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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Belize Commemorates ‘World No Tobacco Day’ 2022**

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Today, the Ministry of Health & Wellness joins the world in commemorating ‘World No Tobacco Day’ under the theme, “Tobacco: Threat to our environment.” This year the ministry, through the National Drug Abuse Control Council for Belize (NDACC), aims to raise awareness of the environmental impacts of tobacco – from cultivation, production, distribution and waste.

Every year, besides the eight million human lives lost to tobacco use, 200,000 hectares of forests are flattened to grow and cure tobacco leaves, the equivalent of 600 million trees lost. For every 15 boxes of cigarettes sold, one tree is chopped down.

Cigarette production also contributes to global warming with almost 84 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions annually. This is nearly as much as some countries’ entire annual emissions. It also causes 22 billion tons of water depletion.

The tobacco industry produces six trillion cigarettes per year that are consumed by one billion smokers worldwide. These cigarettes contain filters mainly composed of microplastics known as cellulose acetate fibers. Despite tobacco industry claims, there is no evidence that filters protect smokers from the harms of tobacco.

Cigarette butts are the most discarded waste item worldwide, accounting for approximately 766.6 million kilograms of toxic trash each year. They are also the most common plastic litter on beaches, making marine ecosystems more susceptible to microplastic leakages from cigarette filters. When ingested, the hazardous chemicals in microplastics cause long-term mortality in marine life, including birds, fish, mammals, plants and reptiles.

Through NDACC, the ministry has strengthened public awareness and education activities to promote the linkage between the environmental impact of tobacco and the poor health outcomes for Belize. Reducing tobacco consumption also moves us closer to achieving the sustainable development goals.

The Ministry of Health & Wellness remains committed to encouraging legislation, implementing and strengthening existing schemes in monitoring tobacco use, protecting people from tobacco smoke and warning about the dangers of tobacco. In this way, Belize is also contributing to the protection of the environment.

If you or anyone you know is seeking help to quit smoking, visit an outreach caseworker at any NDACC office countrywide to receive guidance and adequate advice.

## **Ends**

For more information, contact:

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