



PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, Culture and Immigration Engages in CARICOM Dialogue on U.S. Tariff Policy

Belmopan. April 9, 2025.

The Government of Belize participated in a high-level CARICOM consultation with public and private sector representatives to address the implications of the recently announced 10% reciprocal tariff from the United States under its “America First” Trade Policy. The measure poses a serious threat to regional exports and undermines longstanding trade preferences granted under the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI).

Representing Belize, Director General of Foreign Trade Andy Sutherland outlined the immediate risks to more than US\$45 million in national exports—particularly in the sugar, marine, and pepper sauce industries. He underscored that this policy shift affects not just trade statistics, but the livelihoods of thousands of Belizeans. Building on national consultations held with the private sector in Belmopan just one day prior, Belize put forward concrete proposals aimed at defending economic stability and fostering a unified regional response.

The Government confirmed that Belize’s Embassy in Washington has been directed to engage with U.S. officials at the highest levels to seek clarification, advocate for exemptions, and reaffirm the country’s commitment to rules-based trade under the CBI.

At today’s meeting, Belize added momentum to the regional dialogue by formally advancing a proposal to establish a Regional Emergency Competitiveness Fund, to be administered through the Caribbean Development Bank and the respective National Development Banks across the region. This fund, as envisioned by Belize, would provide a line of low-cost credit to help MSMEs and other vulnerable sectors manage the transition triggered by the new U.S. policy. It would support productivity upgrades, logistics improvements, and market repositioning—especially for exporters suddenly facing increased costs and disrupted buyer relationships.

Belize also reiterated the importance of safeguarding the CARICOM Common External Tariff, accelerating the implementation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, and pursuing market diversification as long-term strategies for resilience. Director General Sutherland noted early signs of a phased U.S. tariff rollout, underscoring a critical window for coordinated diplomatic engagement.

The Government assures the Belizean public that advocacy efforts are actively underway and will remain elevated as the strategy evolves. Belize stands ready to continue leading and contributing to regional efforts in defense of our shared economic interests.

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