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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Ministry of the Public Service Celebrates Milestone in Public Sector Reform**

*Belmopan, January 13, 2026.*

The Ministry of the Public Service and Disaster Risk Management, in partnership with the University of Belize (UB), marked the successful completion of the Strengthening Public Expenditure Management (SPEM) Certification Programme with a Certification Ceremony honouring the inaugural cohort on January 12, 2026.

A total of 113 public officers participated in the nationally tailored Public Financial Management Certification Programme, with 94 officers receiving certification in specialized financial management courses. The programme consisted of a general introduction to public sector fiscal management course and five key certification streams, strengthening core competencies in accounting, budgeting, treasury and cash flow management, procurement, and internal control and risk-based auditing.

In his remarks, Hon. Henry Charles Usher, Minister of the Public Service and Disaster Risk Management, described the programme as a transformative initiative for Belize's public service. He stated, "The SPEM Certification Programme is a rebirth for the public service. It was designed not merely to instruct, but to transform how we manage public resources, ensuring we become better financial stewards for a stronger, more sustainable Belizean economy."

The SPEM Project, implemented under Subcomponent 1.4: Strengthening Capacity Building to Improve Institutional Capacity, was made possible through financing from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The programme was developed following a comprehensive Skills Gap Analysis conducted in 2024, which identified critical capacity gaps in public financial management within government ministries and departments.

Training was delivered over a three-month period and targeted officers across a wide range of roles, including finance officers, budget analysts, economists, executive directors, and administrative personnel. Of the participants, 83 were mandatory and 36 joined voluntarily, demonstrating strong interest and commitment to professional development within the sector.

Minister Usher further emphasized the strategic importance of the programme to the Ministry, stating that SPEM will now serve as the foundation for future professional development in public financial management, and will be linked to promotability within financial grades throughout government.

The ceremony also featured remarks from Dr. Vincent Palacio, the President of the University of Belize; Dr. Carla Barnett, Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM); and Mr. Rolando Zetina, Chief Executive Officer in the Ministry of the Public Service and Disaster Risk Management, all of whom underscored the programme's national and regional significance.

The SPEM Project represents a strategic partnership between the Government of Belize, the University of Belize, and the Inter-American Development Bank, and is designed to become a permanent feature of Belize's institutional framework for public financial management training.

The Ministry of the Public Service and Disaster Risk Management congratulates the inaugural cohort and reaffirms its commitment to strengthening public institutions, enhancing fiscal governance, and modernizing the public service in the interest of all Belizeans.

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