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PRESS RELEASE

Belize Upgraded in Human Trafficking Rank

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Today, the United States' Secretary of State released the 22nd Annual Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP Report) and upgraded Belize's status to Tier 2. "The 2022 TIP Report assesses the anti-trafficking efforts of 188 governments. Countries assessed as fully meeting the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking are placed on Tier 1. Countries assessed as not fully meeting the minimum standards, but making significant efforts to meet them, are placed on Tier 2 or Tier 2 Watch List. Countries assessed as not fully meeting the minimum standards and not making significant efforts to do so are ranked Tier 3."

The report highlights that *"The Government of Belize demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore, Belize was upgraded to Tier 2. The report cited key achievements from the Belize Government including convicting two traffickers and applying adequate sentences; expanding the size of its Anti-Trafficking (A-TIP) Police Unit, which increased investigations; improving data collection and case monitoring; opening a shelter for unaccompanied children at risk for trafficking in cooperation with an international organization; and prioritizing anti-trafficking funding and implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP)."*

The government is pleased with the upgrade from Tier 2 Watchlist to Tier 2 and recognizes that there is more to be done to combat Human Trafficking in Belize. The Anti-Trafficking in Persons (ATIPS) Council, chaired by the Ministry of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, is the multisectoral body which coordinates Belize's response to human

trafficking. The council, which comprises government and non-government entities, remains committed, focusing its efforts on improving coordination and collaboration on protection, prosecution, prevention, and partnerships.

The ministry thanks the ATIPS Council members, collaborating authorities, NGO and civil society partners, and the international community, for their dedication and hard work which have contributed to this upgrade in rank. With renewed vigor and strengthened partnerships, the government will continue its efforts in earnest, taking into consideration the recommendations outlined in the TIP Report as Belize strives to eliminate trafficking and its dehumanizing effects on victims.

Ends

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