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PRESS RELEASE

National Trade Negotiating Commission Holds First Regular Meeting

Belmopan. August 4, 2021. 8:00 a.m.

The First Regular Meeting of the National Trade Negotiating Commission (NTNC) was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration auditorium in Belmopan on Tuesday, August 3, 2021.

The NTNC functions as the primary consultative mechanism between government and all non-state actors in the negotiation and implementation of trade agreements in Belize. The commission is comprised of representatives of government ministries, departments and agencies, the private sector and civil society, labour groups, non-government organizations and academia.

The meeting reviewed, finalized, and adopted the Rules of Procedure, which will guide the operations and smooth functioning of the commission. The meeting addressed substantive matters, which included cross border payments and constraints experienced by the private sector in exporting to Guatemala and Mexico, prospects for a trade agreement between Belize and Mexico, and preparations for the third meeting of the Belize-Guatemala Administrative Commission to be held on August 12 to 13, 2021. Other important matters addressed were front of package warning label, World Trade Organization negotiations on fisheries subsidies, the Trade Facilitation Road Map that was recently approved by Cabinet, and targeted industries for investments to CARICOM.

The NTNC also approved the creation of a Task Force on Payments to devise a national strategy for the establishment of a formal payment mechanism to assist Belizean traders with sending to and receiving payments from Central America and Mexico. The Task Force on Payments is expected to convene its first meeting within two weeks and will report back to the NTNC either at a special meeting or at the Second Regular Meeting of the commission.

The First Regular Meeting was co-chaired by Ambassador Amalia Mai, Chief Executive Officer in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, and Mr. Emile Mena, private sector representative. Hon. Ramon Cervantes, Minister of State in the ministry, and Mr. Andy Sutherland, Director General for Foreign Trade, were also present for the meeting.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for September 29, 2021.

Ends