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PRESS RELEASE

Government to Acquire and Modernise Belize City Commercial Port and Resolve All Ashcroft Claims & Litigation

Belmopan, December 7, 2023.

Today, in a milestone achievement for the Government of Belize, Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño will table a Bill in the National Assembly which will restore public ownership of the Commercial Port in Belize City. This move ends a prolonged stand-off between the so-called Ashcroft Alliance and the Government about the Port's modernization, worker conditions and controversial plans for a cruise port at the site.

The landmark settlement also resolves at pennies on the dollar all remaining Ashcroft judgment awards against Belize and requires the immediate withdrawal of all litigation against the Government by Ashcroft companies.

The Port Acquisition & Settlement Deeds Bill 2023 seeks authorization (1) to purchase the Port, along with 600 acres of adjoining lands, for the much-reduced price of US\$83.37 million and (2) to appropriate US\$15.3 million for the resolution of the long-outstanding judgment awards. The Bill also confirms the withdrawal of all Ashcroft claims and cases against Government, including (1) the Waterloo UK-Belize Treaty Claim relating to the denial, on environmental grounds, of an application for environmental approval to construct a cruise port, (2) a lawsuit against the Christian Workers Union and the Stevedores claiming business interruption damages, (3) an injunction blocking an ex gratia payment to the Stevedores, and (4) various claims against the Ministry of Sustainable Development, the National Environmental Appraisal Committee and the Department of the Environment.

Waterloo and the Ashcroft Alliance will abandon any further efforts to develop a cruise ship terminal in the Port Loyola area or anywhere in the Belize District.

Included in the Settlement, Belize Hotels Ltd., owner of the Radisson Fort George Hotel in Belize City, will build a new, first-class conference facility as part of their ongoing \$57-million reconstruction project. In turn, the Ministry of Investment will approve the company's fiscal incentive, which Cabinet had placed on-hold since last year.

Government will pay less than half the total settlement sums up front – US\$45 million – while the balance will be paid over five years by way of Belize dollar Government Treasury notes carrying an average coupon of 3.65%. The final settlement sums represent 36 cents on the dollar, or a 64% discount compared to what the Ashcroft Alliance has sought from

Government in total compensation, awards, damages and legal costs (US\$98.67 million versus US\$274 million).

Crucially, the Prime Minister will illustrate during his presentation in the National Assembly that current profits from the Port can finance the entire settlement sums while expected increases in revenue will fund the long-overdue modernization program for the Port facilities. The Port is being purchased free of any and all existing debts and liens.

The Office of the Prime Minister has signaled that the Port's new Board of Directors will include representatives from labor and the business community. New management is expected to engage with labor and employee representatives with urgency, once the acquisition is complete in the next several days.

The Bill will be debated today, and if approved, will proceed to the Senate for consideration on Monday, December 11, 2023.

Government's formal takeover of the Port should take place shortly thereafter.

For more information, please contact the Office of the Prime Minister, at 822-2345 or Secretary@opm.gov.bz.

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