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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Minister of State for Foreign Trade Represents Belize at CARICOM's 60th COTED Meeting**

*Belmopan. June 11, 2025.*

Hon. Marconi Leal Jr., Minister of State for Foreign Trade, led Belize's delegation at the Sixtieth Regular Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED), held on June 10-11, 2025, in Georgetown, Guyana.

The Sixtieth Meeting sought, among other things, to further the discussions on the implementation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), with several key topics on the agenda. These included:

- Presentations on Rethinking Caribbean Tourism and the exposure of Caribbean countries to U.S. policies.
- The Free Movement of Skilled Nationals within the CARICOM region.
- Trade in Goods, with particular attention to changes in import duties on commodities important to Belize, such as grains and citrus concentrate juices.
- Approval of CARICOM Regional Standards and Codes on Hazardous Chemicals.
- Updates on the pertinent developments in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the multilateral trading system, as well as discussions on the Region's position through greater coordination and a firm defense of special and differential treatment as a permanent feature of the system.

- Certification and approval of the Partial Scope Agreement between the Government of Belize and the Republic of El Salvador, a crucial issue for Belize. Several Member States consulted with a view to provide additional support to Belize. The COTED agreed that Belize will hold bilateral meetings at the Ministerial level to give further consideration to the Agreement.

Foreign Trade Minister of State Leal was supported by Mr. Andy Sutherland, Director General for Foreign Trade, and Ms. Tricia Gideon, the Deputy Director General.

Minister Leal, H.E. Gayle Miller-Garnett, the Director General, and the Deputy Director General also met with Mr. Brian Kirton, Executive Director of the World Trade Center (WTC), and Mr. Komal R. Samaroo, Chairman of Demerara Distillers, to discuss trade opportunities presented by the new WTC in Georgetown, Guyana. As Guyana's first WTC, it aims to serve as a regional hub to boost trade in sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing. Minister Leal emphasized the potential for increased investment and trade, while the Director General highlighted the WTC's role in expanding regional value chains, diversifying trade, and attracting investment. The Belize delegation expressed interest and extended an invitation to the Belize Invest Summit scheduled for September 3-5, 2025.

**Ends**