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PRESS RELEASE

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration Participates in Inaugural Meeting of the CARICOM-Canada Foreign Ministers' Group

Belmopan February 19, 2021. 1:00 p.m.

Today, Hon. Eamon Courtenay, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration, co-chaired the inaugural meeting of the CARICOM-Canada Foreign Ministers' Group along with Hon. Marc Garneau, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada.

Foreign ministers and representatives from all CARICOM countries attended the meeting along with officials from the CARICOM Secretariat. The ministers discussed coordinated action to manage the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically the critical need for equitable access to vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics. They agreed that initiatives like the World Health Organization's (WHO) COVAX Facility and multilateral efforts through the WHO and other institutions are essential in the collective fight against COVID-19. The foreign ministers also deliberated on promoting resilient and sustainable growth and finding innovative solutions to the impacts of climate change.

In his intervention on climate resilience and sustainability, Minister Courtenay said that even before the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic, small and vulnerable states were battling the impacts of climate change. He added that the international response has been piecemeal, incoherent and ineffective from both development and climate-specific angles. The Minister called on Canada to continue to use its membership in the United Nations framework to advocate for debt relief for small and vulnerable states and for reform of the criteria for accessing finance that takes account of states' unique vulnerabilities.

Belize's delegation to the meeting also included Ambassador Amalia Mai, Chief Executive Officer in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration; H.E. Lawrence Sylvester, Ambassador of Belize to CARICOM; and Mr. Idelso Leslie, Foreign Service Officer.

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