its capacity as Dean of the Caucus of CARICOM Ambassadors, has increased the regular monthly meetings with representatives from Latin America, the Middle East, Europe, Asia and the African Union (over 120 embassies and International Organizations are resident in Cuba).

### **Memorandum of Understanding**

Belize and Cuba continue to engage in dialogue to address and increase cooperation and collaboration on issues such as Health (to address shortages of trained health professionals); Climate Change (collaboration and mutual technical assistance); Culture (collaboration and mutual technical assistance); Migration (exchange of information on migration trends, warning notices); Quasi-Governmental body - National Anti-Doping Organization; and the Anti-Doping Laboratory of Cuba (official, accredited testing for Belizean athletes).

### **Pending Agreements**

The Embassy of Belize in Cuba, continues to liaise with the relevant Ministries of both countries on agreements that are pending including Water Resource Management (technical assistance, experienced engineers and experts in the area of expansion of water services and waste management, strategic planning); Sports (for national sports strategy assistance, talent selection, scientific assessment, and capacity building); and Political parties for cooperation and training, which includes a youth outreach and scholarship element.

## **Embassy's Outreach**

### **Embassy Support to Students**

One of the main objectives of the Embassy is to support the government in its efforts to secure first class medical service to those Belizeans that cannot afford such medical care. In this regard, the Embassy directly intervened to secure medicine and supplies urgently required to save the lives of two students in emergency situations. The Embassy and staff have helped twelve (12) of the sixty-seven (67) to source medication from outside of Cuba in times of serious need. The Embassy has also assisted Belizean students to ensure that there was an understanding of issues unique to Cuba relating to their nutrition, access to medicine and training since COVID, and internships in Belize after graduation. This has significantly improved the understanding of situation faced by graduates.

As part of its commitment to the Belizean students, the Embassy now includes as part of Belizean official visits, an exchange with the students (who are expected to enter the government system upon return to Belize).

There have various officials visits by the Minister of Health and Wellness which fundamentally changed the interaction between the Ministry of Health and Wellness and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology regarding how medical professionals trained in Cuba are incorporated into the system in Belize after graduation.

This allowed for a discussion on the eventual raising of stipends, as well as the provision of stipends to doctors returning on residency, after recognizing the hardship conditions since 2020 in Cuba. Advocacy with the Ministry of Health and Wellness also allowed for a provision of medicines, hygiene and other supplies for Belizean doctors and students in Cuba during critical times of shortage. This has assisted to ensure that students do not abandon scholarships in challenging times.

## **6. Embassy of Belize, Mexico**

### **Belize-Mexico Bilateral Relations**

The Embassy in Mexico, through the office of the Ambassador and the diplomatic staff, is engaged in a wide gamut of activities. A priority is to engage in political dialogue to further Belize's agenda

on getting support for implementation of an eventual ICJ ruling. On the commercial and investment promotion front, the Embassy continues to promote Belizean products and investment opportunities in Belize. The Embassy lends support to Ministerial delegations. Two of the most recent were the visits by the Minister of Home Affairs and New Growth Industry and the Minister of Agriculture Food Security and Enterprise.

It also worked closely with the Mexican Foreign Ministry to ensure that the Official Presidential visit of Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador to Belize in May 2022 was a success.

### **Pending Agreements**

As a result of the conflict in Eastern Europe that disrupted the supply chain, particularly agricultural fertilizers, the Embassy coordinated a meeting for the Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon. Eamon Courtenay, Minister of Agriculture Hon. Abelardo Mai and CEO Servulo Baeza with the Ambassador of Morocco to discuss the option of obtaining fertilizer for Belize's agro industry.

### **Embassy's Outreach**

The Embassy of Belize in Mexico facilitated the visit of the Ministry of Tourism and the B.T.B to the largest Tourism and Trade EXPO for Southern Mexico that was held in Veracruz, Mexico.

### **Embassy Support to Students**

As part of its main activities, to provide assistance to Belizeans, particularly to Belizeans in distress, the Embassy assisted a number of Belizeans with temporary travel documents, verification of nationality documents, visa application submissions and securing appointments for Schengen visa applications (official, student, tourist) for approximately one hundred and seventy-eight (178) persons. The Embassy continues to ensure that the six (6) Belizeans incarcerated in Mexican facilities, for varying degrees of offences during the reporting period, receive fair and humane treatment, that they are in good health and receive the required attention from authorities. Of the more than one-hundred and fifty (150) students studying in the various Mexican Universities across Mexico, sixty-six (66) have been formally registered with the Embassy to form a Student Association to collaborate alongside the Mexican/ Belizean community for diaspora related activities.

## **7. Embassy of Belize, El Salvador**

### **Belize-El Salvador Bilateral Relations**

The Embassy of Belize in El Salvador engaged in varied activities in the reporting period. The Embassy continuously looks for markets for Belizean products and promotes tourism as well as investment opportunities.

In respect of bilateral activities, the Embassy assisted the Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise of Belize, Minister Abelardo Mai, and his team, pairing them with agriculture importers of El Salvador. Ambassador Nisbet also accompanied Minister Mai, on a tour of one of the biggest vegetable and fruit markets, whereby the Minister was able to secure markets for Belize's onions and discussed the possibility of including pineapple and carrots as imports to El Salvador.

As part of the air transport agreements between Belize and El Salvador, the Embassy of Belize was able to play a vital role in securing direct flights between Belize and El Salvador with Belize's local Airline, Tropic Air. Tropic Air now flies between Belize and El Salvador five times per week.

### **Pending Agreements**

The Embassy has been promoting cultural exchange programmes. Ambassador Cherie Nisbet held a meeting with the Minister of Culture, H. E. Mariem Pleitez, to discuss possible projects that can be undertaken by both countries.

### **Embassy Support to Belize Police Department**

The government of El Salvador has adopted controversial but popular measures to control the gang situation in that country. The Embassy stepped up efforts for assistance with information sharing with the Government of El Salvador on how the gang situation in that country has been arrested. Ambassador Nisbet discussed this matter with Mr. Howell Gillett, Assistant Commissioner of Police, who was on a training at the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA).

In an effort to secure additional opportunities for members of Belize's security agencies, Ambassador Nisbet met with Mr. Rene Francis Merino, Minister of the National Defence of El Salvador whereby the Ambassador was able to secure scholarships for the Belize Defence Force, at the Military Academy in El Salvador.

## **8. Embassy of Belize, Taiwan**

Taiwan maintains strong relations with Taiwan. As such, Belize's Embassy in Taipei kept pace with activities to promote the robust and historic relations with the government and people of Taiwan.

One of the highlights to further cement the relations between the two countries took place in February 2022 with the visit of Prime Minister Briceño, Foreign Minister Courtenay and a delegation to Taipei. The PM was received by Taiwanese President, H.E. Tsai Ing-wen, Foreign Minister, H.E. Joseph Wu, and other high-level officials of the Government. A number of initiatives were discussed and supported by Taiwan. The delegation also met with the group of Belizean students studying and training in Taiwan. The Taiwanese scholarship programme is in high demand among Belizean students.

The Embassy advocated successfully for the ratification of the Economic Corporation Agreement, signed with Taiwan, which will open markets and opportunities for Belizean producers. To further stimulate investment and trade, Ambassador Candice Pitts followed up with presentations at a seminar, and in interviews to help Taiwanese investors get a deep understanding of the Belizean industrial environment, popular products, and business opportunities. Furthermore, exposure was given to Belizean products at the Taiwan International Food Show.

An MOU was also signed to promote trade opportunities between Belize and Taiwan. The MOU, between the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) and Imports and Exporters Association of Taipei (IEAT), provides another opportunity for Belizean producers to gain access to Taiwan's market, and the wider Asian market. Additionally, a focused strategy was developed to meet with many potential importers, as there is keen interest in Belizean: seafood, sugar, rum, coffee, and cacao products.

Much effort was made to highlight and promote Belize and our rich culture, including its cuisine, to the Taiwanese. Marie Sharp's Pepper Sauces have a high demand in Taiwan and were showcased at the Food-Wine Pairing event. Also, on the cultural front the Embassy established relations with the Taiwanese Indigenous communities and attended a number of cultural exchange events. In September, at a cultural exhibition, the Embassy displayed paintings created by Belizean artists, with a Belize-Taiwan friendship theme, Belizean handmade artworks, and traditional dresses.

Promoting Belize as a top destination remained a priority for the Embassy. The 2022 Taipei International Travel Fair serves as one of the most important tourism fairs in Taiwan. Belize was present and the booth attracted thousands of potential visitors to our shores.

The Embassy also participated in the signing of MOUs, namely: 1) the University of Belize (UB) and the National Chung Hsing University; and 2) the UB and Agriforward Co. Ltd., to promote academic exchanges. Furthermore, Ambassador Pitts engaged with Taiwanese high school and university students, and with parents and educators to promote Belize and to discuss future academic collaboration.

A large group of Belizean students are studying in Taiwan. The Embassy continuously engages with them to provide the necessary support, either at the Embassy, at the different universities for events such as graduations, and activities of a sporting nature. Such encounters also provide the students with the opportunity to get updated on developments in Belize.

Throughout the year, an extensive number of interviews were conducted to raise Belize's profile in Taiwan and in the region to introduce Belize as a strong and vibrant democracy, strategically placed between the Caribbean and Central America.

Ambassador Pitts is now fully accredited as Ambassador to Japan as Belize grows its diplomatic outreach in Asia.

## **9. High Commission of Belize, London**

Historically, Belize and the United Kingdom have maintained excellent relations for decades. The focus of the work of the Belize High Commission (BHC) has been to further strengthen relations with the UK while establishing new relations and improving access to partners in Belize and to raise the country's profile in areas related to #planBelize. In this regard, the BHC actively engages with the Commonwealth Secretariat, the UK parliament, promotes tourism and investment and engages with the diaspora.

### **I. United Kingdom**

#### **Royal Family**

The British Monarch is the Head of State of Belize, therefore 2022 was a full year of royal events, specifically: 1) Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee from May 26-29, 2022; and Her Majesty's Funeral and Proclamation of Accession of King Charles III from September 10-19, 2022. Belize's representation at these events and their side activities by Dame HE Froyla Tzalam, Governor-General, and High Commissioner Therese Rath were organized by the Mission. Additionally, the Mission coordinated the participation of the Belize Defence Force at the Platinum Jubilee, including providing support and resources for one soldier who contracted COVID-19 following the Jubilee.

#### **King Charles' Sustainable Markets Initiative (SMI)**

The BHC and High Commissioner Rath actively engaged in meetings with representatives of the SMI, including giving presentations on examples of Belize's climate related activities with the aim of reinforcing Belize's need for greater action in climate financing, adaptation, mitigation, and sustainable development investment.

#### **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)**

The Mission's relations with FCDO are cultivated extensively during Meetings between the FCDO Minister for the Caribbean and Caribbean Heads of Missions in London. These Meetings are held

to advance the UK-Caribbean relationship, especially through the UK-Caribbean Forum. This Forum is a biennial meeting to strengthen dialogue and cooperation.

The BHC worked with the CARICOM Caucus of Heads of Missions in London to prepare for the Forum scheduled for May 2023. The Mission further commenced engagement with Lord Zac Goldsmith, who was appointed FCDO Minister of the Commonwealth in October 2022.

### **UK Parliament**

H.E. Therese Rath also engaged with Bob Stewart MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Belize (APPG Belize). For instance, the BHC was present for the conventions of the Labour Party and the Conservative Party to establish contacts with the political parties; and has kept close contact with parliamentarians from both sides of the aisle.

### **Economic Relations**

The Mission supported the protection of Belize's economic and trade interests under the CARIFORUM-UK Economic Partnership Agreement. This included monitoring the fair-trade situation; maintaining contact with commercial partners such as Tate and Lyle and Fyffes; and liaising with the Directorate General of Foreign Trade on responses to the fair-trade situation.

## **II. COMMONWEALTH**

### **Commonwealth Secretariat (CS)**

The Mission supported the planning of the Secretariat's Country Evaluation team's visit to Belize, scheduled to be held in May 2023. This team was tasked to review the Secretariat's programming in the country. Belize is one of the Member States most involved in Commonwealth projects as beneficiaries/partners. Under the strategic plan for 2017-2021, which consists of fifty-one(51) projects, Belize was involved in twenty (20).

Foreign Minister Courtenay met with Secretary-General, H.E. Patricia Scotland during which Belize's gratitude for the Commonwealth's longstanding support of Belize's sovereignty, territorial integrity and national development were conveyed.



## **CHOGM**

Prime Minister, Hon. John Briceño, Foreign Minister Eamon Courtenay, and H.E. Therese Rath represented Belize at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Rwanda in June 2022. Commonwealth Secretary-General, H.E. Scotland was re-elected for a second term of office of two years. Prime Minister Briceño met with various leaders and adopted the Communiqué and the Leaders' Statement which addressed pressing issues such as the climate crisis, the pandemic, and the war in Ukraine.

## **Commonwealth Memorials**

On July 25, 2022, the Mission participated in the memorialization of nine hundred Belizean foresters at Pollock Park in Glasgow, Scotland for their service during the Second World War. The Mission continued its participation to honour Commonwealth citizens, including Belizeans, who served in the First and Second World Wars at the Remembrance Day on November 11, 2022.

## **Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG)**

Hon. Eamon Courtenay was in the UK for the 62nd CMAG Meeting held on March 14, 2023. The meeting was chaired by the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Samoa but following her early departure, Minister Courtenay, as the most senior member of the CMAG, took over the Chair.

## **Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting (CFAMM)**

On March 15, 2023, Hon. Eamon Courtenay delivered a strong statement at the Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting (CFAMM) in London. Minister Courtenay called on the Commonwealth to discharge faithfully its commitments under the Refugee Convention and its Protocol towards asylum seekers and migrants. Minister Courtenay expressed deep concerns with the policy positions adopted by certain Member States of the Commonwealth family. Minister Courtenay also provided updates on the territorial dispute with Guatemala; and informed the CFAMM on the case against Honduras at the International Court of Justice.

## **Commonwealth Foundation (CF)**

Belize accepted the offer to reinstate its lapsed membership to the CF which provides grants to civil society. This is a funding opportunity to be promoted within Belize, as they have now added a special fund for SIDS grants.

## **III. NON-RESIDENT ACCREDITATIONS**

H.E. Rath received copies of her letters of credentials to Estonia, Latvia, and Ireland. Relationships have been established with their UK embassies with presentation of credentials to be scheduled.

### **Ireland's strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean**

In February 2022, the Mission attended the Government of Ireland's launch of its "Global Ireland: Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean to 2025", the first ever whole-of-government strategy for the region. The Mission has maintained contact with counterparts in Dublin and at the Irish embassy in London on the implementation of the Strategy, such as the opening of the Central American Office in the Irish embassy in Mexico, which will cover Belize.

## **IV. INTERNATIONAL SUGAR ORGANIZATION (ISO)**

### **61st Session of the International Sugar Council (ISO)**

The 61st Session of the Council took place in the UK. The BHC was supported and guided by Director Jose Novelo of the Ministry of Agriculture. Belize gave its six (6) votes to Fiji for membership of the Administrative Committee for 2023. The Council welcomed Saudi Arabia, who became the ISO's newest and 88th Member State, on October 17, 2022.

## **V. REGIONAL COORDINATION**

### **CARICOM**

The CARICOM Caucus of Heads of Missions in London continued to meet monthly to discuss political matters, coordinate actions at the bilateral and multilateral levels, and organize joint events. HC Rath chaired the Caucus from January to December 2022. Under her chairmanship, the Caucus

coordinated actions in preparation for CHOGM; established communications with the CARICOM Secretariat and began preliminary discussions for the UK-Caribbean Forum.

## **SICA**

Chairmanship of the SICA Caucus was handed over to Belize in January 2023 from the Dominican Republic.

## **Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC)**

The Mission continued its participation in GRULAC, held regularly throughout the year, to discuss priority issues.

## **VI. ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Caribbean Council (CC)**

Membership in the Caribbean Council has been helpful with practical solutions across a wide range of issues including identifying and facilitating potential trade and business partners.

### **Tourism**

The BHC facilitated introduction between The European Nature Trust (TENT), Mr. Paul Lister, and the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) in relation to the production of a film which utilized Belizean videographers and hosts. The premiere of the production named UNKNOWN BELIZE showcases Belize's natural beauty, its people, unique national character of conservation and features successful tourism investors and new, sustainable community-based agribusiness and aquaculture. The premiere is scheduled for June 2023 at the Royal Geographic Society (RGS).

## **VII. BELIZE DELEGATION SUPPORT**

The BHC provides support to visiting delegations such as: the ICJ team, athletes participating in the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, individuals attending the Commonwealth Leaders Training in London, Naledo at the Specialty and Fine Foods Fair in the Caribbean Booth, and the Chevening Scholars in the UK.

## **VIII. CONSULAR SERVICES**

The Mission has the only Consular office in Europe and has as its primary clients, Belizeans from the Belize Economic Citizenship, and Investment Programme (BECIP) programme. In this year, 75% of the one hundred and fifty-six (156) passports processed, and 85% of new nationality certificates were for BECIP Belizeans and their relatives.

The new biometric passport system was installed in February 2023. Consequently, a new website is under construction to allow for the electronic submission of applications.

## **IX. BELIZEAN DIASPORA**

The BHC commenced re-building its database of contact information for the Belizean diaspora in the UK and engaged with members at various events. The objective of the BHC with regard to the Diaspora is to identify interested persons to start a Belize Association.

### **Hurricane Lisa Fund**

The BHC organized a relief effort, collecting £7900 from diaspora members and a single donation of US\$25,000 from a BECIP citizen. These funds were subsequently transmitted to the Ministry of Finance, GOB.

### **Protocol and Consular Department**

Our Protocol Department ensures that precedence and proper procedures are followed in accordance with national and international codes; especially pertaining to diplomatic formality and etiquette. As such, the Protocol unit coordinates all official events undertaken by the MFAFT&I such as: state and official funerals, international conferences and meetings, state receptions, Independence Day celebrations, diplomatic week, and the like. The Protocol Department is on the front lines of diplomatic engagement and extend the first hand that welcomes visiting Heads of State and dignitaries to Belize.

Whereas the Consular Department is responsible for providing consular services to Belizeans living abroad who require visas, passports, or other travel documents; as well as providing assistance in cases of personal and political emergencies, or natural disasters. Additionally, the Consular

Department provides services to foreign diplomats by issuing them diplomatic identification cards and tax exemption letters.

## **Transfer of the Diaspora Returnee Incentive Programme (DRIP) to the Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations**

Since the Cabinet of Belize approved the Diaspora Returnee Incentive Programme (DRIP) on May 11, 2010, the MFAFT&I managed same through a Diaspora Desk Officer. The DRIP programme essentially provided an incentive, in the form of a one-time tax exemption, for Belize's diaspora to repatriate home. The logic was that said diaspora would feel welcomed and in turn contribute to Belize's development. However, in November 2020 the Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations was established; and finally on August 29, 2022, the DRIP programme was officially transferred to that Ministry. During the 12-year period that the MFAFT&I managed the DRIP programme it successfully processed thousands of applications.

## **Foreign Trade**

### **Economic Partnership Agreement with ROC, Taiwan**

The MFAFT&I, through the Directorate General for Foreign Trade (DGFT), successfully negotiated an Economic Partnership Agreement (ECA) with the Republic of China, Taiwan (2021). The ECA provides tariff concessions which enable Belizean exports to enter Taiwan's market without the application of import duties, thus making it cheaper and more profitable for Taiwanese to import a wide list of goods produced in Belize, 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, and sauces, jams and jellies.

Although Belize has complied with all its obligations under the Agreement, Taiwan has not yet completed the legal processes necessary to bring the ECA into force in its own domestic market. The DGFT will therefore conduct a review of the ECA obligations to identify all outstanding matters for implementation post signature, including concessions of phased tariff reductions, activation of the Administrative Commission, exchange of signatures and forms, administration of the sugar quota, and development cooperation.

## **CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)**

Belize effectively participated in the negotiation of the CARIFORUM-United Kingdom Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). This EPA transitioned the UK's trade obligations as a member of the EU into a stand-alone EPA with the Caribbean Forum of African-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) States following Britain's exit from the EU in 2021. This agreement secured preferential market access to a key market for Belize's traditional exports of sugar, banana, and every other exportable product. Converting market access into market presence is critical to realising the benefits and successful implementation of the CARIFORUM-EU EPA. In recognition of the need to reduce time and facilitate the ease of doing business, the GOB secured grant funding from the CDB utilising funds available under the CSME Standby Facility, established under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) for four (4) projects.

These trade facilitation projects, valued at US\$1.5 mn, benefited interfacing agencies such as: 1) Customs and Excise Department (CED), 2) the Belize Bureau of Standards (BBS) and 3) Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA). The long-term benefits will contribute to building capacity and resilience in the public sector. The Toledo Cacao Growers Association (TCGA), a private entity, was the beneficiary of project financing to build its productive capacity, to establish a processing facility, attain international certification and improve its marketing.

## **CARICOM Matters**

### **Ratification of Three (3) CARICOM Trade Agreements**

The MFAFT&I secured the ratification of three (3) CARICOM bilateral trade agreements with Colombia, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic to increase market access opportunities for Belize's agricultural and agro-processed products. The ratification of these agreements was completed and notified to the CARICOM Secretariat, as required. Belizean producers and exporters can now reap the benefits of these trade agreements that have been in effect for a long time.

### **Implementation of the CARICOM Monitoring Mechanism for Sugar (MMS)**

The MFAFT&I worked with the Belize sugar industry to establish a CARICOM Monitoring Mechanism for Sugar (MMS) to secure and safeguard Belize's trade interests and its right to sell sugar in 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).

### **Implementation of the revised CET based on HS 2022**

The Customs and Excise Act was revised for Belize to implement the CARICOM Revised Common External Tariff (CET) based on the 2022 Version of the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, or the Harmonized System (HS) through the Belize Tariff Schedule (BTS). The amendment included implementation of Belize's obligation to implement revised rates of import duty applicable to Condensed Milk and Soap, for compliance with decisions taken by the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED). Finally, the Belize Tariff Schedule was updated to reflect the current status of phased tariff reduction by Belize to meet obligations under the following trade agreements, currently in effect: the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA); the CARIFORUM-United Kingdom EPA; and Belize-Taiwan Economic Cooperation Agreement (ECA); and the Belize-Guatemala Partial Scope Agreement (PSA).

### **Non-Conforming Measures (NCMs)**

With the main objective of strengthening the CARICOM's capacity to negotiate the liberalization of trade in services, the CARICOM Secretariat initiated a project to assist Member States in identifying what are referred to as NCMs under trade agreements. In preparation for future negotiations in services, Belize is undertaking the necessary work to identify its existing NCMs. This initiative will develop Belize's capacity to map and catalogue the regulatory status quo applicable to the various services sectors, and to identify NCMs affecting trade in services and investment. It also provides the necessary guidelines for Belize to negotiate services liberalization with third countries, including Mexico, in conformity with the CARICOM policy.

In August 2022, the MFAFT&I, with technical support under the Canada-CARICOM Expert Deployment Mechanism, held consultations with public sector stakeholders in Belize to review the draft list of NCMs. The intention is to empower our regulators and service suppliers to trade their services within CARICOM, the UK, and the EU. This project is ongoing, and a first national draft is expected to be finalised in 2023.

## World Trade Organization (WTO) Matters

### 12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference, Geneva, Switzerland



Belize participated in the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) of the World Trade Organization in June 2022. The MC12 was significant as the decisions revolved around the basic functions of the organization, such as negotiations and dispute settlement.

After six (6) arduous days of negotiations, Member States agreed on a package of outcome now known as the “Geneva package”. Most significant from the package were: 1) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, 2) TRIPS waiver on “non-violation and situation complaints”, 3) WTO response to the pandemic through measures to address food security, and 4) WTO reform.



Belize, together with other CARICOM countries played an instrumental role in delivering the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies which established new global rules to eliminate harmful subsidies and protect global fish stocks in a manner that also recognizes the special and differential rights of developing countries. Notably, it is the first WTO agreement to place environmental sustainability at its core. The agreement was also unique for the multilateral trading system because it sets precedent for the use of a ‘poison pill’ in international law. Effectively booby-trapping a negotiated benefit if other issues of interest to other Members are not addressed.

The Geneva package also included a decision on: 1) responding to emergencies, which included the TRIPS waiver, where WTO Members agreed to waive Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) on the production of COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostic and testing materials; 2) clarification of existing rules of the organization relating to public health emergencies; and very importantly, agreement on the need for comprehensive WTO reform that will restore confidence in the functions of the organization.

### **Trade Facilitation Implementation Roadmap**

The MFAFT&I secured Cabinet’s support for a Trade Facilitation Implementation Roadmap, which seeks to facilitate and ensure 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. Additionally, a National Committee on Trade Facilitation was constituted to implement the roadmap. Notably, the roadmap is not only a guide for implementation, but a policy instrument for accessing donor funds to aid implementation.

At the end of 2022, Belize had fulfilled 37.8% of its commitments and obligations under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). Belize’s implementation performance will further improve, given that two (2) projects emanating from the roadmap were carried out in 2022, and implementation continues in 2023 under technical assistance extended by the CDB. The first project was the conduct of a national Time Release Study (TRS) for an Electronic Single Window (ESW). Currently, the Customs Harmonized Bill, which addresses several areas covered by the WTO TFA, is before Parliament awaiting enactment and is expected to improve Belize’s capacity in cross border trade and supporting businesses.



In 2022, through support from UNCTAD, Belize improved national awareness and understanding of the opportunities of the WTO TFA to support women in trade. Stakeholders including the: business community, academia, customs brokers, local administrators, and members of the NCTF participated in the UNCTAD e-learning course on “Gender Perspective on Trade Facilitation Reforms.” The course allowed participants to see through a gender lens those areas of reform required to facilitate trade by considering the importance of women to the economy and the difficulties they face when trading across borders.

### **Reactivation of the National Trade Negotiating Commission**

In line with #planBelize, the MFAFT&I reactivated the NTNC in 2021 to provide a forum for tripartite dialogue and consultations between the government, the private sector and civil society of Belize on trade, and related matters. The NTNC has met five (5) times since it was reactivated in May 2021. For the year 2022, the NTNC has met three (3) times, including two (2) Regular Meetings and one (1) Special Meeting. The NRNC provides the private sector, academia, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with an appropriate forum to add their voices to the national dialogue on important trade policy matters.

## Belize-Guatemala Partial Scope Agreement (PSA)



The MFAFT&I is pursuing, through new negotiations, trade expansion with neighbouring Guatemala by expanding the product coverage under the Belize-Guatemala Partial Scope Agreement (PSA). The MFAFT&I held two (2) rounds of Negotiations with Guatemala in November 2021 and again in February 2022. While some progress was made, another Round scheduled for May 2022 did not take place until November 2022, in Guatemala City. Unfortunately, Guatemala took the position to exclude several products from the negotiations which Belize had export interest in. After substantial efforts at the technical level to offer Guatemala very liberal concessions for other products, in exchange for the products of export interest to Belize, Guatemala refused to include those products. Having exhausted all flexibilities at the technical level, Belize proposed a pause in negotiations, after which sensitive products would be negotiated at the political level.

The Administrative Commission was established under Article 32 of the Belize-Guatemala Partial Scope Agreement (PSA) of 2006. Since its activation, three Meetings of the Administrative Commission have been successfully convened, with the fourth meeting scheduled to have been



held in October 2022, in Guatemala City. Despite the meeting not being concluded in 2022, the technical Group and Committees did meet, resulting in the negotiation and signature of two MOUs between Belize and Guatemala, with one focused on investment facilitation and the other on export promotion. Discussions were also held towards an MOU on transportation facilitation. Additionally, improvements in Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) measures and addressing technical barriers to trade were also discussed.

### **Belize-Mexico Trade Matters**

The MFAFT&I continues discussions with Mexico, with the intent to deliver on the agreement between Prime Minister Briceño and President Obrador to strengthen trade relations through a trade agreement. In February 2021, 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 to the Mexican market outside the scope of a trade agreement, as an interim measure. The latter point was further acted upon between the respective Heads of Government on May 7, 2022, with Mexico signalling improved market access for agricultural products exported by Belize.

The GOB also secured technical assistance from the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to conduct an impact assessment of the proposed trade agreement on the economy of Belize using a Dynamic Computational General Equilibrium (DCGE)

methodology. This study is expected to assess the economy-wide impact of the agreement, and impacts on specific industry sectors. In particular, the study aims to assess the proposed agreement's impact on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), exports and imports, employment, production, and the general competitive position of the industrial sector. The GOB considers this study critical to guide Belize in deciding on negotiating strategies and expected outcomes in the pending trade negotiation with Mexico.

## **Institutional Strengthening**

During the reporting period, the MFAFT&I headquarters sought increased its efforts to service Belize's embassies and missions overseas as the MFAFT&I continued to prioritize the maximization of Belize's diplomatic outreach and the enhancement of its relations with the world. The reorganizing effort undertaken in 2021 enabled the Ministry to execute most of its work programme successfully and efficiently in 2022.

Since the work of the MFAFT&I continues to grow in scope, in 2022 the Foreign Policy section added two (2) Foreign Service Officers (FSO) and the Trade section added three (3) Trade Economists (TE) to adequately keep up with the burgeoning demands of a rapidly evolving world; and to effectively advance Belize's national interests at home and abroad.

### **Trainings (Foreign Policy)**

To remain fit for purpose the foreign service officers under the Foreign Policy and Cooperation Department have undertaken the following trainings in 2022:

- Educational Visit to Kenya by Officers from Caribbean Region, Nairobi, Kenya, January 23 - February 3, 2022
- Executive Training Program (Online) in European and International Affairs for Public Officials and Junior Diplomats from the Caribbean, Diplomatic Academy of Vienna October 3 - October 28, 2022
- 29<sup>th</sup> National Development Course, ROC Taiwan, November 2022

- Canadian Executive Services Organization (CESO), November 21- December 2, 2023
- Delegates' Program on the Human Rights Council (HRC) and its mechanisms, 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the HRC, Geneva, February 22 - April 5, 2023

### **Trainings (Foreign Trade)**

- Introduction to WTO through the WTO E-Learning Platform
- e-Seminar Competition Policy, Trade and Development through WTO E-Learning Platform
- Introduction to Procurement through the Caribbean Development Bank
- UNCTAD Gender perspective on trade facilitation reforms online course
- Multilateral Agreements through WTO E-Learning Platform
- An Introduction to CGE Modelling with Focus Upon Trade Policy through Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
- CARIFORUM Capacity Building in Legal Drafting Project - Workshop on Legislative Drafting for Treaty Implementation
- WTO Young Professionals Programme

Going forward, the technical staff of the MFAFT&I have expressed interest in training in the following areas: cooperation/regional integration, human rights law, diplomacy, treaty negotiations, international trade and finance and possible internships at the United Nations (UN), WTO, Organization of American States (OAS), amongst others that may arise.

Also, the Diplomatic Academy of the Caribbean (DAOC) is a regional centre of excellence which offers a training entitled “Protocol and Diplomacy: A Guide for the Modern Professional,” a five-day online course which would benefit personnel from the various sections of the MFAFT&I.

### **Lessons Learnt/Challenges**

The year 2022 continued to be a year of lessons on all fronts for the MFAFT&I. Some of the recurrent lessons learnt were the need to/for:

- 1) ensure long term continuity and succession planning in a fast-paced, political environment,
- 2) establish a recruitment process to attract highly skilled young professionals,
- 3) procure commensurate financial resources for the MFAFT&I to execute its ambitious agenda,
- 4) ensure better internal coordination to obtain information for inclusion in the annual technical report,
- 5) enhanced coordination and effective communication with key stakeholders and ministries,
- 6) more active participation at crucial meetings, for instance international cooperation meetings, where a representative has to be present to pursue opportunities/benefits,
- 7) ensure better coordination with the Ministry of Finance to secure financing for MFAFT&I projects (for instance building the perimeter fence and carport), and
- 8) increased physical space for personnel, as the maximum carrying capacity at the Leigh Richardson Building has been met.

### **Staffing, Organization and Financial Considerations**

The work of the MFAFT&I is implemented through six (6) directorates: 1) Foreign Policy, 2) Cooperation, 3) Protocol and Consular Matters, 4) Directorate General for Foreign Trade, 5) International Boundaries Unit (IBU) and 6) Office of the Agent. Said directorates are comprised of a cadre of technical professionals, in various areas of specialization, 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 MFAFT&I through the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and directorates. In most cases, their policy, thematic, geographic, or administrative issues are responded to by foreign service officers, administrative, financial, 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 who are working diligently to prepare the GOB's submissions to the ICJ. The establishment of an International Boundaries Unit (IBU) also assists and support the work of said office.

The recurrent budget approved for the MFAFT&I (excluding the Immigration Department) for the 2022/2023 financial year was \$19,687,203.00. However, the actual budget spent by the MFAFT&I in 2022/2023 was \$10,503,321.56; of which \$7,106,050.99 was spent by Foreign Affairs, and \$3,397,270.57 was spent by Foreign Trade.

## **Future Priorities and Looking Forward**

The programmatic focus of the MFAFT&I is based on its annual work plan that is continuously monitored to ensure compliance. As the country continues to focus on rebuilding the economy, in the post-COVID context, the MFAFT&I will reflect this priority through scaled-up and sustained engagement with strategic partners, optimizing all opportunities for international cooperation, increasing trade by insisting on reducing barriers to trade and continued advocacy and representation at the multilateral level to create avenues for growth and development for small countries. In addition, the Office of the Agent will continue to work apace to prepare and submit the GOB's Rejoinder. Attention will also remain on keeping the country's engagement with Guatemala peaceful and productive.

Looking forward, the MFAFT&I will continue to be guided by [#planBelize](#) (link) 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.



## **ANNEX I: Ambergris Caye Declaration on COP26 Outcomes and CARICOM Expectations in the lead up to COP27: “A Pathway from Ambition to Action”**

Recalling the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Declaration on the 1.5 °C Ambition to Defend the Most Vulnerable

Recalling further the regional priorities and expectations for the Glasgow Climate Change Conference aiming to consolidate global solidarity to close the gap for 1.5 °C ambition.

Taking note of the Glasgow Climate Pact and the decisions adopted by the respective governing bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement

Appreciating that the Glasgow Climate Change Conference focused the narrative of ambition on 1.5 °C and confirmed the role of science in informing ambition and accelerated action,

Acknowledging that the Glasgow Climate Pact establishes work Programme to strengthen the 2030 emissions reductions targets, to support measurable progress on the global goal on adaptation, and to determine a new collective goal on climate finance by 2024, and further recognizes the start of the global stocktake and its importance to urgently address gaps in mitigation ambition, adaptation, loss and damage, and finance this decade to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement,

Also noting the decision to initiate the Glasgow Dialogue on Loss and Damage and the finalization of the Paris Agreement Work Programme on common timeframes, transparency, and article 6,

Expressing grave concern that notwithstanding the pledges for net zero announced at the Conference, together with the range of voluntary initiatives launched during its Summit, according to the updated NDC Synthesis report, global warming is still projected to be 2.7°C in 2100, which confirms the latest findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change AR6 Report, that on these trends 1.5 °C could be breached as early as this decade,

Alarmed that emissions are expected to continue to rise to record breaking levels as countries emerge from COVID-19, with 2021 seeing the second largest annual increase in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in history,

Deeply concerned that developed countries support for climate action is incommensurate with the needs of developing countries to justly transition their societies and economies to low emissions climate resilient pathways and the increasing costs they face with rising emissions, the fast approaching or otherwise breached tipping points, the compounding effects of the cumulative impacts of climate change on sustainable development, and unavoidable loss and damage,

Particularly worried that despite being the least contributors to the climate emergency, Member States of the CARICOM face unsustainable and disproportionate debt burdens as they confront escalating climate impacts,

Emphasizing thus the inexorable need to increase near term ambition, to accelerate urgent climate action, and increase and deliver timely support to developing countries, in this decade, Reiterating that limiting global warming to 1.5°C requires rapid, deep, and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions, including reducing global carbon dioxide emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 relative to the 2010 level and to net zero around mid-century, as well as deep reductions in other greenhouse gases,

Underscoring the need for an unequivocal political commitment that no effort shall be spared to strengthen emissions reduction targets of the major emitters as early as the end of 2022, and to enact the necessary measures to unlock and fast track the great potential of humanity, taking an urgent and systematic approach, in line with principles of the Paris Agreement, and ensuring accountability and transparency,

Desiring thus for 2022 to initiate a roadmap from ambition to action with milestones for governments and non-state actors alike with COP27 as our first way point on the path to 1.5°C, the CARICOM Heads of Government,

1. Affirm that for the Caribbean keeping global temperatures below 1.5°C is not an option, it is a matter of survival.
2. Urgently call upon the international community to uphold its responsibility to protect the most vulnerable and maintain a central focus on the special case and particular circumstances of small island developing states (SIDS),
3. Affirm that “Securing a safe climate future for the Caribbean” will remain under close consideration of the CARICOM Heads of Government with a view inter alia to elaborating further on the regional roadmap from ambition to action with a focus on articulating regional needs and priorities, forging new partnerships across the whole of society, and, strengthening CARICOM political engagement in multilateral processes to advance regional priorities,
4. **Endorse a Paris 2030 delivery agenda** to include for 2022:
  - At COP27 if not earlier, major economies plan for strengthened 2030 emissions reduction targets in line with the 1.5 °C Paris temperature goal and Low-emissions Development Strategies.
  - Leading up to COP27, a US\$100 billion finance dashboard progress report and at COP27, and during the High-level Ministerial Dialogue on Climate Finance, clarification on plans to scale beyond the floor of US \$100 billion in the period through to 2025 taking into account the parity between adaptation and mitigation, and the additionality of loss and damage finance.
  - Measures of progress on developed countries commitment to double adaptation finance from 2019 levels and to ensure that vulnerable countries are accessing and benefitting from these finance flows.
  - Timely progress of technical work as called for in the Glasgow Climate Pact noting with appreciation the efforts of the COP Presidencies of the United Kingdom and of Egypt to accelerate the work Programme geared towards clear deliverables at COP27.
  - A timebound reform agenda for climate funds, multilateral development banks, and other finance providers to address SIDS access to grants and other concessionary finance arrangements in line with our urgent needs and priorities; and in this regard urge implementation and further elaboration of the call-to-action emanating from the second roundtable dialogue on SIDS and access to finance.

- Allocation of an envelope of resources to SIDS under the Global Environment Facility Eighth Replenishment Process for capacity building and technology transfer including for the implementation of the enhanced transparency framework.
  - Conclusion of elements for the full operationalization of Article 6 consistent with 1.5 °C ambition, accountability, transparency, and environmental integrity.
5. Welcome the focus of the UK COP Presidency on delivery, and urge the continued collaboration with the incoming President of COP27 (Egypt), to ensure consistency, coherence and implementation of commitments in line with the principles and goals of the Paris Agreement;
  6. Also take note of the UK COP Presidency Glasgow Breakthrough Initiatives and the launch of the Global Checkpoint Process and encourage the UK COP Presidency to engage with CARICOM Member States to identify how the region can benefit and champion SIDS specific breakthroughs;
  7. Urge the convenors of other fora intended to mobilize support for the UNFCCC process, including the Major Economies Forum, the Ministerial on Climate Action, and the Petersberg Dialogue, to marshal efforts to support a Paris delivery agenda.
  8. Note the policy priorities of Germany's G7 Presidency under the overarching objective of "Progress towards and equitable world" including the focus in particular on a sustainable planet;
  9. Take note further of the G7 Presidency's intention to establish a global Climate Club to foster ambitious, climate action and encourage the G7 Presidency to engage with the Caribbean and other small island developing states as partners to jointly identify how such an alliance can directly address the SIDS needs in the near term particularly for addressing adaptation, and unavoidable loss and damage and avoid any unintended consequences.
  10. Note also that the Indonesian Presidency of the G20 has identified energy transition as a policy priority, and express the hope that the focus on sustainable energy transition will be framed in light of the temperature goal of 1.5°C and so lend support to strengthened 2030 emissions targets that could be brought forward to the COP27, underscoring that in so doing the G20 together can keep 1.5°C within reach;
  11. Calls also for global recognition of the SIDS need for finance for loss and damage to cover the costs of impacts and risks to which we cannot adapt.
  12. Urge all leaders to confront the reality that climate change poses an existential threat to SIDS and that its impacts represent a "Code Red for Humanity" and thus require immediate, global action to reduce greenhouse emissions and provide accessible and affordable finance in line with the science to keep 1.5°C within reach.

There is no more time for equivocation and no more time for delay; we, the CARICOM Heads of Government, demand action now.

## **ANNEX II: JOINT DECLARATION OF SAN PEDRO**

**IV Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and of the Central American Integration System (SICA) 3 March 2022**

**We, the Heads of State and Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and of the Central American Integration System (SICA) meeting in San Pedro, Ambergris Caye, Belize on 3 March 2022, on the occasion of the IV CARICOM SICA Summit:**

**Acknowledge** that these are exceptional times characterized by recurrent as well as new multidimensional challenges, including socioeconomic challenges brought about by the climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and antimicrobial existence.

**Consider** that our geographic proximity, shared values, commitment to regional solidarity and multilateralism are the bases for our regional partnership.

**Recall** our historic first Summit twenty years ago in Belize City and subsequent Summits and Ministerial Meetings between CARICOM and SICA which have laid a foundation on which to continue to build stronger and closer relations.

**Highlight** the essential role of Belize as the historic interlocutor between both sub-regions and welcome the efforts of Belize, as Chair of CARICOM, and Panama, as Presidency Pro Tempore of SICA, to advance inter-regional dialogue and cooperation between CARICOM and SICA in this Summit.

**Reaffirm** our commitment to strengthening relations and emphasize the necessity to meet at regular intervals to consult and coordinate on issues of mutual interest on the regional and international agendas.

**Recognize** the transformative force of regional integration in achieving inclusive sustainable development outcomes and commit to continue strengthening their respective regional integration platforms of which they are members, and for others in which we share membership.

**Recognize** that the effect of the COVID-19 on the sub-regions of the Caribbean and Central America has been profound and devastating in public health and loss of life, with sharp economic contraction resulting in real long term negative effects on the socio-economic welfare of our people, including in education, exacerbating poverty, deepening inequalities, reversing hard-won development gains and hampering progress towards achieving the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Welcome** the participation of His Excellency Alberto Fernandez, President of Argentina and Chairman of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in which he reiterated the call for a strengthened and dynamic CELAC and urged the two subregions to engage with CELAC as a mechanism for regional cooperation to advance the crucial phase of the Post-Pandemic Recovery

**Welcome** the engagement with His Excellency Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations on the role of the UN system in coordinating a global response to the critical challenges

confronting the sub-regions including the COVID-19 Pandemic Response and Recovery, climate change and financing for development, as well as efforts to address the situation in Haiti.

**Recognize** and support the efforts of the Haitian government with the signing of the September 11, 2021, agreement for effective and peaceful governance and encourage talks between the Haitian political actors to create a politically stable environment that will facilitate the success of the upcoming elections in the country.

**Reiterate** that climate change remains the greatest threat currently facing humanity and underscore the devastating impact of the climate emergency on the countries of the Caribbean and Central America, including persistent drought and extreme weather events, land degradation, sea level rise, coastal erosion and ocean acidification and the urgent need for a global response commensurate with the enormity of the challenge posed by climate change.

**Recognise and Confirm** the value of cooperation and collaboration between CARICOM and SICA as a positive accelerator on issues of mutual interest such as climate change, COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery, development financing, health, natural disasters, disaster prevention and comprehensive risk management, sustainable development, migration, regional security, poverty eradication and food and nutrition security, amongst others.

**Aware** that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the systemic failures in the international financial architecture, including the lack of access to development financing and inadequate solutions to address unsustainable debt for small and vulnerable countries, and for middle- income countries, and underscore the urgency for a comprehensive and integrated approach to support the countries of the two sub-regions.

**Recognize** the efforts that both sub-regions have been advancing in order to achieve an economic recovery that is sustainable, green, resilient, and inclusive in these extraordinary times, and the commitment to demand increased access of our countries to essential financing, in flexible and preferential conditions, through credit facilities and non-discriminatory and innovative mechanisms.

1. Commit to strengthen foreign policy consultation, to the extent possible, in regional and international fora, especially where CARICOM and SICA share membership.
2. Welcome the active collaboration and dialogue between Caribbean and Central American institutions and mechanisms at all levels, including in banking and finance, trade and investment, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, health, disaster prevention and comprehensive risk management, and security; as well as draw on the support from regional and international institutions, including PAHO/WHO, OECD and ECLAC to strengthen results and impact.
3. Agree to strengthen cooperation between CARICOM and SICA on climate change including exchanging best practices on integrating climate resilience into development planning, fostering regular dialogue and collaboration between the CARICOM Climate Change Center (CCCCC) and the Central American Commission for the Environment and Development (CCAD) and, pursuing joint advocacy for enhancing access to climate finance for adaptation, mitigation and loss and damage responses, keeping global warming below 1.5C, and in preparations for COP27, as appropriate.

4. Agree to collaborate for immediate and long-term public health support, including strengthening capacity and resilience of health systems, mitigation of COVID-19 variants, equitable vaccine distribution and access in the sub-regions, access to new COVID-19 specific treatments, and future pandemic preparedness and disease prevention.
5. Agree on the necessity of revitalizing the economies of the sub-regions and to incorporate green, blue, orange, sustainable and digital transformation into their economic growth plans and policies to attain a more resilient and inclusive post-COVID future.
6. Recognize the potential for deeper and wider regional trade and investment to stimulate economic growth and development and agree to further explore cooperation in this area towards sustainable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in the sub-regions.
7. Reiterate the importance of tourism in both sub-regions and therefore consider it necessary to establish a roadmap for the promotion of this sector, as well as technical cooperation for the recovery and use of natural spaces that contribute to this sector.
8. Urge international financial institutions to take effective measures to strengthen the global financial safety net, assist developing countries in addressing debt vulnerability and in attaining debt sustainability as soon as possible, enhance access to concessionary financing, and development assistance, and addressing vulnerability especially of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the lower coastal states of the Greater Caribbean and the Central American Isthmus, continue to work on devising solutions for Small Island and Low-Lying Coastal Developing States in the two sub-regions by incorporating a multidimensional vulnerability index to the criteria for determining access to concessional financing and agree to join their advocacy in this regard.
9. Congratulate the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of CARICOM and SICA for the adoption of the revised CARICOM – SICA Plan of Action which identifies specific areas for inter-regional dialogue and cooperation to jointly address the challenges faced by both sub-regions and commit to its implementation, periodic evaluation, and follow-up.
10. Emphasize the importance of South-South Cooperation as a valuable mechanism to complement the development efforts of both sub-regions and agree to promote this means of cooperation through partnerships to develop inter-regional projects drawn from the CARICOM-SICA Plan of Action.
11. Agree to establish the High-Level Technical Committee of CARICOM and SICA countries to coordinate and monitor the implementation and evaluation of the CARICOM – SICA Plan of Action.
12. Agree to convene the V CARICOM-SICA Summit in 2024.

The Heads of State and Government express appreciation to the people and Government of Belize for the courtesies afforded to the participants and the excellent organization of the meeting which resulted in a successful IV CARICOM-SICA Summit.

**San Pedro, Belize 3 March 2022**

## ANNEX III: Directory of Heads of Mission/Permanent Representatives



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