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PRESS RELEASE

European Union and CARIFORUM Ministers Launch New Partnerships under the Global Gateway Program

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Hon. Louis Zabaneh, Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, alongside Ms. Orla Kantun Coleman, Director of International Affairs Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, represented Belize at the Joint Ministerial Meeting and Launch of the Caribbean-EU Partnerships in Barbados on October 12, 2022.

Belize's representatives alongside 15 other leaders from Caribbean countries met with Ms. Jutta Urpilainen, the European Commissioner for International Partnerships, to discuss the main priorities that the European Union will dedicate to the Caribbean for the next five years. Both regions will work together through three partnerships under the Global Gateway with a focus on 1.) Green Deal, 2.) Economic Resilience and Trade, and 3.) Governance, Security and Human Development. Moreover, the EU and the Caribbean countries will work together to fight climate change, protect biodiversity and foster digital innovation and mobility of students and university staff.

Minister Zabaneh addressed Belize's position in all three areas. Firstly, on Green Deal. Belize, as a Small Island Developing State is extra vulnerable to external climate change shocks and disasters. The country's partnership for a Green Deal should assist the region in accelerating its energy transition and implementing each country's respective Nationally Determined Contributions. As such, he emphasised the importance of delivering on existing commitments and ensuring adequate treatment for both adaptation and loss of damage.

Secondly, on the topic of Economic Resilience and Trade, Minister Zabaneh highlighted how fundamental it is to have partnerships to attain socio-economic and social development for the region. Progress on this front is intrinsically linked to the global financial architecture, on which Belize depends for supplementary financing. The minister stressed that as Belize's national budgets are unable to finance its developmental goals and aspirations, the use of the gross national income by international financial donors to access grants and concessionary financing is challenging and undermining development. He noted that through the Gateway Program, the EU is introducing new opportunities for financing and hopes that the CARIFORUM states have access to these.

In his remarks on Governance, Security and Human Development, Minister Zabaneh shared that increased people-to-people contact is essential to

fortify relationships and unnecessary obstacles preventing travel between regions only hinder this. He used the example of Belize not benefitting from the Schengen Visa Waiver and invited the EU to make a positive recommendation to Belize's request.

Minister Zabaneh concluded his presentation by highlighting that Belize is grateful to have been represented at the briefing meeting and for the maturing partnership with the EU. He mentioned that as states move towards a more sustainable and climate-conscious pathway and want to develop economies, it is of utmost importance for each CARIFORUM country to effectively implement projects under the partnership and move ahead with sustainable human development within the region.

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