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## PRESS RELEASE

### Ministry of New Growth Industries Reactivates Hemp Industry Oversight Committee

*Belmopan, June 3, 2024.*

The Hemp Industry Oversight Committee reconvened today to discuss pivotal developments in the hemp sector, including the role of agencies in monitoring hemp developments in Belize and legislation. The Committee also reviewed an application for hemp research. A key focus of the meeting was the policy for approving hemp for research and investments in Belize.

Hemp, scientifically known as *Cannabis sativa*, is a cultivated plant with a long history of use across the globe. Originally indigenous to Eastern Asia, this versatile plant has achieved a cosmopolitan distribution due to its widespread cultivation. Throughout recorded history, hemp has been utilized for its industrial fiber, seed and other oils, animal feed, and medicinal properties. Hemp is also renowned for its health benefits, which have been recognized since ancient times. Modern research has identified multiple compounds within the cannabinoid pathway that have significant effects on various health conditions.

The Committee's meeting is a significant step towards enhancing the research and development framework for hemp in Belize. With leadership from the Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries, and in collaboration with other ministries and stakeholders, Belize aims to establish a robust environment for scientific research and investment in this beneficial sector by improving the application procedure and regulations.

Additionally, this effort fortifies the New Growth Industries portfolio, positioning it for strategic marketing and investment opportunities.

Present at today's committee meeting were Ms. Sharole Carr, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries; Mr. Hugh O'Brien, Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture; Mrs. Zoe Roberson-Zetina, Managing Director, Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA); Mr. Lincoln Blake, Director, Investment Policy & Compliance Unit, Ministry of Investment; Ms. Ginée Neal, Staff Officer and Lead for New Growth Industries Unit, Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries; Mr. Francisco Gutierrez, Director of Plant Health, BAHA; and Mr. Frantz Smith, Investment Policy Officer, Ministry of Investment.

**Ends**