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PRESS RELEASE

Stakeholders Review Belize's First National Policy on Migration and Development

Belmopan, November 23, 2026.

The Government of Belize, through the Ministry of Immigration, Governance and Labour, and in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), held a National Stakeholder Validation Session on the draft National Policy on Migration and Development on November 23, 2026, at the Best Western Belize Biltmore Plaza in Belize City.

The session brought together more than 150 participants, in person and virtually, from government ministries and departments, municipal authorities, the diplomatic community, the private sector, trade unions, civil society, academia, representative organizations of migrant communities, and the Belizean diaspora.

The draft is Belize's first national framework for managing migration in support of national development. It was shaped through 32 national consultations and 21 internal validation sessions across the Ministry's immigration and labour departments and is organized around five strategic pillars and 15 strategic results, each supported by priority actions in the Policy's Implementation Matrix.

The Ministry of Immigration, Governance and Labour leads and coordinates the Policy at every stage of the policy process, from agenda setting and policy formulation through adoption, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Stakeholders have been engaged throughout this process, and their continued engagement and buy-in will be essential to building the shared ownership needed for the Policy to succeed across the policy cycle.

In her welcome remarks, Mrs. Tanya Santos, Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Immigration, Governance and Labour, highlighted that the Policy will strengthen migration governance by bringing together the institutions and partners that share responsibility for migration. She said: “For far too long, we have governed and managed migration in pieces. The Policy identifies the gaps and allows us to manage the whole picture of migration through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.”

In his keynote address, Hon. Kareem Musa, Minister of Immigration, Governance and Labour, described migration as a development issue and placed the Policy within #planBelize 2.0, the Government’s Medium-Term Development Strategy 2026-2030, and its priorities for decent work, skills development, social inclusion, and modern public services. The Minister noted that the Policy aims to maximize the contribution of human mobility to the sustainable development of Belize by promoting socioeconomic inclusion, supporting territorial development, fostering social cohesion, and leveraging the human, social, and economic contributions of migrants and the Belizean diaspora, while safeguarding national interests, public confidence, social stability, and the rights and opportunities of Belizean citizens.

Mr. Michael Lund, Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP, highlighted UNDP’s partnership with the Government of Belize and the technical support it has provided throughout the development of the Policy. He noted that this support reflects UNDP’s commitment to providing integrated development solutions that are driven by national priorities and aligned with its strategic direction.

The Government of Belize thanks UNDP, IOM, and all stakeholders, both within Belize and in the diaspora, for their contributions, and recognizes that their continued collaboration will be essential as the Policy moves toward finalization and implementation.

The Ministry remains committed to developing a national migration policy that is inclusive, evidence-based, coordinated, and responsive to Belize’s development priorities.

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