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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Land Exchange Agreement Between the Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries and the University of Belize**

*Belmopan. October 4, 2024.*

The Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries (MHANGI) is pleased to announce the signing of a Land Exchange Agreement with the University of Belize (UB). This significant agreement, signed today in Belmopan, marks the culmination of more than two years of negotiations between UB and the National Forensic Science Service (NFSS).

The Agreement is a result of the NFSS's need to relocate from its current site in Ladyville to a more central and strategic location to allow for expansion and to better meet the country's growing needs in forensic science and legal medicine. Through the Belize Integral Security Programme (BISP), funded by the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), the NFSS will benefit from the design and construction of a state-of-the-art forensic laboratory and forensic morgue complex. Given the existing memorandum of understanding between the NFSS and UB, which facilitates collaboration on teaching, training, and research, this Agreement will further strengthen the partnership between these two vital institutions.

As part of the Agreement, MHANGI will transfer 1.28 acres of land in Ladyville, currently home of the NFSS, to the University of Belize. In exchange, UB will transfer 12 acres of land in Belmopan, designated for the construction of the new NFSS complex. The Ministry of Natural Resources, Petroleum and Mining (MNRPM) has been instrumental in facilitating the negotiation and finalization of the Agreement, and will oversee the land transfers once the NFSS has completed its relocation to the new facility in Belmopan.

During the brief signing ceremony, Dr. Vincent Palacio, President of UB, remarked "This land exchange represents a strategic advantage for the University of Belize, allowing us to expand our academic programs, including the recently launched School of Medicine. Our relationship with the National Forensic Science Service has been ongoing for some time, with fruitful collaborations in resource sharing, internships, and teaching. This action is a continuation of that particularly beneficial partnership, offering further opportunities for our students in forensic science, allied health fields, and the Criminology and Criminal Justice program started last year."

Hon. Kareem Musa, Minister of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries, echoed these sentiments, stating, "The signing of this land exchange agreement for forensic science marks a significant milestone in advancing

the infrastructure and capacity of our efforts in contributing to the criminal justice system; it reflects this government's commitment to improving forensic facilities, which are critical to modernizing law enforcement efforts, enhancing laboratory services, and supporting the judicial process."

## **Ends**

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