



PR#240-25

PRESS RELEASE

Minister of State for Foreign Trade Represents Belize at CARICOM's Sixty-First COTED Meeting

Belmopan, November 21, 2025.

Hon. Marconi Leal, Minister of State for Foreign Trade, led Belize's delegation and chaired the Sixty-First Regular Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) on November 20-21, 2025, in Georgetown, Guyana.

The 61st 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:

- Update on the Full Free Movement of Nationals among Barbados, Belize, Dominica, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.
- Trade in Goods, with particular attention to changes in import duties on commodities important to Belize.
- Approval of the development of a regional compost standard.
- The establishment of the Caribbean Sugar Refinery in Belize, a joint venture that will revitalize the Caribbean Sugar industry by April 2026 by producing locally refined, high-quality sugar while reducing dependence on costly imported logistics.
- The Community's acknowledgment of Belize's growing trade relationship with Guatemala and endorsement of its intent to negotiate an expanded PSA to strengthen economic integration and enhance export competitiveness within the CARICOM framework.
- A crucial issue for Belize is the certification and approval of the Partial Scope Agreement between the Government of Belize and the Republic of El Salvador. Member States approved the agreement for certification, and Belize will proceed to sign this agreement.

Furthermore, Minister Leal also had the opportunity to have an amicable bilateral meeting with Senator Hon. Aubyn Hill, Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce, where they discussed how both countries can support the trade of frozen citrus products into Jamaica.

Minister Leal was supported by H.E. Gale Miller, High Commissioner to Guyana; Mr. Andy Sutherland, Director General for Foreign Trade; Ms. Tricia Gideon, Deputy Director General for Foreign Trade; senior officials from the Customs and Excise Department; Ms. Tricia Soberanis, Deputy Comptroller; and Mr. Francis Alfaro, Trade Support Officer.

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