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## PRESS RELEASE

### **MOHW Advises Caution as COVID-19 Pandemic is Declared Over**

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The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared that COVID-19 is no longer a “global health emergency” or a public health emergency of international concern.

The declaration was made by Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, on May 4, 2023, following the fifteenth meeting of the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. This decision was supported based on the fact that there is a decline in the number of COVID-19 deaths and persons being severely affected and requiring hospitalization, and the high level of the population with immunity to SARS-CoV-2 from either infection, vaccine or both.

Despite the declaration, the Ministry of Health & Wellness (MOHW) advises that the virus and its variants continue to circulate in Belize. The ministry reiterates that good hygiene practices, such as frequent handwashing and avoiding crowded places when sick with respiratory symptoms, remain the best methods to stay free of COVID-19 and other infections.

The ministry highlights this message from Director-General Ghebreyesus, who stated, “The worst thing any country can do now is to use this news as a reason to let down its guard, to dismantle the systems it has built, or to send the message to its people that COVID-19 is nothing to worry about.”

According to WHO, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused nearly seven million documented deaths globally but may have contributed to many more deaths. WHO states that 13.1 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered, with 89% of health workers and 81% of persons 60 years and older having completed the primary series.

The MOHW thanks Belizeans for their commitment to adhering to public health measures, ensuring a significant uptake of vaccines and compliance with early testing leading to early diagnosis throughout the pandemic, despite the great uncertainties.

For more information, please contact the Ministry of Health & Wellness at 822-2325 or 822-2363 during regular working hours.

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