



Commonwealth Ministerial Committee on Belize

NEW YORK, September 2019

Concluding Statement

1. The Commonwealth Ministerial Committee on Belize, met in New York on Thursday 26 September 2019, to discuss the status of efforts to reach a final resolution of Guatemala's claims on Belize's territory.
2. The meeting was convened by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, at the request of the Government of the Belize, and was chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados, Hon. Dr Jerome Walcott.
3. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belize, Hon. Wilfred Elrington, briefed the Committee on recent developments between Belize and Guatemala. The Committee was briefed in particular on the successful referenda in Guatemala on 15 April 2018 and in Belize on 8 May 2019 in accordance with the 2008 Special Agreement between the two countries to submit Guatemala's territorial, insular and maritime claims to the International Court of Justice and the subsequent steps taken by Belize and Guatemala to bring the case before the ICJ. The Committee was also briefed on challenges along the Sarstoon River and the Adjacency Zone between Belize and Guatemala.
4. The Committee congratulated Belize and Guatemala on the affirmative outcomes of their respective referenda and expressed support for the two countries to pursue the case at the ICJ, as stipulated in the Special Agreement of 2008, in order to achieve a peaceful and definitive resolution to Guatemala's claim.
5. The Committee was concerned to hear from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belize about the continuous illegal encroachment by Guatemalans into Belizean territory resulting in the deforestation of Belize's protected forests and the illegal extraction of Belize's natural resources. The Committee also expressed concern that Guatemala's armed forces continue to carry out unfriendly acts along the entire Sarstoon River with a view to asserting ownership.
6. The Committee recalled the agreement of Belize and Guatemala to work toward the design and development of a cooperation mechanism, together with the Organization of American States and urged the two countries and the OAS to reinvigorate their efforts to this end.

7. The Committee recognized and commended the OAS for facilitating the ongoing efforts by Belize and Guatemala to implement the confidence building measures and urged the international community to continue to support these and other similar measures.
8. The Committee reaffirmed the unequivocal support of the Commonwealth for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Belize, as expressed consistently and most recently at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London in April 2018.
9. The Committee also agreed to draw the conclusions of their meeting to the attention of all Commonwealth member governments.

New York, 26 September 2019

The Committee was first established in 1977 and comprises the Foreign Ministers of Barbados, Canada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Malaysia, Nigeria and Tanzania. The Foreign Ministers of Belize and the United Kingdom are observers in the work of the Committee.