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PRESS RELEASE

Belize Hosts CSME National Border Control Officers Attachment Programme

Belmopan, March 31, 2025.

Belize is hosting the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) National Border Control Officers Attachment Programme. This programme was made possible by the generous support of the Eleventh European Development Fund (EDF) under the “Strengthening the Framework of CARICOM Integration and Cooperation Process” (SFCICP) Programme.

Ambassador Amalia Mai, Chief Executive Officer for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Culture in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, Culture, and Immigration, delivered the welcoming remarks, emphasizing the growing significance of border control officers in facilitating seamless trade and travel while safeguarding regional security. She highlighted that this programme is designed to equip participants with the essential knowledge, skills, and tools to excel in this critical role. She also emphasized that Belize remains committed to fostering an exchange of experiences, promoting mutual learning and growth. Ambassador Mai encouraged the participants to enjoy the food and warmth of Belize.

Ms. Shona Quammi, Project Officer for Finance at the CARICOM Secretariat, reinforced the importance of sharing best practices across Member States to advance regional integration.

By highlighting the role of youth in policy development, Ms. Marissa Cervantes, the CARICOM Youth Ambassador, emphasized the need for young people to be actively involved in decision-making, innovation, and advocacy.

Belize is the first CARICOM Member State to host this week-long initiative, which will be replicated in other Member States in the coming weeks. Delivering the keynote address at the inaugural ceremony, Hon. Marconi Leal Jr., Minister of State for Foreign Trade, underscored the vital role of border officials in today’s interconnected world. He highlighted their role in tourism, security, administrative efficiency, trade, and economic growth. Despite challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and geopolitical uncertainties, particularly from the north, history has shown that adversity brings opportunities for growth.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Andy Sutherland, Director General of the Directorate General for Foreign Trade, reiterated the crucial role of border officials in achieving full free movement. He encouraged participants to network and take the opportunity to experience the culture and scenic beauty of Belize.

Other participants included H.E. Lawrence Sylvester, Belize's Ambassador to CARICOM; Mr. Emil Mena, Ambassador for Trade; and senior officials from the Border Management Authority, the Customs and Excise Department, the Immigration Department, and Belize's Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA).

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