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PRESS RELEASE

Belize Participates in the Seventh Global Environment Facility Assembly

Belmopan, August 25, 2023.

Belize made its mark at the Seventh Global Environment Facility (GEF) Assembly being held in Vancouver, Canada, from August 22 to 25, with the official launch of the new Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF) on August 24.

Hon. Orlando Habet, Minister of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management, joined representatives from 185 countries to unanimously ratify the GBFF.

In his address to the Assembly, Minister Habet said that *“for Belize and other SIDs, this fund is critical for the implementation of commitments under the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).”* He stated, *“We are committed to doing our part in the success of the GBF.”*

The minister also highlighted that Belize is well underway to meet its 30 by 30 targets well ahead of the 2030 timeline, with more than 60% of the country under forest cover, of which 39% is categorized as terrestrial protected areas and 20.3% marine protected areas. Through the Blue Loan Agreement, Belize will realize 30% of marine protected areas by 2026.

The GBFF has been designed to mobilize and accelerate investment in the conservation and sustainability of wild species and ecosystems whose health is threatened by wildfires, flooding, extreme weather events, and human activity, including urban sprawl. The fund seeks to mobilize \$200 billion by 2030. At the Assembly, the Canadian Government announced a pledge of CAN\$200 million and the United Kingdom, a further £10 million to the fund. It is hoped that countries will be able to access these funds before the COP16 in 2024.

The GEF Assembly is held once every four years. This year, over 1,500 people from around the world participated in the event. Participants included environmental leaders and managers from governments, businesses, academia, and civil society, including indigenous peoples, women, and youth.

“This is a hugely positive moment that will be remembered far into the future,” said Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, CEO and Chairperson of the GEF. “We have shown at the Seventh GEF Assembly that even in difficult conditions – with wildfire smoke as our backdrop – we can move forward to build a more biodiverse planet for everyone’s benefit.”

Minister Habet and Belize’s delegation participated in bilateral meetings with several donors and partner organizations to explore opportunities for further collaboration and mobilization of resources to support ongoing programs and initiatives. Of note is that Minister Habet, along with representatives of CCAD, met with CEO Carlos Manuel Rodriguez to explore additional funding windows through the GEF mechanism to access additional funds to scale up key initiatives within Belize and the region.

The Belizean delegation included representatives from the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management and the Blue Bonds and Finance Permanence Unit under the Office of the Prime Minister.

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