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PRESS RELEASE

Government of Belize Hosts Cruise Line Executives at High-Level Meeting

Miami, Florida, October 20, 2023.

Today, the Government of Belize convened a high-level meeting in Miami, Florida, engaging with top executives from leading member cruise lines of the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA).

The Belize delegation was led by Hon. John Briceño, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment, and included Hon. Anthony Mahler, Minister of Tourism and Diaspora Relations; Hon. Eamon Courtenay, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration; Hon. Christopher Coye, Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment; Hon. Michel Chebat, Minister of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics, and E-Governance; Hon. Orlando Habet, Minister of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management; His Worship Mayor Bernard Wagner; and a team of executives and technocrats from the Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations and the Belize Tourism Board.

The FCCA executives expressed their appreciation for the initiative, highlighting that it marked the first occasion in which a Prime Minister and a high-level delegation engaged with cruise lines in a dedicated forum of this nature. The primary focus of the meeting was to address crucial aspects related to the future development of cruise tourism in Belize and to emphasize the sustainable approach to such development.

The Government of Belize and cruise line executives reiterated their unwavering commitment to the cruise sector in Belize. The cruise lines also emphasized the pressing need for a berthing facility, to which the government responded with a sincere commitment to support the construction of a port that aligns with industry requirements and receives the necessary environmental clearance. It was indicated that the issue of port development is nearing a resolution, with new legislation to be soon finalized.

Each cruise line represented at the meeting expressed their dedication to collaborating more closely with Belize's government and private sector. To enhance communication, town hall meetings will be arranged with stakeholders, while training and infrastructure development will play a pivotal role in enhancing the overall visitor experience.

After the session, Ms. Michele Paige, CEO of FCCA, said that “It was an honour to be included in today’s prestigious lunch meeting with Belize officials, and I particularly thank Prime Minister, Hon. John Briceño and Minister of Tourism and Diaspora Relations, Hon. Anthony Mahler for the invitation and continued partnership with FCCA and our member lines. This meeting is another step in a long and mutually beneficial relationship with Belize, and I look forward to finding more ways for the destination and people to benefit from the immense potential that cruise tourism offers.”

Mr. Rick Sasso, MSC Cruises USA’s Chairman, noted that “Strong partners create remarkable results so together we can really make Belize a one-of-a-kind destination. MSC Cruises is excited about the future potential of Belize and a cruise tourism focus is worthy of the time and investment we will all contribute. The top-down government engagement is very noticeable and well respected.”

Additionally, Marie McKenzie, Carnival Corporation’s Senior Vice President of Government & Destination Affairs, said, “We greatly value our relationship with the people and leaders of Belize, and we’re committed to working together to promote sustainable tourism, including the jobs and businesses it supports. We are also grateful for how welcoming everyone is to our

Carnival Corporation cruise lines and our guests. Belize is such a special destination to visit.”

Mr. Joshua Carroll, Vice President of Destination Development for the Royal Caribbean Group, shared, “Royal Caribbean Group commends FCCA and the Government of Belize for bringing together cruise industry leaders to gain consensus on developing a sustainable future for our industry in Belize. We are eager to continue collaborating with our industry colleagues and the government of Belize to bring to life our shared vision.”

Mr. Nico Corbijn, Head of Marine and Land Operations of Azamara, said, “The Prime Minister’s leadership is truly inspirational. His vision to put Belize on the cruise-map in a responsible and sustainable manner is to be applauded.”

The Government of Belize and Norwegian Cruise Line also signed an amendment to the agreement between the Government of Belize and Belize Island Holding Limited for the Harvest Caye Port in southern Belize. This amendment promotes equitable benefits for the country and provides a framework for future growth at this port and complementarity with other ports in the country.

After the meeting, the Prime Minister commented on the cruise industry, saying that it has become a critical component of Belize’s tourism sector. He said, “It is in our country’s best interest to maintain and continue to nurture that critical linkage with all cruise operators. We remain committed to identifying those developments and solutions for the continued growth of cruise tourism, and Belize as a key destination.”

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