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PRESS RELEASE

Belize Celebrates World Malaria Day

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Belize joins the world today in celebrating World Malaria Day. The occasion is an opportunity to keep malaria high on the global health agenda. Locally, Malaria Day is being observed under the theme, “Maintaining a Malaria-free Belize starts with me.”

This year’s theme signifies the start of a campaign to empower communities to take ownership in preventing the reintroduction of malaria in Belize. The Ministry of Health & Wellness (MoHW) continues to keep malaria high on the health agenda, supporting the mobilization of resources, empowering communities at risk of malaria and strengthening key health prevention measures and care.

Malaria is a preventable and treatable disease. Over the past few decades, Belize has made significant advancements toward the elimination of this disease. There has been a significant decrease in the number of reported malaria cases from over ten thousand cases in the 1990s to maintaining zero local cases for a third consecutive year, achieving a key eligibility requirement for malaria-free certification by the World Health Organization (WHO).

On this World Malaria Day, it is with a collective sense of accomplishment that the Ministry of Health & Wellness shares that it has written to the Director General of the WHO to initiate the process of certification of malaria elimination. Certification of malaria elimination is granted by WHO when a country has proven beyond reasonable doubt that there is no local case or chain of transmission for at least three consecutive years. Between 2010 and 2021, Belize achieved a 100% reduction in local malaria cases (150 cases to zero cases), with its last case reported in December 2018. The focus is now on the prevention of the reintroduction of the disease through early

detection and prompt treatment along with good coverage of preventive measures such as mosquito nets distribution and indoor residual spraying (IRS) to maintain zero local cases even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Ministry of Health & Wellness in collaboration with key partners such as the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) continue working towards strengthening areas such as early diagnosis, treatment, case surveillance and monitoring of malaria.

The ministry calls on all healthcare workers to continue their increased surveillance for malaria in their communities and expresses its sincere appreciation to all those involved in the control of malaria and whose service has been instrumental in Belize's success.

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