



Commonwealth Ministerial Committee on Belize

14 September 2021, Virtual

Concluding Statement

1. The Commonwealth Ministerial Committee on Belize met virtually on Tuesday 14 September 2021.
2. The meeting was convened by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, at the request of the Government of Belize, and was chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson Smith.
3. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belize, Hon. Eamon Courtenay, briefed the Committee on recent developments regarding Guatemala's claim over Belize's territory. The Committee was briefed in particular on the progress of Guatemala's Territorial, Insular and Maritime Claim (Guatemala/Belize) at the International Court of Justice. The Committee was also briefed on the problems arising from illegal encroachments of Guatemalan nationals into Belize's western protected areas; increased presence of transnational criminal networks operating in these areas; and illegal settlements of Guatemalan nationals in Belize territory.
4. The Committee commended and welcomed Belize and Guatemala's positive engagements and ongoing efforts to build their relationship and find a solution to the territorial controversy.
5. The Committee commended both Belize and Guatemala for participating in the International Court of Justice process and noted the extension of the time limits for the submission of the Memorial and the Counter Memorial to the International Court of Justice by Guatemala and Belize respectively.
6. The Committee condemned any action contrary to the Confidence Building Measures, such as the ongoing illegal encroachments, including extraction of forestry products, illegal farming, illegal cattle ranching and gold panning, by Guatemalan nationals in Belize's western protected areas near the border, as well as increased transnational and organized crime and illegal settlements. The Committee urged Guatemala to respect, abide by, and implement the Confidence Building Measures, which are valid and in force.
7. The Committee also expressed concern regarding the potential for tensions in the Sarstoon River and the Committee urged Belize, Guatemala and the

Organization of American States (OAS) to redouble their efforts to design and develop a mechanism for Confidence Building Measures for the Sarstoon River.

8. The Committee recognised and commended the OAS for its ongoing assistance to find a definitive solution, reducing and avoiding tensions, and maintaining peace and security along the border, and the Committee urged the international community to continue to support and fund these and other similar measures.
9. The Committee reiterated its firm and steadfast support for the maintenance and preservation of the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and security of Belize.
10. The Committee also agreed to draw the conclusions of their meeting to the attention of all Commonwealth member governments.

14 September 2021, Virtual Meeting

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.