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PRESS RELEASE

Inaugural Meeting of the Economic Development Council

Belmopan, November 5, 2021. 4:35 p.m.

An inaugural meeting of the 2021 – 2024 composition of the Economic Development Council (EDC) was held on Thursday, October 28, 2021, at the Cabinet Room, Belmopan.

The EDC serves as the Government of Belize's official mechanism for dialogue between the public and private sectors, and is specifically mandated to advise the Cabinet and wider government on matters of impediment affecting the ability to conduct legitimate business in Belize. The objective of such public-private collaboration is to contribute to a business climate that is conducive to resilient growth and innovation through efficient and effective public service delivery. Since its establishment, with assistance from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the EDC through its technical secretariat, the Public-Private Desk (PPD) in the Office of the Prime Minister (both legally enshrined in Belizean law by virtue of Act No. 38 of 2017), has consistently set a high standard of excellence, efficiency, diligence and impartiality in its execution of leading critical business climate reform initiatives.

Among key accomplishments, which the EDC has championed, are Building Sector Reform, Trade License Reform, Tax Administration Modernization and the digitization of the Belize Companies and Corporate Affairs Registry under which the drafting and enactment of a suite of new digital laws were introduced by the Briceño administration in October 2021. The EDC also successfully previously delivered Belize's Comprehensive National Transportation Master Plan, stemming from which the ministry now responsible for logistics is presently implementing a Public Transport Reform project. The EDC is currently providing coordination support for the Consolidation and Modernization of Belize's Company Laws and the implementation of a National Public Private Partnership Policy for Belize among other key #PlanBelize commitments for the realization of an enhanced and modern policy environment within which Belizean businesses can grow and prosper.

The newly reconstituted council presently comprises of the following public and private sector representatives:

Public-Sector Representatives:

- CEO Narda Garcia, Office of the Prime Minister (Public Sector Co-Chair)
- Joseph Waight, Financial Secretary, Ministry of Finance
- CEO Ambassador Amalia Mai, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration

- CEO Dr. Osmond Martinez, Ministry of Economic Development
- CEO Servulo Baeza, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise
- CEO Jose Urbina, Ministry of Youth, Sports and E-Governance
- CEO Nicole Solano, Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations

Private Sector Representatives:

- Alvaro Alamina, Banking and Finance (Private Sector Co-Chair)
- Ted Tejada, Tourism
- Dr. Henry Canton, Agriculture
- Nikita Usher, Exports
- William Usher, Distribution Services
- Arturo Lizarraga, ICT Services

Ishmael Quiroz, Executive Director of the EDC and Director of Public-Private Dialogue, has reaffirmed the new council membership's commitment to fulfilling its overall objectives of strengthening collaboration between public and private sectors through meaningful dialogue which leads to positive outcomes facilitating economic development; and advising on and championing reforms that improve, modernize and enhance critical public sector processes which have an impact on the ability to do business in Belize.

Given the challenges compounded by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it is envisioned that the EDC will play a critical role in overseeing the implementation of key recommendations emanating from the Economic Recovery Advisory Team commissioned by Prime Minister Briceño with the objective of proactively supporting Belize's economic rebound.

To learn more about the work of the Economic Development Council, visit www.edc.gov.bz.

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