



PR#168-22

## PRESS RELEASE

### Statement on Proposed Appointment of Chief Justice

*Belmopan. June 23, 2022. 3:50 p.m.*

Earlier this year, the Office of the Prime Minister caused to be advertised the position of Chief Justice. The ads were placed on the Supreme Court of Belize's website and were published regionally and through the Commonwealth Secretariat. The office of the Prime Minister received eight applications, none of which were by any Belizean applicant.

The Prime Minister had through the Attorney General asked the Bar Association to appoint an interview panel of senior members of the Bar to conduct interviews. The interview panel then conducted interviews of eight applicants and a report on the interviews and the vetting of the applications was prepared for the Prime Minister, for him to make his decision. In that report and based on her qualifications, experience and her interview, the Hon. Justice Louise Blenman, a Justice of Appeal of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, was recommended favorably to the Prime Minister.

Her Ladyship, the Hon. Justice Louise Esther Blenman is a Guyanese national, who graduated from the University of the West Indies in 1986 with a Bachelor of Laws Degree (LL.B.) with Upper Second Class Honours. She later obtained the Legal Education Certificate from the Hugh Wooding Law School in Trinidad in 1988. She was called to the Bar in Guyana, in 1988. Justice Blenman obtained a Master of Law Degree (LL.M.) with merit from the University of London.

Her Ladyship, the Hon. Justice Blenman has served in a variety of senior legal and judicial positions in the region in St. Lucian, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Antigua and Barbuda, and Anguilla. She currently sits as a Justice of Appeal of the Eastern Caribbean Court that serves nine states and territories. She, therefore, brings a wealth of experience having sat as a High Court judge for 9 years and a Justice of Appeal for 10 years in the region.

For in excess of six years she served as the Chairperson of the Judicial Education Institute of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court and is a fellow of the Commonwealth Judicial Education Institute. She also served as the Chairman of the Sentencing Guidelines Committee. She also has a wealth of experience in mediation.

She is known for her dedication to the rule of law and public service, and most importantly, for her timely delivery of judgments that have been cited in the courts in Belize. She is renowned for her prolific judgment writing, many of which have been affirmed by the Privy Council.

The Prime Minister has on the 21st day of June 2022, caused a letter to be written to the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Shyne Barrow, to consult with him on the nomination of the Hon. Justice Louise Blenman. Subject to the consultation process, the next step will be for the Prime Minister to advise Her Excellency the Governor General, Dame Froyla Tzalam, on the appointment of the future Chief Justice.

The current Acting Chief Justice is to remain Acting Chief Justice until the appointment of a person to the office of Chief Justice, and she is to thereafter be elevated to the Court of Appeal as a Justice of Appeal of that court.

Under the Senior Courts Bill that was recently tabled in the National Assembly earlier this month, the restructured office of the Chief Justice is expected to be the judicial leader for both the Supreme Court of Belize and the Court of Appeal. The Prime Minister believes that the Hon. Justice Louise Blenman's candidacy, therefore, brings a wealth of experience having sat on both courts in the region.

**Ends**