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## PRESS RELEASE

### Pronouncements on Maya Land Rights

*Belmopan, February 2, 2023.*

In light of recent public statements, the Government of Belize reaffirms its commitment to full compliance with the terms of the Consent Order of the Caribbean Court of Justice and to the implementation of a Maya Land Policy, which not only affords protection to the rights of the Maya people recognized by our courts but also addresses the concerns of other Belizeans which underpin the comments of Honourable Michael Eस्पат. Finding an appropriate balance requires considerable deliberations both by expert consultants and the Cabinet sub-committee engaged in the process.

The Government of Belize does not agree with the characterizations sought to be attributed to Minister Eस्पат's comments but understands that they are driven by political and other agendas.

Likewise, the Government of Belize publicly condemns the use of any racist language and fearmongering in dealing with the Maya land rights by any person or group and views such activity as detrimental to the ongoing process. The government specifically calls on the various Maya leader organizations to refrain from alarmist pronouncements that could harm this complex process.

A draft Maya Land Policy is at an advanced stage and the government expects to release it shortly. The object of the policy is to provide a framework for the development and implementation of affirmative measures to be taken by the Government of Belize to implement the Consent Order as informed by historical court proceedings in Belize, international human rights standards and international jurisprudence as well as by existing national policies.

The policy will be subjected to full consultation with the Maya people and their representatives as well as with the public before it is adopted so that all stakeholders will have full opportunity to contribute to it. The formulation of the policy is indeed the next step in compliance with the Consent Order of the Caribbean Court of Justice.

**Ends**