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PRESS RELEASE

Prime Minister Briceño Concludes Successful Official Visit to Venezuela

Belmopan, November 28, 2022.

On November 25, 2022, Prime Minister John Briceño and President Nicolás Maduro held talks at Miraflores Palace, the President's official residence in Caracas, Venezuela. The visit follows the invitation issued by President Maduro in September 2021 when both leaders met on the margins of the CELAC Summit held in Mexico City.

The leaders signed a *Joint Declaration of The President of The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and The Prime Minister of Belize* in which they committed to strengthening the close bonds of friendship and solidarity between their countries and respective peoples. They committed to work together to conclude agreements for cooperation in trade, energy, tourism, communications, air connectivity, education, culture and housing. It was agreed that a Mixed Commission would soon begin work to advance this broad bilateral agenda.

President Maduro announced that Petrocaribe was being renewed and expanded to cover products, in addition to petroleum, and that Belize would continue to be one of the beneficiaries. Prime Minister Briceño recognised the efforts of Comandante Hugo Chavez for engineering the innovative Petrocaribe initiative which has benefitted Belize and many other countries in the Americas, and welcomed an early resumption of the program for Belize.

Both leaders acknowledged the need to work together to strengthen regional cooperation through CARICOM and CELAC, and reiterated their call to maintain the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace. In the joint statement, Belize and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirmed their respect for the

Charter of the United Nations, international law and the Bandung Principles which guide the Non-Aligned Movement.

The meeting included important negotiations on the debts owed by Belize to Venezuela on which a new agreement was reached that brings substantial benefits to both countries. The leaders instructed their experts to promptly finalise the details of the new accord.

Prime Minister Briceño welcomed the offer by Venezuela to provide support to Belize in housing and fertilizer for Belizean farmers after the destruction caused by Hurricane Lisa.

President Maduro accepted the invitation of Prime Minister Briceño to visit Belize at a convenient time in 2023.

Prime Minister Briceño was joined in Venezuela by Hon. Eamon Courtenay, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration; Ambassador Mark Espat, Financial Advisor; H.E. Ambassador Oscar Arnold; and Mr. Kareem Michael, Governor of the Central Bank of Belize.

President Maduro was joined by Vice President Delcy Rodríguez; Foreign Minister Carlos Faría; Mr. Rander Peña, Vice Minister for Latin America and the Caribbean; and H.E. Gerardo Argote, Venezuela's Ambassador to Belize.

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