



PR#155-22

PRESS RELEASE

Belize Participates in 12th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization

Belmopan. June 14, 2022. 10:45 a.m.

Hon. Ramon Cervantes, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration, is leading Belize's delegation to the 12th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva, Switzerland. The Ministerial Conference was opened on June 12, 2022, after not being able to convene for nearly five years. The conference comes at a critical juncture for international trade which continues to face global challenges that ultimately affect the cost of living for Belizeans.

In his statement to the conference, Minister Cervantes stressed the importance of a smooth functioning multilateral trading system which serves the economic development of small states like Belize. He deplored the ineffectual response of the WTO to the COVID-19 pandemic while calling for meaningful reform of the organization. Minister Cervantes expressed Belize's strong support for a decision on a waiver of the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Agreement (TRIPS) to improve COVID-19 vaccine access and affordability. He emphasized the need to address the looming food security crisis and supported the proposal to exempt the UN World Food Program (WFP) purchases from export restrictions.

Minister Cervantes also voiced Belize's strong call for an outcome on the negotiations to remove harmful fisheries subsidies that deplete global fish stocks and affect livelihoods and marine biodiversity. He stated that an agreement on fisheries subsidies, which takes into account the special needs of countries like Belize, was necessary to uphold the credibility of the negotiating function of the organization.

The Ministerial Conference is being held from June 12-15, 2022. Hon. Cervantes is accompanied by senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration.

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