



CAPITAL WEEKLY

"From the Heart of the Nation to the Soul of the People."



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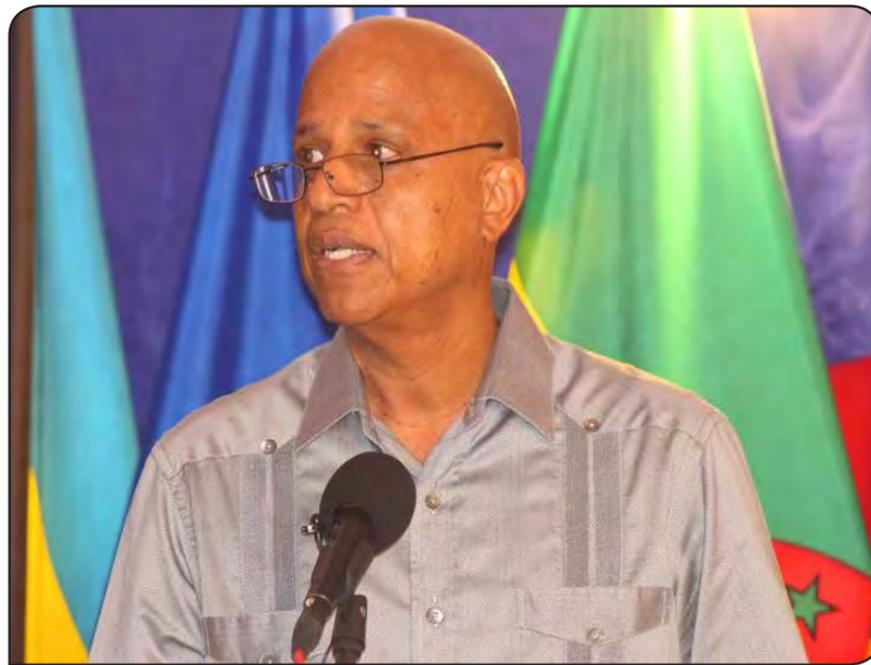
CARICOM comes to BELIZE

CONFRONTING MAJOR EXISTENTIAL ISSUES

Belize's Prime Minister currently holding chairmanship of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Heads of Government from participating nations have come to town for the 27th Intersessional Meeting. The official opening took place Monday evening on the scenic, serene, stimulating, seaside paradise of Placencia in Stann Creek District.

Welcoming the Prime Ministerial guests and their entourage from the Caribbean family, Prime Minister Barrow fittingly remarked, "I hope that the legacy features of these surroundings will act as aid and inspiration to our deliberations. And very important deliberations they are; for while that is always the case whenever we meet, I may be forgiven for thinking, and hope to make clear, that our issues and challenges are particularly pronounced at this time."

Getting right down to business, he proceeded to give an overview of the general economic climate in which our Caribbean nations currently find ourselves: "There has been a failure of the World Economy to recover properly from the shock of the financial crisis that began in the last part of the first decade of this new century. That failure for the majority of us in CARICOM has meant slow growth, increasing difficulties with our public finances and tremendous



Prime Minister Honourable Dean Barrow Delivering Address at the Opening of the CARICOM Meeting in Placencia Monday Evening

strains on our capacity to satisfy the life-improvement aspirations of our people. And it is worth noting that even in the few countries that have shown substantial enough expansion, much of the net effect has been depreciated by population increases. On the bright side, though, there appears to be what we hope will be a sustained resurgence in our region's all-important tourism industry. This would be a welcomed offset to the continued volatility in our commodities sector."

Speaking about the impact that the petroleum industry and market is having on our economies, Prime Minister Barrow explained, "The global oil price rout has in particular been

a double-edged sword for a couple of us. So we salute the recent petroleum discoveries in Guyana and look forward to that country being able to exploit those resources on its own terms. And we welcome the benefit to consumers that cheaper fuel has meant. But at the same time, we regret the effect that both the contraction of production and the precipitate price drop have had here in Belize. And we note the even stronger detriment of the latter on public sector revenues in Trinidad and Tobago. As well, the oil conundrum has severely constrained the flow of resources to those of us that participate in the PetroCaribe arrangements. This is, of course, in consequence

of the havoc done to Venezuela, the source of our erstwhile bounty. To compound matters, it is clear that the oil price phenomenon is symptomatic of the more generalized weakening, to which I earlier, in commodities markets. This worsens the crisis situation in public finances in certain parts of the Eurozone, so that altogether there seems to be a distinct possibility of the world economy sliding back into recession. The consequences that would entail for our region are both obvious and frightening."

And with that, Prime Minister Barrow transitioned into the issue of the day, if you will, the elephant in the room: "And when we move from the general to the particular, regarding global economic and financial currents, there is one already extant development with absolutely cataclysmic ramifications for us. I am talking, of course, about the phenomenon of so-called de-risking. Under pressure from their regulatory authorities in Europe and especially the US, banks in those jurisdictions have been closing their correspondent relationships with our indigenous financial institutions. This deprives our banks of the ability to keep US deposits, do wire transfers, facilitate credit card settlements for their local clients and our economy. The implications of this for our

Continued on Page 16



CARICOM Heads of Government at Official Opening Ceremony in Placencia Monday Evening February 15, 2016

EDITORIAL

BELIZE AND CARICOM

Established 43 years ago in 1973 through the Treaty of Chaguaramas, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was a romantic idea whose practical purpose has perhaps never been as pronounced as it is today.

It is in times of adversity that one most appreciates the blessings of belonging to a family. And it is this sense of belonging and common purpose that Prime Minister Dean Barrow was referring to when he remarked in his speech as the new Chairman of CARICOM at the opening of the Twenty-Seventh Intersessional Meeting of the Heads of Government, "I'm trying to reiterate what we know only too well - the reality that forces us to acknowledge the limitations of individual smallness is the same reality that obliges us to size-up both in terms of collective thinking and collective action."

The context is, of course, the existential threat confronting our region with respect to de-risking and the consequent loss of correspondent banking. It is a matter that understandably looms extremely large on the agenda of the CARICOM meeting.

The Treaty of Chaguaramas, as revised and signed by CARICOM Heads of Government on July 5, 2001 at the Twenty-Second Meeting of the Conference in Nassau, Bahamas, acknowledges being "mindful that cooperation and joint action in developing trade relations with third states and in establishing appropriate regulatory and administrative procedures and services are essential for the development of the international and intra-regional trade of member states." Indeed, it was never before as relevant as it is today, a third state in this case being, in particular, the United States of America whose new regulatory measures present for the Caribbean Community one of the greatest challenges since its formation more than four decades ago.

So, while the concept of a Caribbean Community might have fallen well short of the romantic dream with which it was conceived, the practical benefits, now more than ever, are manifest.

As Prime Minister Hon. Dean Barrow put it, "To be driven back to a reliance on the less lofty but more practical virtues of functional cooperation, may be no bad thing. In saying this, I am perhaps merely repeating what was stated some time ago by a past CARICOM Prime Minister: that our common cause effort simply cannot all at once incorporate the multiplicity of our individual drivers; that concentrating on the less poetic but more workable dimensions of our integration movement is both sensible and unavoidable; that to admit this is not to admit failure since prioritizing the more readily successful cooperative ventures *does* ultimately lead to the optimum future deepening that we both desire and deserve." Well spoken, Prime Minister of Belize and Chairman of CARICOM.

NATIONAL UNITY NEEDED

Patriotism above Politics



The National Flag of Belize



PUP Leader, Hon. John Briceno



UDP Leader, P.M. Dean Barrow

By Delroy Cuthkelvin

There are some issues that require national unity and transcend partisan politics. It's long been agreed that the Belize-Guatemalan Territorial Dispute and efforts to resolve it is one such issue as it threatens the very existence of our Nation as we know it.

De-risking and the consequent loss of correspondent banking services, which threatens the survival of our financial sector and the state of our economy, is the latest emerging issue that transcends partisan politics, and overcoming it will require the same kind of national unity. The Prime Minister appropriately characterized it as an existential threat, and a potentially huge national crisis.

The General Elections being behind us, the Government having renewed its mandate and the Opposition having reconstituted its leadership, the timing is right and fitting for the forging of such national unity. Like a true statesman, the Prime Minister has congratulated him on his re-emergence, and for the new Opposition Leader, this is an excellent opportunity

to reciprocate the goodwill and demonstrate some meaningful patriotism, particularly as a successful politician whose background and forte is business.

As Luciano sings, "We're all in this thing together." For sure, together is also the best, if not the only way for us to get out of it. Let's hear it for Belize!

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CAPITAL WEEKLY

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Caribbean Convenes on Climate Change

This past week, Climate Change experts from the Caribbean region converged in Belize for a two-day conference. On the top of their agenda were discussions on the COP 21 Agreement which was recently signed in Paris by 195 nations. That agreement outlines a global plan of action to prevent the adverse effects of climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2 degrees centigrade.

Speaking to the national media at the Biltmore Plaza where the conference was conducted, Minister of State for Climate Change matters, Hon. Omar Figueroa stated, "Right now we have our technical team that has been really going into these agreements and making sure that we can live up to our responsibilities. But we can't look at these agreements as a challenge for us. There will be tremendous amount of opportunities embedded in these challenges. For example, we now have in the Paris Agreement parity between adaptation and mitigation, which puts us in a position to be able to benefit from the agreement."

Financial resources to execute the global plan of ac-



Hon. Omar Figueroa, Minister of State Responsible for Matters Relating to Climate Change

tion coming out of the Paris Climate Change Summit should come mainly from developed, heavily industrialized nations which are responsible for emission of huge amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Expounding on this, Chairman of the Regional Coordinating Committee on Climate Change, Doctor James Fletcher, stated, "The pledge is that by the year 2020, we should have access to 100 Billion US Dollars in finances; and that amount should be 100 Billion Dollars every year thereafter. In the COP decision, there has even been a pledge to review that, with the intention of scaling it up. We've said that 100



Doctor James Fletcher, Chairman of the Regional Coordinating Committee on Climate Change

Billion US Dollars is the absolute minimum, is the floor. Maybe the Caribbean's needs alone will take that 100 Billion US Dollars. Then you have Pacific countries that would disappear entirely."

As for small Caribbean nations like Belize, Fletcher says that while the levels of our greenhouse gas emissions might be relatively insignificant, we can nevertheless make a meaningful contribution towards the global action plan and solution, as all countries have agreed to reduce the levels of their emissions.

"What these developed countries have to do is to drastically reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases. They have

made a commitment to do that for the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, which every country was to submit to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that basically said, among other things, how they will reduce all their emissions of greenhouse gases," he elaborated.

For his part, Hon. Omar Figueroa emphasized the Belize Government's full commitment to the global agenda and action plan to address this existential threat of Climate Change which is already having an impact on our country in areas such as agriculture, erosion of our coastlines and coral bleaching.

"Each country has a responsibility to develop a list of nationally determined contributions, so to speak. So we are in the process of also putting a lot of those together. Some have been submitted to the convention folks, but we are in the process of doing that. Part of our sustainable development strategies, our agricultural policies, all take into consideration our climate change responsibilities. So there is a lot that has been going on," he explained.



*Mr. Victor Recinos
Belize's Comptroller of Customs*

The Nation of Belize is stepping up its effort to counter and curb money laundering, financing of terrorism and customs fraud.

Two weeks ago, the stage for the intensification of these efforts was set with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the new Director of the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), Joy Grant and the Comptroller of Customs, Victor Recinos. The MOU, signed on February 3, 2016, will increase potential sources of information available to the FIU and Customs to properly undertake

COUNTERING CUSTOMS FRAUD MONEY LAUNDERING AND THE FINANCING OF TERRORISM

their analytical and investigative functions. This past week, a strategic planning workshop was held to assist in developing adequate human resources to improve the effectiveness of the Customs Department particularly in this regard. Conducted inside the conference room of the Customs Compound in Belize City, the workshop was attended by senior officers of Belize and well-facilitated by the World Customs Organization.

Speaking on behalf of the World Customs Organization, Customs Modernization Advisor Matthew Bannen explained, "The work this week was about dealing with a particular aspect of the strategic business plan of the Belize Customs, which is quite broad in terms of the reform and modernization. There are IT aspects and legislation aspects.

This week was about the human resource aspect and how best to deliver the functions that are expected of customs in Belize. So how are they going along those lines? It's been a significant change in the last five years, and we are about building on that change. To do that, we looked at all the specific functions in the commercial area, in the enforcement area, in the management area, and then what are the best tools and professional development programs and training to ensure that staff can deliver those functions and those objectives under that strategic plan."

For his part, Belize's Comptroller of Customs, Victor Recinos, elaborated on what they aim to achieve through the workshop: "Planning strategic HR policy and training policy to go with the corporate business



*Mr. Matthew Bannen
World Customs Organization*

plan that we have. This corporate business plan will run from 2016 to 2019. The third pillar of that plan talks about enhancing our human resources, that being our most valuable asset.

So this whole week, we have been looking at our processes, our systems, and all the policies that we have to put in a comprehensive document which we will call an HR Policy and a Training Plan that will go along with that; so that all that we want to accomplish will be spread out over three years in training and building of capacity in our officers."

Software Installed for the Visually Impaired

CARICOM Secretary General Visits Leo Bradley Library



Secretary General Irwin LaRocque, Ambassador Daniel Gutierrez, Dr. Leroy Almendarez and staff members at Leo Bradley Library

The Secretary General of the Caribbean Community Secretariat Ambassador, Irwin LaRocque, visited the Belize National Library Service on Thursday, February 11th, 2016 to officially unveil software, donated by the CARICOM Secretariat, for the visually-impaired.

visually-impaired at the Belize National Library Service that would be available to the public. The Library, located on Princess Margaret Drive in Belize City, was identified as the ideal location because of its proximity to several high schools, the university and technical vocational institutions. It is also near to the Stel-

ware programmes installed at the library is JAWS (Job Access With Speech), the world's most popular screen reader, developed for computer users whose vision loss prevents them from seeing screen content or navigating with a mouse. JAWS provides speech and Braille output for

use of the donated software by persons who benefit directly from the programme.

He used the opportunity to speak to both the users and support staff at the library, where he was joined by Chef de Cabinet in the Office of the Secretary General Ms. Glenda Itiaba; Advisor of



Secretary General Irwin LaRocque witnesses first hand a visually impaired Belizean utilizing one of the special programs installed



CARICOM Secretary General Irwin LaRocque conversing with a staff member at the Leo Bradley Library

In 2015, the CARICOM Secretariat donated and installed software for the

la Maris School, which caters to students with special needs.

One of the two soft-

the most popular computer applications on your PC. The other software programme installed is MAGic® Screen Magnification Software. It is a screen magnification and screen reading solution for low vision computer users. MAGic can help you work more efficiently with business applications, documents, email, navigating the Internet, and engaging in social networking. MAGic delivers smooth, crisp letters, even at the highest magnification levels.

The Secretary General witnessed first-hand the

Communications in the Office of the Secretary General Mr. Leonard Robertson; the Director General of the Directorate General for Foreign Trade Dr. Leroy Almendarez; Belize's Ambassador to CARICOM H.E. Daniel Gutierrez; Acting Chief Librarian of the Belize National Library Service Ms. Lusiola Castillo and Belize's CSME Focal Point Ms. Tricia Gideon for unveiling.

Belize is one of the first CARICOM Member States to have the software installed. The programme has been long-awaited and welcomed.



“People of the Caribbean Community, we have a lot to be proud of and a lot to look forward to. Let us strive to make 2016 one to remember as a landmark year for our integration movement.”

HON. DEAN BARROW, PRIME MINISTER OF BELIZE & CHAIRMAN OF CARICOM

Free Movement Regime of Caribbean Community

Two-Day Workshop Conducted In Belize City

Belizeans from the private and public sectors attended a two-day workshop on Free Movement of Labour in accordance with the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

Held in Belize City at the Radisson Fort George Hotel, the workshop opened with four key speakers highlighting the history, present progress and benefits of the CSME. Keynote Speaker, CEO Kerry Belisle reiterated the commitment of the Labour Department to facilitate free movement and



Opening of Workshop for Stakeholders in CSME Free Movement

reinvigorate domestic systems to create greater efficiency and transparency. Dr. Olivia Smith, Deputy Programme Manager, Free Movement and Labour, CARICOM Secretariat, led an interactive workshop with an overview of the CARICOM Community, explaining the rights, benefits and challenges; while Legal Research Officer, Deborah Barrow expounded on legal implications and compliance with provisions in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

Tricia Gideon, CSME Focal Point, Belize, explained,

“We have goods, we have services, we have skilled nationals, we have setting up of business and we have temporary service providers such as consultants; so if you want to go start a business, there is a procedure that you must go through which we have at our ministry, if you would like to have more information about that, at the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Commerce.

If you want to go and live and work in one of these member states, immigration is responsible in doing skill

certificates; you can go there. If you want to be a consultant in the region, we have the Belize Coalition of Service Providers, which is the authority responsible for issuing those certificates. And if you want to export to these regions we have our Customs and BAHA departments that ensure us that these goods are ready to enter these markets.”

The CARICOM Secretariat and Ministry of Investment, Trade and Commerce acknowledge the need for much more public awareness.



*Tricia Gideon
CSME Focal Point Belize*



*Dr. Olivia Smith - CSME Unit
CARICOM Secretariat*

Belizean Law Enforcement Personnel Attend Training Course At International Law Enforcement Academy In New Mexico



Sr. Supt Chester Williams and Roswell City Mayor Dennis Kintigh

Senior Superintendent of Police, Chester Williams, who commands Eastern Division South, was part of a Belizean team of law enforcement personnel who recently travelled to New Mexico, United States of America to participate in a training course at the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) there.

It is one of a number of international police academies administered by the U.S. Department of State where U.S. law enforcement can instruct local police from participating countries in counterterrorism, narcotics interdiction, detection of fraudulent documents, and border control practices. They were established in 1995 as a means of

bringing together international law enforcement personnel to reduce crime, combat terrorism, and share in knowledge and training. Instructors and active agents teach courses on subjects such as physical security for installations, transnational investigations, post-blast investigations, countering wildlife trafficking, anticorruption, illicit drug trafficking, money laundering and financial crimes, terrorism and human trafficking. The ILEA provides a core curriculum of management and technical

instruction for criminal justice managers to develop effective law enforcement cooperation while enhancing each country’s criminal justice institutions’ abilities to suppress transnational crime.

The bilateral agreements creating ILEA operations also establish a Joint Oversight Committee chaired by the U.S. Embassy and host government officials to oversee the policies and operation of the Academy. The Joint Committee meets at least twice a year and operates by consensus of the parties.



Belizean Law Enforcement Personnel who attended ILEA Training in New Mexico (USA) with Mayor of Roswell City, Dennis Kintigh

Cooperation in Public Health and Medical Skills

Agreement Signed between Governments of Belize and Taiwan



Hon. Pablo Marin and Taiwan Ambassador H.E. Benjamin Ho

An agreement on cooperation in public health and medical skills was signed on Wednesday, February 10, 2016, between the Government of Belize and the Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan).

The agreement was signed by the Hon. Pablo Marin, Minister of Health and H.E. Benjamin T.H. Ho, Ambassador of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to Belize.

The objective of the agreement is to access technical support from the Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) in the area of public health and

will include, but will not be limited to, health education, disease screening and clinical services. Another major aspect

of the joint collaboration will be the capacity building of medical personnel in Belize.

The agreement will apply to projects initiated jointly by both parties. The first major project, Capacity Building Project for the Prevention and Control of Chronic Renal Failure, will address the ever increasing number of patients with end stage renal failure.

Activities within the project will include training for nurses in the hemodialysis procedure in Belize, training for hemodialysis technicians and Community Health Workers, as well as the development and production of public education material. The aim of the project is also to strengthen the screening program for high-risk persons for kidney disease.

The Ministry of Health, recognizing the urgent need to address non-communicable

diseases (NCDs) as direct contributors to the development of chronic renal failure, developed the 2013-2023 Belize National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases.

Statistical figures from 2014 reveal that diseases of the heart (13%) and diabetes (9.5%) rank within the top three (3) causes of mortality in Belize. One of the risk factors for these NCDs is obesity, therefore it is important to address this factor through the promotion of healthy life style practices.

The Government of Belize, through the Ministry of Health, is very appreciative of the technical assistance offered by the Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) and welcomes this initiative as an important tool in combating the increase of non-communicable diseases in Belize.



(Left to Right) Dr. Ramon Figueroa, CEO, Ministry of Health; Hon. Pablo Marin, Minister of Health; H.E. Benjamin Ho, Ambassador of Taiwan to Belize; Dr. Marvin Manzanero, Director of Health Services

Forward Operating Base at Sarstoon Moving Forward



Hon. John Saldivar with Members of the BDF at Sarstoon River

On February 10, 2016, Minister of National Security Hon. John Saldivar, accompanied by Minister of State Hon. Frank Mena, visited the construction site of the Forward Operating Base at Sarstoon, Toledo. He was also accompanied

by senior members of the Belize Defence Force (BDF), the Belize Police Department and Ministry of National Security officials.

The delegation appreciated the rapid pace at which the construction is proceeding. Elements of the BDF have set up temporary installations at

the site as the work progresses. The Forward Operating Base at the mouth of the Sarstoon River is one of several initiatives being undertaken by the Government of Belize to safeguard and protect our national sovereignty. The Forward Operating

Base, though modest in its beginnings, will establish a much needed presence and will serve to combat illicit activities such as trafficking in narcotics, contraband, human trafficking and weapons trading, which threaten Belize's national security.



Construction of Forward Operating Base underway at Sarstoon

Belize and the Regional Youth Development Agenda

Sports Minister Welcomes SISCA Secretary General



SISCA Secretary General H.E. Ana Hazel and Belize's Minister of State for Education, Youth and Sports Honourable Elodio Aragon

On Monday, February 8, 2016, Honourable Elodio Aragon, Minister of State, Ministry of Education, Youths, Sports and Culture welcomed to Belize Her Excellency, Ana Hazel Escrich, Secretary General of the Central American Social Integration Secretariat

(SISCA). During the visit, Minister of State Aragon and H.E. Escrich discussed mutual areas of the SISCA Regional Agenda such as Regional Youth Development Programs and the proactive participation of Belize in CODICADER (Consejo del Istmo Centroamericano de Deportes y Recreación).

In July 2016, Belize is slated to host the CODICADER Games in five sports disciplines - Chess, Athletics, Softball, Football and Basketball at the Primary level. SISCA has expressed its support to the Ministry in the area of sports equipment and technical expertise for the success of hosting the games.

Honourable Aragon

expressed the continued political and technical support of his Ministry and seeks to enhance the cordial relations existing with SISCA. Accompanying Honourable Elodio Aragon was Chief Executive Officer, Adele Catzim; National Sports Director, Ritchel Dominguez and Mr. Giovanni Alamilla from the National Sports Council.



SISCA Secretary General H.E. Ana Hazel, Minister of State Hon. Elodio Aragon, CEO Adele Catzim and a Belizean Diplomat

Belize Ambassador & Haitian President



Outgoing Haitian President Michel Martelly & Belize Ambassador to Mexico and Non-Resident Ambassador to Haiti, H.E. Oliver Del Cid

His Excellency Oliver del Cid, Ambassador of Belize to Mexico, presented his Letter of Credence to outgoing President Michel Martelly of the Republic of Haiti in a ceremony at the National Palace on 5th February, 2016.

Recognizing the importance of the event as a strong step in further strengthening bilateral relations, President Martelly and Ambassador del Cid expressed their countries' commitment to

furthering the friendship and collaboration. Ambassador del Cid also met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Haiti, Honourable Duly Brutus and made a floral offering at the Haitian National Pantheon Museum in memory of the Heroes of the Independence of Haiti.

The Embassy of Belize in Mexico, in addition to being accredited as Belize's Non-Resident Embassy to Haiti, also serves as Non-Resident High Commission to Jamaica.

Agriculture Field Day

Corn & Beans Seed Production

The Ministry of Agriculture on Thursday February 11, hosted a Field Day on the seed production of corn and beans at the Central Farm Crop Unit Production Plot.

The purpose of the Field day was to showcase the technological package in quality seed production of open pollinated corn and beans.

Present at the event were the main stakeholders of the project, which including farmers from the Toledo, Stann Creek and Cayo Districts.

It is expected that from the experience gained, the farmers will adopt good agriculture practices in seed production, and will thus improve productivity and the quality of corn and beans in their own business enterprise.



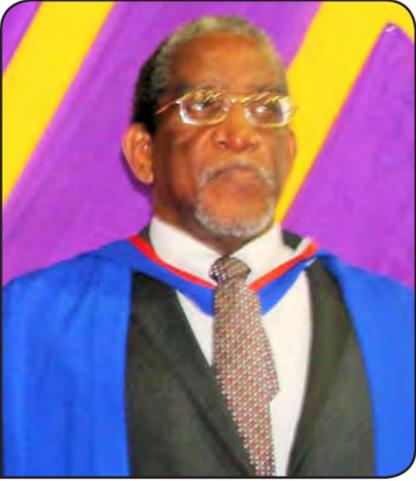
Farmers from Stann Creek, Toledo and Cayo Districts on Field Day at the Central Farm Crop Unit Production Plot in Cayo District

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"We are the Agents of Change"

Graduation Remarks by University of Belize President Alan Slusher



*Alan Slusher, President
University of Belize*

I thought that I would take this opportunity to share some thoughts on development and on the role of institutions like the University of Belize in promoting and sustaining development.

I have deliberately said 'development' rather than 'economic development' in order to emphasize the multifaceted notion of the process. It is not just about increasing people's incomes or purchasing power, thus enabling them to eat more nutritious meals regularly, clothe themselves better, live in more comfortable homes, or own their own cars. It is also about freeing people from the mindless drudgery of repetitive, low-paid manual labour; about providing the capacity and the opportunity to everyone to be able to think, to be able to conceptualize, to analyse, to identify how existing operations can be improved to make them more effective and efficient, so that one can do more with less, and then actually to be able to turn the concepts into physi-

cal reality. It is about putting in place social structures and relationships that facilitate these improvement processes, so that each level of progress generates still more ideas and opportunities for further improvement, so that the development process, seen as a process for improving the quality of life, becomes self-sustaining, and with the quantity of life, think in terms of the length of life, increasing as a result.

Populations grow; we have more people. With all these come changes in the way people act with, and react to each other; the opportunities for friendships and relationships multiply; the processes for managing relationships become more complex. One example of this is our judicial system, that is, our arrangements for settling disputes. When I was growing up we had a single Magistrate's Court in Belize City; we had a

Court. Now we have a large number of Magistrate's Courts; we have a number of simultaneous sessions of the Supreme Court;

That is the multi-faceted part of development. It is not just about getting richer, although that is a critically important part



Graduates of the University of Belize (February 6, 2016)

we have a local Court of Appeal; and we now have frequent appeals from our Court of Appeal to a Caribbean Court of Justice. And there is now talk of carry-

of the process. And it is a process, not a one-off event that, once achieved, one can forget wanting development or wanting to live in a developed country, and go about one's other business, whatever that may be.

"A key part of our job is to develop within the society the capacity to think, to conceptualize, to analyse; to be able to identify the key features of the environment in which we find ourselves; to identify the needs and wants; to be able to identify the ways in which the capacity of the society to satisfy those needs and wants might be improved; and to be proactive in helping to put in place the arrangements which actually expand the capacity of the society to meet its own needs and wants."

travelling Magistrate who went to the district municipalities, and handled cases that were beyond the capacities of our resident District Commissioners; and we had a single Supreme

ing a particular dispute to an International Court of Justice; and I haven't mentioned any of the currently existing international human rights and arbitration bodies that we have utilized.



The audience of family members and invited guests at the University of Belize Graduation

Development, developing a country, is about increasing the capacity, or ability, of that country and its institutions to satisfy the aspirations – needs and wants – of its people on a continuing basis. You would immediately recognize that development then involves trying to match two moving elements. On the one hand, people have needs and wants; and the normal tendency is for those needs and wants to change and grow over time, particularly where people have readily available to them images of lifestyles of others who are able to enjoy physical facilities and social arrangements that appear to them to reflect substantial improvement on what they currently have.

On the other hand, there is the issue of the capacity of the local environment to provide those apparent improved lifestyles. Where a society is able to generate and provide—and even perhaps exceed—the incomes, goods and services, and social arrangements that a population wants, the situation is one of national comfort. Where a society is not able to do that,

Continued on Page 9

“We are the Agents of Change”

Graduation Remarks by University of Belize President Alan Slusher



UB Chairman Harry Pilgrim; Principal & Pro Vice Chancellor UWI Campus Luz Longworth; and UB President Alan Slusher

Continued from Page 8

there is discomfort. That discomfort can manifest itself in ways that are beneficial for the society, as in where it encourages effort to expand domestic productive capacity and output, so that the domestic society and economy begin increasingly to satisfy needs and wants, and the population as a whole can see and experience that growing improvement. Or where needs and wants continue to expand faster than the capacity of the local society to satisfy them, there is increasing frustration, leading to dysfunctional behaviour that would include rising crime, increasing migration, and unravelling of the social fabric.

Development as a process, as an ongoing matching of the two sets of forces I have mentioned means that it is reversible. If needs and wants are not growing all that quickly, and if people are generally satisfied with what they have, then it is possible to have a reasonably stable society in which people generally feel themselves comfortable.

But it is also possible to have a situation where in objective terms substantial capacity expansion is taking place, and incomes and lifestyles are improving, but people want next year's living levels today. So that a country that is expanding its supply capacity starts showing signs of strain because it is not expanding fast enough.

So, back to development: Whether a country is developing or not depends on the extent that it can bring into sync, and keep in sync, those two elements - the growth in the needs and wants of the popula-

tion, and the actual supply and distribution of the goods and services to satisfy those needs and wants. Where supply capacity is rising faster than the growth in domestic demand, incomes rise and savings are also increasing, if we assume



Graduates of the University of Belize (February 6, 2016)

reasonably equitable distribution of income. Where the opposite is the case, and demand is growing faster than incomes are being generated, savings are depleted. And a period of more can be followed by a period of less. An important part of the development process, then, is

the capacity of the society and economy to adjust and adapt to a changing external environment, as well as to changes in their own internal functioning.

Flexibility is key since the only thing that is constantly with us is change. As an aside, I would mention that British Honduras used to be known as a country that produced high-quality timber, and it was our main export product; so important was it that the timber industry is still the main feature on the Belize flag. Our economy has since gone on to much more lucrative areas; maybe we need to take a look at some of our symbols.

So what is the role of the University of Belize in all of this? A key part of our job is to

develop within the society the capacity to think, to conceptualize, to analyse; to be able to identify the key features of the environment in which we find ourselves; to identify the needs and wants; to be able to identify the ways in which the capacity of the society to satisfy those

needs and wants might be improved; and to be proactive in helping to put in place the arrangements which actually expand the capacity of the society to meet its own needs and wants.

We try to do this in two ways. First, we try through our classroom programs and courses to help our students in a focused way to develop the required capacity. We don't teach; ideally, we help students to learn.

Secondly, we try through our research and community outreach efforts, efforts which I would be the first to admit that we need to expand substantially, to bring information and stimulation to the wider community, in order to expand knowledge and capacity. In both sets of efforts, we are engaged in a mind-development game.

We all, individually, live inside our heads, in our minds. What we seek to do here is to help to expand that mind-space and develop its ability to conceptualize and then design and build all the structures and arrangements that help us to enjoy our lives.

The critically important issue that I want you to take away from all of what I have said is that everything we do, we here at the University, and you, wherever you work and play, is about people. Development is about us, what we are doing to satisfy our own needs and the needs and wants of those around us. In other words, we are the agents of the change that we are trying to see in our society. I thank you for your indulgence.



The Graduates of the University of Belize (February 6, 2016)

"Put Your Vision to Reality!"

Keynote Address At University of Belize Graduation February 6, 2016 - Delivered by Luz M. Longworth - Principal & Pro Vice Chancellor University of West Indies Campus

First, let me say how happy I am to be back home today to address the graduates of the Spring graduating class of the University of Belize. Since we are in the month of Valentine's, let me share a love secret with you.

Some 15 years ago, almost to the day, in January 2001, I began a love affair with the University of Belize and with the students that I taught for 4 years before returning to work with the UWI here in Belize, and then in Jamaica, and now the region, based in Barbados. The University of Belize at that time had just been formed and this was an exciting moment of history for all of us. Many of the staff who are still here will remember those days of struggle for self-definition for the University, of culture formation, of protests by staff and students as we searched for our institutional identity and our role in the nation. I am sure that we gave our President at the time, Dr. Corinth Mortar-Lewis, very anxious times, and for that I apologize, Doctor Lewis.

Graduates, it is not an easy task to form a University, and you are beneficiaries of what was a challenging road towards the establishment of a reputable university. I salute the founders, Presidents and administration, the academic staff, the students and the people of Belize for setting a course and persisting in the development of an institution that has widened access to tertiary education in Belize. This is very important as Belize and the rest of the Caribbean seeks to expand the population with tertiary level training to meet the challenges of this knowledge

century. According to the 2013 statistics, Belize only has 12% of its labor force with a tertiary education and the average in the Caribbean is approximately 15%. That is woefully inadequate to take us beyond where we are and where we want to go as a people. I know that Minister Faber has that expansion of access to tertiary education as a key part of his agenda.

So, on contemplating what to say to you today that you would find most meaningful and memorable, I decided that what would be most impactful would be if I sat down now and you could all go to lunch to celebrate. However, that would certainly do a disservice to the President and the Board who have kindly invited me here. Unfortunately therefore, I will spend the next 10 minutes reflecting with you and asking you three simple questions: Where are you now, where do you want to go, and where are you likely to go?

"It is not what you become that matters, but who you become. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr, "The function of Education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true Education."

Class of 2016, you graduate in one of the most important months of the calendar. February is celebrated by many countries as Black History month, Reggae month and of course in a week's time there is the sweetest of all holidays - Valentine's Day. Significantly, today is Bob Marley's birthday and therefore a fitting day for your graduation and, to quote Bob, a day to "get together

and feel alright" (One Love). But although I know that today is a day for celebration, I want us to first look at the question "where are you now?" Let us take a sober and realistic look at the world that you are entering. According to the UN, the major issue that concerns young people globally is the issue of unemployment. Like many young people, I am sure you are concerned at the 10% unemployment in your country and the underemployment of many tertiary graduates not just here in Belize but throughout the region. A recent survey done at the University of the West Indies of its graduates between 2009 and 2013, showed a worrying trend of graduates taking longer to become employed and although 78% of them were employed within a year of graduation, approximately 17% were not working in the fields that they had anticipated. Add to that the fact that this region is one of the slowest to recover from the

recession and all the economic forecasts show very slow economic growth. Although Belize is projected to be among the fastest growing economies for 2016 in CARICOM with over 3% GDP growth, it is still not enough to move us out of the economic doldrums. I bet about now you are thinking "Hey, I thought she was here to motivate and inspire the graduating class, why all these depressing statistics?" This is the dialectic of life, as light can only be defined by understanding what is darkness, how can you be motivated if you have no reason to be de-motivated, how can you be inspired if you have never been uninspired.

So, in this month of love and celebration of history and culture, I therefore want to speak of how you as young people entering a world of uncertainty and of challenge can find a way



*Luz M. Longworth
Delivering Keynote Address*

to not just survive but to thrive. I will suggest a few strategies for living your life with passion and use the words of renowned icons Martin Luther King, Marcus Garvey and Bob Marley to reinforce some of these points. If you are sitting there wondering where you are going next, then you are in the right place. 61% of you are under 25 years of age and another 29% under 37 years of age. This is still the definition of youth, and in your youth you are still developing and on your path. You have taken that first step to becoming leaders in your family, community and country. With a tertiary education, you are a minority in this country and the region; you have achieved a degree in Education, Accounting, Social Work, Business, Tourism, Natural Resource Management, Nursing among others - all fields that are essential to setting the foundation for Belize's development. You have been taught to think critically, to understand your subject and to apply your knowledge to problem solve. If nothing else, you have learned to learn; and that is the most important benefit of a university education in today's rapidly changing world. Even if you are sitting here thinking that you will be a teacher or a lawyer or a biochemist, there is one thing

Continued on Page 11



Graduates of the University of Belize (February 6, 2016)

"Put Your Vision to Reality!"

Keynote Address At University of Belize Graduation February 6, 2016 - Delivered by Luz M. Longworth - Principal & Pro Vice Chancellor University of West Indies Campus

Continued from Page 10

that I can tell you - what you studied may become irrelevant. It is not what you become that matters, but who you become. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr, "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education."

Remember today's graduation ceremony is a sign that you have committed yourself to excellence; but here is another sobering thought. You are likely to have a hard time finding a job, or the job that you think you deserve. That will be a tough lesson to learn because your parents, your teachers in high school and your lecturers in high school have always told you that if you want to succeed you should study hard and that will guarantee you success. I can assure you that it is true eventually, but it is not usually instant, and the only way you can gain experience is to live it. For our new generation of instant messaging, real time communication, the thought that you still have to work your way through life is a difficult one to absorb. My advice is to live this period with passion. Embrace whatever it is that you are given to do with all your heart and commitment; do it with every ounce of passion and love that you can muster, even if it is a job you really did not want to do.

Martin Luther King's advice was clear: If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.

I know that many of you want to eventually own your own businesses, and entrepreneurship is very important in a country's development. When I taught at UB, I did an annual survey of all of the students that I taught in the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, and I taught approximately 200 each year. Approximately 80% of all

those I surveyed indicated that within ten years of graduation they wanted to run their own businesses. I have always wanted to do a follow up study to see how many actually fulfilled that dream; so maybe, President and Dean Watler, we can speak about that. But, while you are building that dream, make every business that you work in like your own, work as if you are the owner, even if you are not taking home the big bucks.

When I first came to Belize to live, I had a very interesting experience that I want to share with you. I was in a popular store on Queen Street shopping for an electric fan, and I found



Graduates of the University of Belize (February 6, 2016)

exactly the fan that I wanted. The sales lady who had watched me looking around came up to me and whispered, "Miss, nuh buy dis fan, it cheapa da di shop on Orange Street." What do you think I did? Of course, I went to the other shop and I was grateful for the cost saving tip. But it left me thinking deeply about that kind of behavior that would lose a sale for the place that you work in. It could be that she was badly treated and so quietly was 'getting back' at her employers; but I tell you that if she ever came to me for a job, I would not have employed her despite the tip that saved me money. This was someone who did not work as if this was her business, who had no loyalty to her place of employment, and I would not trust someone like that with mine.

So to sum up: "Whatever your life's work is, do it well. A man should do his job so well that the living, the dead, and the unborn could do it no better." (Martin Luther King Jr.) So, where will you go from here?

Unfortunately, my crystal ball did not arrive with my luggage, and so I am at a loss to tell you. But, wherever you go, go with all your heart, bloom wherever you are planted! Do not be afraid to give your all, or to change from the path that you foresee for yourself; be confident that with your education and a positive attitude, you will get to where you want to go, even if you don't know where it will take you. I started off wanting to be an actress, a singer or a model, then an interpreter with the United Nations, and then a Professor of Latin American Literature, then a manager. I have been many of these things but I never thought

they would all come together to prepare me to be in charge of a Campus of the prestigious UWI. But, although I achieved some things, and not all - I am a terrible singer - everything I did, I did with all my heart, all my soul and all my mind, and every bit of experience has helped me at various stages of my career. When the time came to move on, I did so with the benefit of having learnt a lot, but also of contributing much too to every organization that I was privileged to have been a part of. So, as Marcus Garvey said: "If you have no confidence in self, you are twice defeated in the race of life." Remember that society does not owe you anything just because you have a degree now. In fact, it is you who owe society a lot. 88% of Belizeans have worked and paid taxes to give you this chance to make a difference for them, for yourself and for your country. Do not lose this opportunity to make a difference wherever you find yourself; do not wait for when you get to the top, or when you

get that big promotion. You can make a difference wherever you are; you can bring your intelligence and creativity to work every day and use it. Trust me, you will not run out of ideas by sharing them and acting on your own initiative. Even if you have the boss from hell, look beyond that and do your very best every day because that is the only way that you will gain experience and knowledge; and no one can ever take that away from you. But, most importantly, give back to your country, find ways to make a real difference in the life of the people you live and work with. The Father of the Nation, Rt. Hon George Cadle Price, once said, "I would like to be known as a good Belizean, one who went through life on a pilgrimage and left the world a better place than I found it." What a simple but so profound way of summing up a life of giving and contributing. But, life is lived in an accumulation of moments, so ensure that every day, at the end of the day, you can say to yourself, "I made a difference" to someone or to something, no matter how small.

So finally, let me ask you, how many of you have a camera phone with you now? Take it out now and take a selfie. Keep that photo, and whenever you are faced with a challenge or a disappointment, look at that photo and remember this moment of pride, joy and enthusiasm, and sing along with Bob Marley, "Dem a go tyad fi si mi face, cyan get mi outta di race." (Bad Card). Know that with passion but patience, confidence but humility, enthusiasm but empathy for others, ambition but integrity, you will get to where you want to go; and you will remember this day as the day you made that first, important step.

Blessings as you go forward in your life; celebrate today because, as Bob Marley tells us, "Life is one big road with lots of signs. So, when you riding through the ruts, don't complicate your mind. Flee from hate, mischief and jealousy. Don't bury your thoughts, put your vision to reality. Wake Up and Live! Congratulations to all of you!

“I Come With A Lot Of Hope!”

New Leader of the Opposition Sworn In

One of the pillars of our Democracy is a strong and viable Opposition. Having lost three consecutive general elections and four consecutive municipal elections, serious questions about the strength and viability of the PUP as Belize's Opposition Party. The burden of proof rests squarely and heavily on the shoulders of the new Leader of the People United Party, Hon. John Briceno. He was sworn in as PUP Leader at the party's headquarters in Belize City on Wednesday, February 3, 2016; and on Monday, February 8, 2016, he took the oath as Leader of the Opposition at Belize House in Belmopan. In an interview with the media, Briceno remarked, “As Leader of the Opposition, one of the first things I want to do is to meet with my parliamentarians, so that we can then discuss the way forward...There are, I think, at least a dozen House committees that we need to look at the composition and see how we can make sure that everybody participates and everybody has a function to do. We certainly need to look at the issue of senators to decide whether we are going to keep the senators or whether we are going to change them.” A position had voluntarily relinquished prior to the 2012 General Elections, the seat of PUP leader was re-



The New Leader of the Opposition, Hon. John Briceno, being Sworn in at Belize House by Governor General Sir Colville Young

captured by Hon. John Briceno in a special national convention on January 31, 2016 featuring a three way race with incumbent leader Francis Fonseca and Hon. Cordel Hyde whom Briceno says has a key role to play in rebuilding the party under his leadership. “I've always said that the

Hon. Cordel Hyde has to play a critical role in the rebuilding and the re-strengthening of the party as we move to get to Belmopan in the next election. I have met with him, and he is here with us today...We are going to be finding ways on how we can use him to the maximum of

his abilities,” Briceno explained. Hon. Cordel Hyde, for his part, spoke about the need for party unity in order for the PUP to be a strong and viable Opposition: “That's been the clear message from people all over the country inside the party, that they want the party to work together, to fight together, to return to Government. It's been a long time since we won an election, since 2003. We've had nine defeats in nine years, starting in 2006, and I think our people are tired of losing...And so, I fully expect that we're going to be unified and we're going to get things done.” And Briceno seems confident that as leader of the PUP he will be able this time around to forge the kind of unity that will enable the PUP to be a strong, effective opposition and a viable government in waiting. “I come with a lot of hope. I am a person that is full of optimism...When it comes to unity within the party,...everywhere we went in all the meetings that we had across this country, from Corozal all the way to the Toledo District, everybody was crying out, saying that they want a party that is united. I have been speaking to the different leaders of the PUP and all of them have pledged their unqualified support to me as the leader of the party and as Leader of the Opposition,” Briceno concluded.



*Hon. John Briceno
New Leader of the Opposition*



*Hon. Cordel Hyde expects the
Party will unify behind Briceno*

Japan Government Donates to Cotton Industry in Belize

The Government of Japan is granting a total of \$102,029.00 USD to the Cotton Industry in Belize. The contribution was made under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security projects of the Government of

Japan. The project was initiated by cotton farmers in Belize and is represented by Mr. Kensuke Inoue. Agriculture being one of Belize's main strengths, the development of this industry provides jobs and stability in such a field. The Embassy of

Japan says it wishes success for the project as the Sea Island Cotton represents one of the most promising ventures to strengthen the relationship between Belize and Japan. Belize produces some of the best cotton in the world. In

attendance was Mr. Hiromoto Oyama from the Embassy of Japan, Honorary Consul General of Japan in Belize, Mr. Monty Sadarangani, Mr. Kensuke Inoue, Mr. Gonzalo Ramirez and the Chief Agricultural Officer, Mr. Roberto Harrison.



Ambassador Hiromoto Oyama, Consul General Monty Sadarangani, Mr. Inoue, Mr. Harrison and others



Ambassador Hiromoto Oyama

Enterprise - Employment - Empowerment

Department of Youth Services Conducts Job Preparedness Training



Youths undergoing Job Preparedness Training

The Department of Youth Service's (DYS) Youth Enterprise and Job Creation Unit is presently conducting a Job Preparedness Training for twenty five youths between the ages of 17 and 29 years.

The main objective of the training is to empower these young people with the necessary skills and knowledge to become

marketable to join the work force. A total of ten sessions are being conducted.

The various topics include, Skills Identification, Work Ethics, Conflict Resolution Management in the Workplace, Resume Writing, Interviewing Skills, Mock Interviews and how to work with HIV infected persons in the workplace. The other component of the training

is to continue mentoring these young people and procure placement for them or assist them in returning to school where necessary, or engage them in other skills training such as those offered at ITVET.

The Department of Youth Services will be hosting its Closing Ceremony to recognize those successful participants of the program. The ceremony will be held on March 4th, 2016, commencing at 10:00 a.m. at the

Department of Youth Services Headquarters on 55 Regent Street, Belize City.

The second component of the program will commence shortly. DYS makes an appeal to employers to give them a call if they need an employee, so that the skills of the young people can be matched with the expectations of the potential employers. (For further information, please contact the Department of Youth Services, Belize City.)



Youths undergoing Job Preparedness Training

SICA Member States Meet to Address Emergency Health Issues Associated with Spread of Zika Virus in the Region



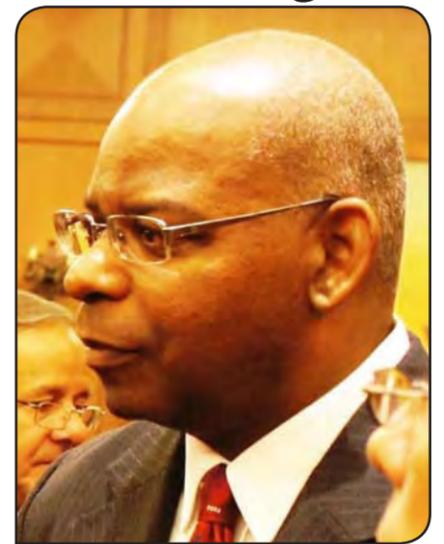
*Hon. Pablo Marin
Minister of Health*



*Dr. Ramon Figueroa
CEO - Ministry of Health*



*Dr. Marvin Manzanero
Director of Health Services*



*Mr. Lawrence Sylvester
CEO - Ministry Foreign Affairs*

On Tuesday, February 2, 2016, officials from the Ministries of Health and Foreign Affairs of Belize participated in a regional video-conference organized by the Government of Honduras, current Presidency Pro-Tempore of the Central American Integration System (SICA), to discuss the regional health implications of the Zika virus.

The objective of the meeting was to coordinate

regional positions and actions to ameliorate the number of infections and to agree on a sustained action plan to work towards the eradication of the Zika Virus.

The Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) has committed to providing all its resources to assist the region in its response to eradicate the Zika Virus and its possible correlation to microcephaly that has been affecting newborn babies of mothers infected

with the virus. Research is also being conducted to ascertain a possible link to the Guillain-Barre Syndrome.

The Ministry of Health has engaged in a country-wide campaign of spraying and assisting in the removal of possible stagnant water that are breeding grounds for the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which is also a carrier for Dengue fever, Malaria, and Chikungunya. The Ministry is also finalizing the national preparedness and

response plan to combat the Zika virus.

The Honourable Pablo Marin, Minister Health, headed the Delegation for Belize. He was accompanied by Doctor Ramon Figueroa, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in the Ministry of Health; His Excellency (H.E) Lawrence Sylvester, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Doctor Marvin Manzanero, Director of Health Services; and other officials from the Ministry of Health.

Investing In The Fight Against Crime

MINISTRY OF TOURISM DONATES \$200 THOUSAND VEHICLES TO POLICE



Hon. John Saldivar
Minister of National Security



Vehicles handed over by Minister of Tourism Hon. Manuel Heredia to Minister of National Security Honourable John Saldivar



Hon. Manuel Heredia
Minister of Tourism

It's a fact that crime affects every sector of the community. One sector which has otherwise been performing extraordinarily, but whose prospects are being seriously threatened by the scourge of crime, is the Tourism Industry. It is quite fitting, then, that the Ministry of Tourism is making a heavy investment in the efforts to fight crime.

On February 3, 2016, Minister of Tourism Honourable Manuel Heredia handed over a donation of three pickup trucks vehicles to Minister of National Security Honourable John Saldivar to improve the mobility of the Police in its continued fight against crime. The vehicles, which cost a total of \$200 thousand, will be deployed in hot-spots in Belize City and Cayo District to provide safety and security for Belizeans and visitors.

In handing over the vehicles, Minister of Tourism, Hon. Manuel Heredia remarked, "The Ministry of Tourism and B.T.B and myself feel that we need to do our share also. It

is not about collecting taxes and squandering it around. I believe that we are supposed to use it properly, and for this reason, every now and again, you will see that the Belize Tourism Board will be assisting the Police in making sure that they have the proper tools to be able to safeguard the interests of our residents and of our tour-

of those infiltrate our beautiful Belize. So, all the time we have to be more and more cautious, more and more willing to do our share and finding the resources. Not long ago at the second building of the B.T.B, we handed over five motorcycles also, and not only for Belize City. We have done so, I think a few months ago, a fleet was donated

with the Belize Tourism Board to try to get these vehicles for the Tourism Unit. As you know, Tourism is our main foreign exchange earner; it's our biggest industry in the country, and we place great importance in keeping that product intact. And so, today's donation of vehicles is going to go a long way in helping the Police Tourism Unit in doing its job, carrying out its mandate across all the tourism destinations in Belize."

Also on hand for the hand-over was Commissioner of Police Allen Whyllie. Commenting further on the deployment and utilization of the new vehicles received, he stated, "One will be assigned to the Tourism Village to do the Police patrols in that area; another will be assigned to do rural patrols in various tourism areas countrywide, and the other will be assigned to San Ignacio to assist with the Caracol deployment as well as the spot checks within that area."

The hand-over took place at Eastern Division Headquarters in Belize City.



The new vehicles and officers assigned to drive them

ists. Definitely, I believe that almost any amount, whoever donates, will never be enough because Belize is growing. All around the neighborhoods, you find our country being plagued with different crimes and some

to the San Pedro police station and likewise Caye Caulker."

In receiving the vehicles, Minister of National Security Honourable John Saldivar stated, "We've been in long negotiations and discussions



Mr. Allen Whyllie
Commissioner of Police



The Three Pickup Trucks handed over to the Ministry of National Security by the Ministry of Tourism

From Commitments to Results

BELIZE AT INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Hon. Elodio Aragon Jr and CARICOM Youth Ambassador Eric Sanchez participated in this year's International Youth Forum on Sustainable Development on February 1st and 2nd, 2016. This Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum was held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York under the auspices of the ECOSOC President, His Excellency Mr. Oh Joon.

The theme of the forum was "Implementing the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Moving from Commitments to Results". H.E. Joon listed unemployment, poverty, climate change, and inequality as issues needing to be addressed through a cross-cutting and interconnected approach.

In plenary sessions, Minister Aragon stated that Belize is finalizing its National Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) which mainstreams the United Nations Post 2015 Sustainable Development Framework. The GSDS identifies clear policy aims together with subsidiary goals and targets to achieve a national vision comprising of a strong economy featuring optimal national income and ro-



Honourable Elodio Aragon, Minister of Youth and Sports at the International Youth Forum on Sustainable Development in New York

bust growth, a resilient society, healthy environment, citizen security and good governance.

The Minister also emphasized that youth participation is at the heart of our national development vision and that Belize's National Youth Development Policy has, as one of its goals, to ensure that young people are empowered to achieve optimal economic and social wellbeing while taking care of the natural environment. Honourable Aragon made further interventions on the

panel, discussing Global Initiatives on Decent Jobs for Youth.

In addressing the gathering, Minister Aragon gave a brief overview on the Government of Belize's initiatives that encourage and support employment for young people.

"I believe that this forum highlights the importance and vitality of young people across the globe and the need for each government to do its part in supporting, empowering and creating the opportunities for them to become the pace-setters that

they should be, and for them to be able to become the future society that shapes its own destiny," remarked Minister Aragon.

The main purpose of the forum was to bring the voice of youth into the inter-governmental debate on how to make the post 2015 development agenda a reality on national, regional and international levels. The forum provided a platform for young people to dialogue with Member States and other actors on concrete commitments and actions to realize the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted in September, 2015.

The forum identified avenues for young people to contribute to the inter-governmental review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as ways that youths can partner with the United Nations system, civil society and governments to ensure proper implementation.

ECOSOC Youth Forum 2016 featured opening and closing plenary sessions with representatives from youth organizations, high-level officials and other Keynote speakers. The participants of the forum included national and regional youth delegates, Ministers of Youth, representatives from the permanent Missions of Member States to the UN, UN Major Group for Children and Youth and other multilateral organizations.

Mobility for Sports Coordinators

As reported in our last edition, the Minister of State with responsibility for Youth and Sports, Hon. Elodio Aragon, recently handed over seven motorcycles to sports coordinators countrywide.

The Minister explained, "In each district we have sports coordinators who have responsibility for the sporting facilities. Also they have responsibility to run certain programs for us when it comes to sports, such as dealing with the Primary Schools sports



Sports Coordinators on their new motorcycles handed over by the Minister of Youth and Sports Honourable Elodio Aragon Jr

tournament that is going on now; also they must coordi-

nate and begin to plan sporting programs for the districts.

A motorcycle is important for them because it gives them a little bit of mobility to move around. Our greatest resource here is our sports coordinators in the districts. We need to give them our support. We need to let them get that feeling that things are going to be better. I do believe that empowering them with these motorcycles is going to do that, and much more."

The motorcycles were acquired through a direct initiative by the new National Director of Sports, Mr. Ritchel Dominquez.

CARICOM comes to BELIZE

CONFRONTING MAJOR EXISTENTIAL ISSUES

Continued from Page 1

international trade, for our remittances, for our structures of production, consumption and investment are so obvious as to require little further elaboration. It is therefore no hyperbole to say that, especially in an environment where the value of our imports and exports taken together equals or exceeds our GDP, any attenuation, not to say complete cutoff, respecting our trade and remittance flows, constitutes a clear, present and compendious danger. It is in this context of Belize, like so many others, being so fundamentally threatened, that I went to Washington two weeks ago for the expressed purpose of taking up this matter directly with the US Regulators.”

Prime Minister Barrow updated the nation and the CARICOM family on the outcome to date of his mission to Washington to address the de-risking and correspondent banking issue: “The Regulators all agreed that absent a solution, our economies, our societies would go belly up; and conceded that could be in no one’s interest, including theirs. The sticking point, though, was their proclaimed inability to oblige their private sector banks to engage or re-engage with ours. So the highest expression of that sympathy unguent I earlier mentioned, was no more than an undertaking by the US Regulators to say to their banks that our jurisdictions have done and are doing everything we can to be fully AML/CFT compliant; and that there was therefore no in principle objection to those banks doing business with us. But ultimately, the Regulators insisted, it was strictly a decision for those sovereign US banks to make. They would have to decide whether it was in their financial interest to deal with us, assume the full transactional weight of the resulting monitoring and reporting requirements, and run the risk of nevertheless pay-



Prime Minister Dean Barrow and Secretary General Irwin LaRocque

ing huge fines if anything went wrong. Or, the US banks could simply continue to take the path of least resistance on the basis that our minuscule margins were not worth the trouble. It could not be supposed, of course, that any thought as to the catastrophe waiting to overtake our countries would enter into those banks’ straight forward risk/reward calculus. To be fair, the US authorities have been as good as their word, and have now spoken to at least one correspondent bank that Belize has approached. The outcome of that is still pending.”

Prime Minister Barrow acknowledged that while Belize has taken the lead in its attempt to stave off the adverse effects on its own domestic financial sector and economy, finding a more favourable resolution might be better attained through our collective efforts as a region.

“Meantime, our campaign, and I speak now of CARICOM, continues. And it cannot be other than relentless in the face of the possible correspondent banking Armageddon that we face. It is therefore a matter that looms extremely large on our agenda over the next two days and has already been the subject of a dedicated finance Ministers meeting this morning. Without prejudice to any other recommendations that will come to us from that meeting, I signal now that Belize will offer the following for consideration. Surely, our respected country banks can get together across jurisdictions and

as a bloc approach target banks in the US for pooled correspondent services. That way, we should be able to leverage the critical mass needed to make our business volume worthwhile in terms of the risk/reward equation. The modalities and the logistics will take some working out but clearly are not beyond our skills.”

Belize’s Prime Minister and CARICOM’s Chairman used the de-risking and correspondent issue as an opportunity to highlight the privilege and benefit of belonging to a regional community such as CARICOM.

“I’m trying to reiterate what we know only too well. The reality that forces us to acknowledge the limitations of individual smallness is the same reality that obliges us to size-up both in terms of collective thinking and collective action. A precondition to this, though, is that we talk less and do more. If there is a perceived mismatch between CARICOM rhetoric and CARICOM achievement, we need to tone down the rhetoric and step up the achievement. It may mean a lessening of grandiose goals; it may mean long-haul, quotidian grind to achieve incremental accomplishments. Drudgery in the garret rather than flash-in-the-pan brilliance. But the times do seem to require this sort of workmanlike focus to wring from difficult circumstances the realizable, measurable objectives our people deserve.

And on the back of sustained slogging, there’s quite a bit we can do for ourselves even with respect to those generally recessionary global economic conditions about which I spoke earlier. But I repeat, stock-taking now for purpose of a reset requires a hard-headed assessment of where we are, where we need to go, and how we get there.”

And he submitted that as a regional integration move-

ment, Caribbean nations must be practical and realistic with respect to the actual goals we expect to achieve, notwithstanding the lofty ideals and vision upon which the Caribbean Community was established:

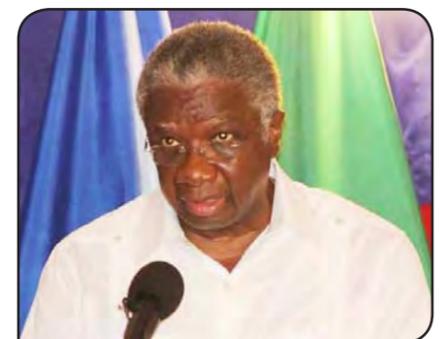
“We need to settle on achievable goals for the immediate and medium term, and specify and take the necessary steps for realization on a time-and-action basis. In the process we may recognize, for example, that there is need for a work-around of the unbridgeable gap between our aspirations for a perfect single market and economy, and individual circumstance and sovereignty constraints. The nimbleness and flexibility that must be deployed to adjust to the changing world circumstances, may themselves militate against the centralized management mechanism that a full CARICOM single economy posits. So that to be driven back to a reliance on the less lofty but more practical virtues of functional cooperation, may be no bad thing.

In saying this, I am perhaps merely repeating what was stated some time ago by a past CARICOM Prime Minister: that our common cause effort simply cannot all at once incorporate the multiplicity of our individual drivers; that concentrating on the less poetic but more workable dimensions of our integration movement is both sensible and unavoidable; that to admit this is not to admit failure since prioritizing the more readily successful cooperative ventures *does* ultimately lead to the optimum future deepening that we both desire and deserve.”

In assuming chairmanship of CARICOM for a period of six months, Prime Minister Dean Barrow succeeds outgoing chairman, Prime Minister Freundel Stuart of Barbados who delivered his handover speech prior to PM Barrow at the official opening ceremony.



PM Barrow, Sec. Gen. LaRocque and other Heads of Government



PM Freundel Stuart of Barbados Outgoing CARICOM Chairman