



PR#198-24

PRESS RELEASE

Belize Participates in CARICOM's Fifty-Ninth Regular Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED)

Belmopan, December 2, 2024.

Hon. Osmond Martinez, Minister of State for Foreign Trade, led Belize's delegation at the Fifty-Ninth Regular Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) held in Georgetown, Guyana on November 27-28, 2024.

The 59th Meeting sought, among other things, to further the discussions on implementing the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), with several key topics on the agenda. These included:

- The free movement of skilled nationals within the CARICOM region.
- Trade in goods, with particular attention to changes in import duties on commodities important to Belize.
- Approval of Regional Standards and Codes, such as labelling of pre-packaged foods.
- Updates on CARICOM's Implementation of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Agreement on Trade Facilitation, aimed at making international trade faster, cheaper, and more efficient.
- The launch of the CARICOM Interactive Marketplace and Suspension Procedure (CIMSUPRO), an electronic platform designed to connect CARICOM producers with buyers.
- A crucial issue for Belize is the certification and Approval of the Partial Scope Agreement between the Government of Belize and the Republic of El Salvador. Member States agreed to hold a special meeting in early 2025 to approve and certify this agreement. Belize signed a General Framework for this agreement in 2023 and aims to finalize it in 2025.

Furthermore, Minister Osmond Martinez also had the opportunity to have an amicable bilateral meeting with Senator Hon. Kamina Johnson-Smith, Jamaica's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, to discuss the import requirements for poultry into Jamaica.

Additionally, Hon. Kerrie Druard Symmonds, Barbados' Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, and Minister Martinez had a successful bilateral meeting on facilitating poultry exports to Barbados. Barbados has a keen interest in importing poultry from Belize and inquired about the current stock levels in Belize and whether Belize is capable of fulfilling periodic orders. Poultry shipments into the Caribbean represent a significant milestone for Belize.

Foreign Trade Minister of State Martinez was supported by Mr. Andy Sutherland, Director General for Foreign Trade, Ms. Tricia Gideon, Deputy Director General, along with senior Officials from the Customs and Excise Department, Ms. Tricia Soberanis, Assistant Deputy Comptroller, and Mr. Francis Alfaro, Trade Support Officer.

Ends