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## PRESS RELEASE

### **OAS Sixth Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities of Science and Technology**

*Belmopan. December 8, 2021. 4:20 p.m.*

The Sixth Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities of Science and Technology, held virtually on December 7 and 8, 2021, was organized jointly by the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Government of Jamaica under the theme “Harnessing the Power of Transformative Science and Technologies to Drive our Communities Forward.” Belize was represented at the meeting by Dr. Hon. Louis Zabaneh, Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology.

The meeting brought together the highest science, technology, and innovation (STI) authorities of the hemisphere, as well as representatives from the private sector, academia, and civil society. It is a key instrument for scientific and technological cooperation and remains the principal forum for hemispheric dialogue and the formulation of public policies in science, technology, and innovation in the Americas.

The ministerial meeting addressed the following sub-themes:

- Science and Technology to Build Resiliency in the Framework of Sustainable Development and COVID-19 Recovery
- Youth: Improving Skills and Readiness for Industry 4.0
- Science, Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship to reduce the digital divide and promote the inclusion of women and girls, rural and indigenous communities, and other populations in vulnerable situations
- Effective public-private-academia collaboration to enhance competitiveness and quality of life
- Levelling the playfield for active participation in the global economy by micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) through STI
- Technology Foresight as Input for Public Policy Decisions (Prospecta Americas)

## · Science for Decision Making

During the meeting, ministers and high-level authorities exchanged good practices and identified offers for cooperation to help implement hemispheric actions to accelerate the recovery from the pandemic.

Dr. Hon. Louis Zabaneh expressed his gratitude for the presentations made during the meeting and for the opportunity to share Belize's experiences with supporting MSMEs. Minister Zabaneh's remarks focused on "levelling the playing field for active participation in the global economy by MSMEs through STI." He expressed that Belize has engaged in several important initiatives to stimulate the transformation necessary to harness the power of science, technology, and innovation, all aimed at the sustainable human development of Belizeans. He presented on three initiatives that directly impacted MSMEs: Belize Investment Summit and the Innovation Pact Manifesto, the National Digital Agenda, and the modernization of Belize's legal environment.

In his closing remarks, Minister Zabaneh thanked the ministers and delegates for the opportunity and recognized the support offered to Belize by the Inter-American Development Bank and the OAS. He also expressed his anticipation in exploring strategic partnerships as an integral part of Belize's transformational approach to leapfrog sustainable human development for the benefit of the country and region.

**Ends**