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PRESS RELEASE

Ministers for Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs Conclude Working Visit in Toledo

Belmopan. February 15, 2022. 12:00 p.m.

Hon. Dolores Balderamos Garcia, Minister of Human Development, Families and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, accompanied by Hon. Elvia Vega Samos, Minister of State, today completed a three-day working visit to the Toledo District. Successful and well-attended meetings with the communities were held in San Pedro Columbia and San Antonio.

The Ministry of Health & Wellness granted approval for the consultations and all health protocols were observed. Hon. Oscar Requena, Minister of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government, as well as Mr. Greg Cho'oc, Indigenous Peoples' Affairs Commissioner, also attended and engaged with both communities in very constructive dialogue.

The Government of Belize has filed the Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) Protocol with the Caribbean Court of Justice, and the ministers have commenced a tour of Maya villages in Toledo to share and respectfully consult. Minister Balderamos Garcia made the specific point that government fully respects the traditional Alcalde governance system; however, the Toledo Alcaldes Association (TAA) as such is not the sole authority within the governance system, with each community having the right in meetings to make all decisions affecting their villages. Government has also pledged to engage with all representative organizations. The ministers called for respect and amicable conversations and called on elements of the TAA to refrain from incendiary and inaccurate statements.

The ministers also met in Punta Gorda Town with Alcaldes, chairpersons and villagers of five other villages as well as representatives of the Kekchi Council and the Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management. All in attendance pledged to work hand in hand with the government for the implementation of the Consent Judgement.

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