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Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review*

Belize

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Introduction

1. The Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, established in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 of 18 June 2007, held its seventeenth session from 21 October to 1 November 2013. The review of Belize was held at the 12th meeting on 28 October 2013. The delegation of Belize was headed by Judith Alpuche, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation. At its 18th meeting, held on 31 October 2013, the Working Group adopted the report on Belize.

2. On 14 January 2013, the Human Rights Council selected the following group of rapporteurs (troika) to facilitate the review of Belize: Brazil, Germany and Maldives.

3. In accordance with paragraph 15 of the annex to resolution 5/1 and paragraph 5 of the annex to resolution 16/21, the following documents were issued for the review of Belize:

(a) A national report submitted/written presentation made in accordance with paragraph 15 (a) (A/HRC/WG.6/17/BLZ/1);

(b) A compilation prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in accordance with paragraph 15 (b) (A/HRC/WG.6/17/BLZ/2);

(c) A summary prepared by OHCHR in accordance with paragraph 15 (c) (A/HRC/WG.6/17/BLZ/3).

4. A list of questions prepared in advance by Germany, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was transmitted to Belize through the troika. These questions are available on the extranet of the universal periodic review (UPR).

I. Summary of the proceedings of the review process

A. Presentation by the State under review

5. The delegation of Belize stated that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, both at home and abroad, was a cornerstone of the State's domestic and foreign policy. The preparation of the UPR report had provided Belize with an unparalleled opportunity to reflect on the meaning of human rights in the context of its own national development, on the status of the implementation of its international human rights obligations, and on the duty of the Government in that respect.

6. In drafting the national report, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had coordinated with the full range of ministries and with civil society partners. The report reflected inputs from the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation, the Attorney General's Ministry, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. A number of non-governmental organizations had also been consulted during the process, including the Women's Issues Network of Belize, the Human Rights Commission of Belize, the Belize Council of Churches, the Belize Association of Evangelical Churches, the United Belize Advocacy Movement and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Once the final draft of the report was ready, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had convened a validation workshop with government and non-governmental agencies to share the report and receive final comments. The report was

subjected to spirited debate. Thereafter, the final report had been submitted to Cabinet, the highest policy body of the Government, which had given its unqualified endorsement.

7. Belize was a small, developing country with a population of about 316,000 people. It faced all the challenges of a small State: vulnerability to exogenous shocks, dependence on eroding preferential terms of trade, the vagaries of climate change, and high external debt.

8. According to the recent Living Standards Measurement Survey, household poverty increased from 25 per cent in 2002 to 33 per cent in 2009 and the indigence rate increased from 10.8 per cent to 15.8 per cent.

9. Belize was a multicultural society, with diverse groups coexisting peacefully. A total of 64 per cent of its population were under the age of 29. Belize had a low population density, with the majority of the population residing in rural areas, including at remote locations.

10. Belize was proud of its democratic traditions and the fundamental freedoms that were enshrined in its Constitution. Labour union activism and citizen participation were defining features of its colonial and post-independence history. Respect for rule of law and judicial independence were hallmarks of its judiciary.

11. Belize was a party to the majority of international human rights treaties, including the regional human rights treaties of the inter-American system. The Government took seriously its obligation to implement the treaties. To that end, a number of national laws formed the framework of the national human rights regime. That national framework was anchored firmly in the Constitution, which affirmed the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Belizeans and the equal and inalienable rights of all persons.

12. At the frontline of the Government's efforts to promote and protect human rights was the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation. Four quasi-governmental agencies had specialized functions with the purpose of ensuring the protection of key vulnerable populations. The National Committee for Families and Children was tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The National AIDS Commission coordinated a multi-stakeholder response aimed at addressing the policy, legislative and practical challenges relating to HIV/AIDS. The National Council on Ageing advocated for the rights of older persons. The National Women's Commission oversaw the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention of Belem do Para (Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women), as well as the implementation of the revised National Gender Policy.

13. Following on recommendations received during the first review, the Government had moved to strengthen the Office of the Ombudsman, which had independent powers to investigate citizen complaints and seek redress. The Office of the Ombudsman continued to enjoy the confidence of Belizeans as evidenced by the number of persons who accessed the Office.

14. The Government had also invested significantly in strengthening the Legal Aid Office, both in terms of resources and capacity. Belize hoped to expand the services of the Legal Aid Office to all districts and to employ an attorney dedicated to juvenile justice.

15. Civil society also played an important role in promoting and protecting human rights. Civil society advocacy work had been instrumental in sustaining a national discussion about the rights of citizens, the national human rights framework and the role of Government.

16. Human rights must be realized in all their dimensions: legal, social, political and economic. In that regard, the Government had taken a rights-based approach to development. Respect for human rights was a guiding principle of Horizon 2030, its national development blueprint. National development and the full realization of the human rights of all Belizeans were two sides of the same coin. All Belizeans must be assured of a certain minimum standard of living, which served as a common basis for the full enjoyment of all human rights.
17. Belize subscribed fully to the aspirations of the Millennium Development Goals, and had worked assiduously since 2000, in concert with its development partners, to meet the goals. Belize had done fairly well in meeting its education and health targets.
18. Belize was actively participating in the inter-governmental discussions on the post-2015 agenda and was commencing the realignment of its national development plans in anticipation of the new global development framework.
19. Belize was acutely aware that persistent pockets of poverty continued to pose a challenge to development; poverty remained an obstacle to the full realization of all human rights of all Belizeans. Poverty alleviation and the expansion of economic opportunities were the overarching objectives of the national development strategy and action plans.
20. Over the past five years, considerable efforts had been invested in the reform of the social protection systems of Belize, focusing in particular on the modernization of social safety net programmes. The Government had sought to guarantee social protection to key population groups, including older persons, children, people living with HIV/AIDS, women and youths.
21. At the center of Government efforts were a number of targeted interventions designed to support the poorest segments of the population in the areas of health and education.
22. The National Health Insurance scheme provided free and low-cost access to health care for those living in south-side Belize City and southern Belize, the poorest areas of the largest city and of the country, respectively.
23. The Building Opportunities for Our Social Transformation (BOOST) initiative, a conditional cash transfer programme, provided cash grants for poor and indigent individuals and families. The cash transfers served as an incentive to keep children in school and ensured that they were up to date with their immunization protocols. The most recent data from the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation indicated that there were some 8,600 beneficiaries. Belize was most proud of its high rates of “bankerization” among its beneficiaries, with 96 per cent of those beneficiaries receiving benefits through credit unions. The positive effect of the BOOST programme was confirmed by a 2012 World Bank evaluation that concluded that the programme was showing some good results.
24. The Food Pantry programme provided a weekly basket of basic food items to beneficiaries at half the market price. Over 3,000 families were currently benefiting from the programme.
25. Health care and income security were the primary concerns for the elderly. To that end, the Government continued to support the Non-Contributory Pension programme for older persons, which provided coverage to approximately one quarter of the elderly population. Additionally, 48 per cent of the elderly population had access to the National Health Insurance scheme.
26. Belize had made significant gains in addressing the multiple challenges associated with HIV/AIDS. Notwithstanding a small increase in new infections in 2012, for four years

previously, new infections rates were on the decline. The Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission programme had a coverage rate of 95 per cent. The Government continued to provide universal access to antiretroviral treatment. In tandem with civil society partners, the Government also continued to sensitize the general population on HIV issues, targeting in particular adolescent females and most-at-risk populations.

27. While the Government had endeavored to ensure implementation of all the treaties to which Belize was a party, it was mindful that reporting remained a major challenge. The Attorney General's Ministry had established an International Legal Affairs Department to, inter alia, provide advice on treaty obligations which would, in turn, inform the consideration of joining new treaties. The Government continued to study closely the treaties recommended by Members of the Human Rights Council during the previous review. In 2011, Belize ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). It would continue to work towards completing processes already under way for accession to the major international human rights treaties that were still pending.

28. The feasibility of establishing a new architecture or a national human rights institution in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) was a challenge in the present economic context of strained resources. However, the priority of ensuring compliance with the State's human rights obligations remained undiminished. Since the first UPR cycle, and with the assistance of OHCHR, Belize had convened a number of workshops to build technical capacity and instituted an interministerial mechanism to coordinate the preparation of reports to the treaty bodies.

29. The challenge of timely reporting was not unique to Belize. It was a common problem among all small States. Belize therefore encouraged the Human Rights Council and the treaty bodies to continue streamlining the process in an effort to ease the reporting burden of small countries with limited resources.

30. Parliament had enacted new laws in the context of its ongoing national efforts to continuously improve the legislative framework to ensure the protection of human rights of all Belizeans, taking on board a number of recommendations emanating from its first universal periodic review.

31. Belize had, for example, earlier this year, enacted improved domestic legislation implementing the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Parliament had also passed the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Prohibition Act in order to implement the provisions of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OP-CRC-SC).

32. The Education and Training Act, which entered into force in 2010, prohibited corporal punishment in schools. Amendments to the Labour Act treating issues related to age of admission to work were pending for consideration. Additionally, a draft Occupational Health and Safety Act aimed at, inter alia, prohibiting the involvement of children in hazardous work, in accordance with International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions and other international standards, was also pending consideration.

33. During its first UPR, Belize received a number of recommendations relating to the promotion and protection of the rights of women. Those recommendations were focused on sexual and reproductive health, labour and gender-based violence. In 2010, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in collaboration with a number of other partners, conducted an assessment of the linkage between sexual and reproductive health and HIV in Belize and found that Belize had a comprehensive and supportive national policy framework.

34. Belize had adopted a similar comprehensive approach to addressing gender-based violence. To complement the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act, the Women's Department had rolled out the National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action, the domestic violence protocol for police officers had been revised and a number of user-friendly publications had been distributed to ensure that victims of gender-based violence were fully aware of their rights and the support services available to them.

35. In terms of labour-related issues, the Women's Department continued to organize a number of training courses for women to build their capacity to engage in the marketplace and to develop skills to enable them to generate their own income. The Decent Work Agenda currently being implemented by the Labour Department focused on women and youth.

36. The revised National Gender Policy was endorsed by Cabinet in March 2013. It built on the 2002 policy and focused on strategies to reduce gender disparities in five key areas: health; education/skills training; wealth and employment generation; violence-producing conditions; and power and decision-making. It was the subject of spirited debate among Belizeans and provided an opportunity for a truly national dialogue about gender relations, diversity and human rights.

37. Since Belize had a very young population, protecting the rights of children and providing opportunities for youths were a high priority of the Government. Following on the recommendations of the first UPR cycle, significant improvements had been made to the national birth registration system to ensure greater access. Birth registration was at 95 per cent and approaching universal coverage.

38. Improving access to quality education continued to be a major focus of the Government's efforts. While universal access to primary education appeared to be within reach, challenges remained at the preschool, secondary and tertiary levels. The Government had embarked on an ambitious reform programme to transform the education sector. The Education and Training Act of 2010 provided the legal framework for those reforms.

39. The Government had invested significantly in providing opportunities for employment and for rehabilitation for youths, particularly those at risk.

40. In relation to indigenous rights, the delegation stated that the Mayas of southern Belize exemplified human rights in action. In July 2013, the Court of Appeal of Belize affirmed that the Mayas were entitled to indigenous title and the rights thereunder in respect of the lands they occupied. However, that high court did not affirm the Government's duty to give effect to those rights through the remedies offered by the lower court. Consequently, the Government had been in communication with the representatives of the Mayas to determine a mutually agreeable framework for the implementation of the judgment of the Court of Appeal.

41. Belize continued to be concerned about persistent pockets of poverty and low social indicators in the Toledo District, where the majority of Mayas lived. A number of targeted interventions had been implemented to provide the Mayas with assistance and support, including the Improving Children's Health and Nutrition in Poor Mayan Communities in Toledo project, which had a very high rate of coverage.

42. With regard to the advance questions submitted by Members of the Human Rights Council, the delegation stated that Belize was a steadfast supporter of the International Criminal Court, and one of the earliest depositors of the instrument of ratification of the Rome Statute. Indeed, Belize was the eighth country to deposit its ratification instrument. Another demonstration of its commitment was that Belize participated actively in the Assembly of States Parties and had, along with Trinidad and Tobago, proposed an amendment to the Rome Statute to expand the crimes under the Court's jurisdiction to

include international drug trafficking. Although Belize did not yet have in place a single comprehensive law to implement the Rome Statute, existing domestic laws did respond to the State's obligations under the Rome Statute, including the Genocide Act and several other pieces of legislation that cover crimes under the Court's jurisdiction.

43. Belize was encouraged by the recent pace of ratifications of the amendments adopted at the Review Conference of the Rome Statute, held in Kampala. Belize was reviewing those amendments and welcomed the offer of Liechtenstein to provide technical assistance to support the Government's consideration of the amendments.

44. Despite its best endeavors and intentions, Belize was unable to submit a full national report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; that continued to be a work in progress.

45. The Constitution of Belize prohibited discrimination against all persons and affirmed that "all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law". The Prime Minister had reiterated that Government would not "shirk its duty to ensure that all citizens, without exception, enjoy the full protection of the law". Belize noted in that context, as well, an advance question regarding a section of the Criminal Code which criminalized sodomy. The section of the Criminal Code was sub judice.

46. The delegation stated that the inextricable link between development and human rights was the recurring theme of its presentation and of the national report. Belize was a small State, facing severe economic and financial constraints in the context of the global financial crisis. The Government was proud that, despite resource challenges, Belize had found ways to increase investments in its social and economic development to enable Belizeans to actualize their social and economic human rights as well as their civil, political and cultural rights, which were firmly entrenched in the Constitution.

47. The delegation emphasized that room for improvement existed and welcomed the opportunity provided by the UPR to engage in a good-faith discussion with Members of the Human Rights Council on how to further strengthen the system of protections.

B. Interactive dialogue and responses by the State under review

48. During the interactive dialogue, 40 delegations made statements. Recommendations made during the dialogue are to be found in section II of the present report.

49. Cuba praised the strategy implemented by Belize to address the economic and social impact of natural disasters, which were common in the country. It welcomed efforts to achieve gender equality, reduce poverty and address income disparity. It noted that the implementation of an education strategy had allowed Belize to make progress on access to, and the quality of, teaching, despite persistent challenges. Cuba made recommendations.

50. Ecuador congratulated Belize on the progress it had made regarding human rights, particularly in the areas of gender, older persons, young people and persons with disabilities. Ecuador made recommendations.

51. France welcomed the efforts made by Belize since its first UPR, particularly the ratification of CRPD. France made recommendations.

52. Germany recognized many of the challenges and resource constraints faced by Belize. It was, however, concerned that Belize had failed to implement many of the recommendations accepted in 2009, and encouraged the country to continue to implement its accepted first-cycle recommendations. Germany made recommendations.

53. Honduras noted that the report submitted by Belize reflected the progress made and challenges relating to human rights in the country since its previous UPR. It commended Belize for the appointment of an ombudsman and encouraged the State to provide the mechanism with sufficient resources. It also supported the suggestion of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination that Belize establish a national human rights institution in line with the Paris Principles. Honduras made recommendations.

54. Indonesia noted that, despite challenges, Belize continued to advance human rights. It welcomed the mainstreaming of human rights into the national framework and commended the country's commitment to combating HIV/AIDS and reducing the stigma and discrimination associated with the condition. It commended efforts to protect women's rights and combat gender-based violence, and expressed its hope that the establishment of a national human rights institution would remain on the agenda. Indonesia made recommendations.

55. Ireland commended the progress made by Belize, particularly concerning women's rights. Ireland was concerned by reports of violence against women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons. It encouraged Belize to take measures preventing such violence and facilitating the reporting of allegations. It was concerned by the status of Belize as a country of departure, transit and arrival for trafficked persons, but praised steps taken in that area. Ireland made recommendations.

56. Malaysia noted developments since the first review in 2009. It commended efforts to mainstream human rights into the national policy framework of Belize. The progress it noted also included the promotion and protection of the rights of women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons. Significant efforts had also been made in education. It appreciated the State's frankness in identifying challenges, particularly concerning the eradication of poverty. Malaysia made recommendations.

57. Maldives welcomed the ratification by Belize of CRPD and noted positively its accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. It praised efforts to promote women's entrepreneurship and looked forward to the full implementation of the revised National Gender Policy. Noting the State's constraints regarding treaty enforcement and reporting, it called on the international community to provide technical assistance. Maldives made recommendations.

58. Mexico commended the creation by Belize of a national ombudsman in 2012 and was confident that it would contribute to improving the human rights situation. Mexico praised efforts to combat the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, as well as legislation prohibiting the sexual exploitation of children. It noted the country's commitment to education, efforts to integrate persons with disabilities and ratification of CRPD. Mexico made recommendations.

59. Montenegro commended the State's ratification of CRPD and asked what steps were planned to align domestic legislation with the Convention's obligations, and what measures were envisaged to facilitate the treatment and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. Montenegro was concerned by the lack of timely reporting to treaty bodies and asked what the main domestic challenges were that prevented reporting under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Montenegro made recommendations.

60. Morocco asked what measures were envisaged under the three-year medium-term strategy to enhance implementation and monitoring of sectoral plans relating to economic, social and cultural rights. It also asked what measures were envisaged to improve planning to achieve the objectives for 2015 set out in the plan of action for children and adolescents.

It urged the international community to provide technical support to help Belize fulfil its obligations under international instruments.

61. The Netherlands commended measures taken by Belize to enhance access to health care, the decrease in maternal and infant mortality and the increase in births attended by skilled personnel. It recalled two recommendations that Belize accepted in 2009, namely raising the minimum age for marriage from 16 to 18 and abolishing criminal sanctions for same-sex activity between consenting adults. It remained concerned by certain aspects of sexual and reproductive rights. It made recommendations.

62. Nicaragua noted that, despite the economic difficulties facing Belize, it had made efforts to fulfil its human rights obligations. Although Nicaragua understood that lack of resources hindered compliance with international obligations, it noted that such compliance was important. It urged Belize to continue to cooperate with the mechanisms of the United Nations system in the follow-up and implementation of its international commitments in the field of human rights. Nicaragua made a recommendation.

63. Nigeria commended the Government on designing a national development scheme, entitled Horizon 2030, and on embedding human rights within the national policy framework. It also commended Belize on achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education and on improved life expectancy and infant mortality rates. Nigeria made recommendations.

64. Norway observed that Belize lacked any constitutional or statutory provision expressly prohibiting discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and/or gender identity and that its Immigration Act included homosexuals in the list of prohibited persons for the purposes of immigration. Being opposed to the use of capital punishment under all circumstances and aiming for its universal abolition, Norway noted that Belize retained the death penalty. Norway made recommendations.

65. Paraguay noted the appointment of an ombudsman and welcomed the priority given to combating poverty. It welcomed the adoption of Horizon 2030 and constitutional provisions on human rights protection, which prohibited discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, colour and place of origin. It requested information on the outcome of the implementation of the revised National Gender Policy and the National Gender-Based Violence Plan of Action. Paraguay made recommendations.

66. Peru noted advances in human rights, including the creation of a long-term national development framework; the launching of policies, plans and initiatives to promote gender equality and combat gender-based violence; and the adoption of measures to assist persons living in poverty and reduce maternal mortality, including the extension of National Health Insurance coverage. It also noted the request made by Belize for technical assistance in addressing various human rights challenges. Peru made recommendations.

67. The Philippines welcomed the inclusion of human rights protection in the Constitution and the State's strong commitment to promoting, protecting and ensuring the enjoyment of human rights. It noted that technical and financial constraints hindered the establishment of a national human rights institution. It was encouraged that eradication of poverty was central to medium-term development. It urged Belize to consider prohibiting corporal punishment in all settings. It made recommendations.

68. Singapore noted various measures adopted by the Government on the rights of older persons, including on pensions, food programmes and access to health-care facilities, and its work on a study with UNFPA to identify the constraints and challenges faced by older persons. Singapore also noted a broad range of efforts to tackle the challenges posed by HIV/AIDS. Singapore made recommendations.

69. The delegation of Belize thanked States for their recommendations, comments and questions. On the matter of disabilities, the delegation replied that, even prior to becoming a party to CRPD, Belize had been operating under a framework of action for persons with disabilities. There were services available for their protection as well as for their rehabilitation and treatment. Belize was developing a comprehensive action plan to ensure that it could meet all the obligations under CRPD. Various legislation protected persons with disabilities, but Belize needed a complete assessment to ensure that there were no loopholes in the law. The Government was committed to working with partners and civil society to develop a renewed comprehensive framework. The first lady of Belize herself was a champion for the issue. She was establishing the Inspiration Center in Belize City, which would focus on rehabilitation and psychosocial support targeting particularly poor children with disabilities and their families. The Center would provide a space where children without disabilities could come and interact with children with disabilities, which boded well for the promotion of a culture of tolerance vis-à-vis persons with disabilities.

70. Concerning lack of timely reporting under ICERD and other treaty obligations, the delegation clarified that, although Belize did not submit an entire national report under ICERD, it did submit answers to the list of questions relating to ICCPR. Belize was acutely aware that it needed to meet its obligations and would continue to be engaged in the dialogue with the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The issue was simply a matter of personnel to prepare reports. Belize had a very small unit, established in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the State was steadily building its capacity in that regard. In order to put together robust and meaningful reports, Belize had another limitation in terms of the availability of timely and accurate data. The State was strengthening administrative and microsystems within the key ministries so that data would be available and that compiling reports to treaty bodies would be easier.

71. With regard to the National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action, the delegation stated that Belize had received a considerable grant from the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women to support its implementation, including an evaluation. There were no concrete results from the evaluation as yet, but the plan was very much being implemented and was a front-burner issue.

72. As for the National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents not meeting the targets for 2015, the delegation indicated that it was rather an ambitious plan. Although Belize would not meet some of the targets, what it gained was the process. Belize was able to have major stakeholders and civil society work together in a concerted way on children's issues to set the groundwork.

73. Slovenia welcomed steps to promote gender equality and tackle domestic violence, although reports of domestic violence against women continued. It commended the adoption of legislation to prohibit corporal punishment in schools and initiatives to promote alternative discipline. It was concerned that corporal punishment was still lawful under the Criminal Code. It indicated that Belize should address the problems it faced in reporting to the treaty bodies. Slovenia made recommendations.

74. Spain congratulated Belize on making human rights a top priority. It welcomed the ratification of CRPD and the development of integrated policy approaches to gender. It was concerned about discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and hostility towards LGBT communities. It commended the Supreme Court of Justice's 2010 judgement recognizing the land tenure rights of Maya communities in the Toledo district. Spain made recommendations.

75. Thailand applauded legislation prohibiting corporal punishment of children and ensuring the right to safe drinking water and sanitation. It encouraged the establishment of an independent national human rights institution. It welcomed progress in ensuring access

to health services, including to HIV/AIDS treatment, but noted that challenges remained. It urged the international community to provide technical assistance. Thailand made recommendations.

76. Trinidad and Tobago noted steps taken by Belize to strengthen its human rights framework, despite the challenge of being a small island developing State. It noted particularly the revision, amendment and enactment of legislation and policy developments in the areas of gender, early marriage, the commercial exploitation of children, youth empowerment and protecting the rights of persons living with HIV. It made recommendations.

77. Turkey commended the adoption of respect for the rule of law and human rights as a guiding principle for Horizon 2030. It noted achievements in the areas of women's rights and gender equality and welcomed legislation enacted to levy severe penalties for human trafficking. It considered that the establishment of the Legal Affairs Department would be pivotal in overcoming the obstacles to the implementation of international human rights instruments. Turkey made a recommendation.

78. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland supported the country's commitment to gender equality. It was disappointed that Belize had not supported a worldwide moratorium on executions. Referring to equality in the enjoyment of human rights and the inadmissibility of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, it welcomed the recent comments of the Prime Minister recognizing the rights of all citizens without exception. The United Kingdom made recommendations.

79. The United States of America commended progress in addressing discrimination against women, particularly the approval of the revised National Gender Policy. It encouraged a reform of existing laws that might be used to discriminate against LGBT persons. It observed that, despite the State's commitment to improving its technical and policy capacities during its first UPR, the second report indicated the same human rights training and institution-building needs. The United States made recommendations.

80. Uruguay highlighted the ratification of CRPD and strategies to facilitate birth registrations in public hospitals, where 90 per cent of births occurred. It noted the promulgation of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Prohibition Act and the Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Act, which envisaged more severe penalties for trafficking and related crimes; and the Education and Training Act, which prohibited corporal punishment in schools. Uruguay made recommendations.

81. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela noted initiatives against poverty, such as BOOST and the Food Pantry programmes. It emphasized that the expansion of the National Health Insurance programme had led to reduced maternal mortality, and noted the ratification of CRPD. Recognizing government investment in education and compulsory primary schooling, it noted measures to improve access to, and the quality of, education. It made a recommendation.

82. Viet Nam welcomed the comprehensive presentation of the national report, and commended the commitment of Belize to the UPR process and the implementation of recommendations accepted during the first cycle. It also welcomed human rights achievements in institutional reform, gender balance, education, child protection, youth rights, health care and social protection. It made recommendations.

83. Algeria acknowledged efforts to protect and promote human rights, including ratification of CRPD. It reiterated the call for technical assistance from the international community in establishing a national human rights institution. It asked how technical assistance could contribute to the implementation of recommendations received during the UPR. Algeria made a recommendation.

84. Argentina applauded efforts to protect older persons' rights. It noted that a strategic plan for the National Council for the Ageing was currently being prepared and asked for more information about that plan. It invited Belize to share its good practices with the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons to be appointed by the Human Rights Council. It welcomed the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Prohibition Act and encouraged efforts to combat the scourge. Argentina made recommendations.

85. Australia welcomed the appointment of the new Ombudsman in 2013, although it was disappointed that the Ombudsman had failed to produce annual reports since 2009. It commended human rights training for law enforcement officials, judicial officers and State officials, but remained concerned about the use of excessive force by security forces. It noted that the death penalty remained law, but acknowledged the de facto moratorium on executions. Australia made recommendations.

86. Barbados noted that it collaborated with Belize on trade, environment, security and human rights and commended the consultative nature of the national report. It welcomed the incorporation of human rights into the national policy framework, including the medium-term strategy framework and Horizon 2030, and efforts to combat poverty. It noted protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, including older persons and those at risk of HIV/AIDS.

87. Brazil welcomed the revised National Gender Policy and National Gender-Based Violence Plan of Action. It commended ratification of CRPD and encouraged Belize to make a declaration under article 14 of ICERD. It acknowledged progress in children's rights, noting that the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Prohibition Act implemented OP-CRC-SC. Commending poverty-reduction efforts, it asked about the expected results of the National Poverty Elimination Strategy. Brazil made recommendations.

88. Costa Rica encouraged efforts to ensure access to medical care and income security for older persons. Welcoming efforts to ensure gender equality, it called nevertheless for the low participation of women in politics to be addressed. Commending the ratification of CRPD, Costa Rica encouraged its enactment in domestic law. It encouraged Belize to continue with the de facto moratorium on the death penalty with a view to its abolition. It made recommendations.

89. Chile commended the integration of human rights in public policies and new action plans and legislative reform under Horizon 2030 and the three-year medium-term strategy. It welcomed future planning under the 2014-2017 strategy, which focused on eradicating poverty which, as noted in the national report, hampered the exercise of human rights and freedoms. Chile made recommendations.

90. China expressed its appreciation for efforts to implement recommendations accepted during the previous UPR cycle relating to the National Poverty Elimination Strategy, protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, promotion of gender equality, HIV/AIDS monitoring and improving legal aid provision. It noted ongoing difficulties in the areas of poverty reduction and social security. It urged the international community to meet technical assistance needs. China made a recommendation.

91. Colombia recognized efforts to implement recommendations made during the previous UPR cycle and the transparent collaboration with international mechanisms. It noted that all countries faced human rights challenges, but nations had a legal and moral obligation to make citizens' lives better, particularly for the most vulnerable and discriminated populations. It offered to share its experience in the design and implementation of mechanisms for policies relating to international human rights. Colombia made recommendations.

92. Canada recalled recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child to reduce poverty among children of indigenous and minority groups. It asked whether more people would be able to benefit from the BOOST and Food Pantry programmes. It encouraged ongoing efforts in the reporting, investigation and punishment of offences by police officers and steps to improve access to preschool and secondary education and reduce poverty and crime. Canada made recommendations.

93. With regard to the question from Canada about increasing coverage of two social safety net programmes, the delegation stated that Belize had taken a deliberate policy step to ensure that the cash transfer programme and the Food Pantry programme were funded from recurrent revenue to ensure sustainability. The investment in improving health and education for poor children was a long-term one, and Belize wanted to ensure the sustainability of those programmes. Belize would continue to do so for the current and next financial year and had a plan to increase the number of beneficiaries of those programmes. There was also full political support. The Prime Minister said on various occasions that those pro-poor policies and programmes were the centrepiece for his Government.

94. As to the National Gender Policy and its aims, the delegation reported that it was designed to tackle issues of gender equality, gender equity and women's empowerment. This was a revised policy that had built on the previous policy. Belize was working on a revised implementation plan for the policy.

95. Provisions for amendments to the Criminal Code that dealt with sexual offences were before the national assembly. The National Gender-Based Violence Plan of Action and other issues in terms of, inter alia, strengthening the implementation framework for the gender-based violence programme, and the decent work agenda, were all part and parcel of the Government commitment under the revised gender policy. The cabinet had approved the revised policy only this year. It was hoped that, by the first quarter next year, and following extensive consultations, there would be a multidisciplinary and multisectoral plan of action to ensure the implementation of the gender policy.

96. The delegation stated that a part of what constituted a barrier to the development of the implementation plan for the gender policy was resistance from churches, especially the evangelical churches. In certain sectors, they requested complete withdrawal of the policy because it spoke to respect for diversity, including the acknowledgement of sexual orientation as a type of diversity. It spoke to providing sexual and reproductive health services for vulnerable groups, including men who have sex with men and commercial sex workers. Because of those factors, the evangelical council and other churches had called for a complete removal of the policy. Nonetheless, the Prime Minister stated his commitment to the policy and opened the door for submissions of concerns by the council, but the plans of action for various sectors were in place and Belize would continue the work in ensuring gender equity and equality and women's empowerment under the rubric of that policy.

II. Conclusions and/or recommendations**

97. **The recommendations formulated during the interactive dialogue, listed below, enjoy the support of Belize:**

97.1. **Endeavour to establish a national human rights institution in line with the Paris Principles (Nigeria);**

** Conclusions and recommendations have not been edited.

- 97.2. Step up efforts in seeking assistance towards the establishment of a national human rights institution that is in line with the Paris Principles (Philippines);
- 97.3. Accelerate, with the cooperation of OHCHR, the internal studies and procedures necessary to establish a National Human Rights Institution in accordance with the Paris Principles (Uruguay);
- 97.4. Continue strengthening its efforts to provide the office of the Ombudsman with sufficient resources to enable it to effectively carry out its tasks (Slovenia);
- 97.5. Provide the Ombudsperson with sufficient resources it needs, as a critical institution to monitor and oversee the respect for human rights (Turkey);
- 97.6. Increase the capacity of the Ombudsman's Office, the Belize Police Department's Professional Standards Board, and other human rights-related institutions through internal efforts and by seeking assistance in these areas from international development partners (United States of America);
- 97.7. Guarantee the right of everyone to equality before the law, equal protection of the law, and non-discrimination, in conformity with the international commitments undertaken by Belize (France);
- 97.8. Inform the ILO about progress made by Belize in the implementation of its National Policy on Gender (Paraguay);
- 97.9. Adopt legislation and policy measures prohibiting racial discrimination (Norway);
- 97.10. Investigate all cases of violence against women, punish the perpetrators and ensure that victims receive the necessary support and compensation (Ireland);
- 97.11. Investigate the cases of domestic violence that continue to be reported and ensure perpetrators are punished (Maldives);
- 97.12. That the Unit on Family Violence and other competent bodies improve search and data collection systems, in order to accurately quantify the magnitude of the problem, its causes and consequences (Spain);
- 97.13. Redouble efforts to combat violence against women and the worst forms of child labour, and provide shelter services to victims of these crimes (Peru);
- 97.14. Strengthen measures aimed at eradicating child labour (Ecuador);
- 97.15. Redouble efforts to protect young people under 18 years, especially young women, against the worst forms of labour, including trafficking, sexual exploitation and hazardous work (Honduras);
- 97.16. Intensify efforts to combat human trafficking (Nigeria);
- 97.17. Strengthen measures to combat trafficking in persons in legislation and in practice (Costa Rica);
- 97.18. Strengthen measures against trafficking in persons by effectively implementing the Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Act, and investigating, prosecuting and punishing those responsible, as well as ensuring respect for victims' right to asylum (Ireland);

- 97.19. Implement a system of administration of juvenile justice that fully integrates in its legislation, policies and practices the provisions and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (in particular articles 37, 39 and 49) as well as the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing Rules), United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (The Riyadh Guidelines), United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty and the Vienna Guidelines for Action on Children in the Criminal Justice System (Uruguay);
- 97.20. Consider further expanding its birth registration programme towards achieving universal birth registration coverage (Philippines);
- 97.21. Ensure the effective implementation of inclusive policies on the issue of gender to foster the participation of women in the economic and political life of the country, with concrete measures and an adequate timetable for compliance (Spain);
- 97.22. Strengthen mechanisms to promote the full and effective participation of women in different spheres, thus guaranteeing their effective incorporation into public life (Ecuador);
- 97.23. Make efforts to support a system of quotas to promote the participation of women in political and public life and in decision-making posts in all spheres of life. Additionally, make efforts to reduce or eliminate wage differences between men and women (Honduras);
- 97.24. Re-double its efforts in reducing and eliminating the incidence of poverty, particularly in the impoverished areas, in line with its revised National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action (Malaysia);
- 97.25. Widely expand access to health services for all, especially for marginalized groups and indigenous peoples (Thailand);
- 97.26. Step up efforts to provide information and education on sexually transmitted diseases to its population, as well as to combat stigma against people living with HIV/AIDS (Thailand);
- 97.27. Increase efforts to avoid school drop out by pregnant adolescents, through the creation of programmes that would allow for their return to school in optimal conditions for their development and that of their children (Spain);
- 97.28. Strengthen its efforts to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities (Trinidad and Tobago);
- 97.29. Assign a government department the mandate of promoting and protecting the rights of disabled persons (Nigeria);
- 97.30. Incorporate in its legislation and take positive measures to implement the rights contained in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Maldives);
- 97.31. Implement legislative provisions to prevent the criminalization of irregular migration and to encourage the use of alternative measures to deprivation of liberty, so that the detention of asylum seekers is established as a measure of last resort, while re-establishing the mechanism to determine refugee status (Uruguay);
- 97.32. Strengthen measures aimed at ensuring development in a manner that is resistant to risks (Cuba);

97.33. Step up the implementation of the current national strategies and action plans, with more priorities to address the challenges of poverty reduction, food security, education, health care, gender equality and social welfare (Viet Nam).

98. The following recommendations enjoy the support of Belize, which considers that they are in the process of implementation:

98.1. Adjust national legislation with a view to incorporating domestically international and regional treaties ratified by the country (Colombia);

98.2. Provide with financial resources the Office of the Ombudsman created last year (Paraguay);

98.3. Include human rights as a subject in the curriculum of educational institutions as well as in plans for training aimed at the security forces (Paraguay);

98.4. Expand education and human rights training programmes so that these are included as well in the training for magistrates, judges, lawyers, and eventually in education and in general (Costa Rica);

98.5. Strengthen the capacities of its reporting system in order to tackle its backlog in reporting to treaty bodies (Slovenia);

98.6. Continue its efforts to reduce stigma and discrimination through education and awareness raising campaigns (Indonesia);

98.7. Continue its efforts aimed at implementing the national policy of gender equality adopted by the Government in March 2013 (Algeria);

98.8. Continue efforts to combat discrimination suffered by the most vulnerable groups of the population, such as persons with disabilities, with HIV/AIDS or indigenous peoples (Argentina);

98.9. Address the excessive use of force by law-enforcement officers by ensuring public agents are held to account for allegations of misconduct, abuse and violence (Australia);

98.10. Continue to work to combat violence against women (France);

98.11. Ensure the implementation of the National Gender-Based Violence Action Plan and put a halt on gender-based violence (Indonesia);

98.12. Take measures to actively track the implementation and results of the Domestic Violence Act and the National Gender-based Violence Action Plan and to publicly report on these efforts to reduce violence, especially against women and girls (Canada);

98.13. Adopt protocols on domestic and sexual violence for police agents (Paraguay);

98.14. Continue to strengthen norms, programmes and administrative measures aimed at combating all forms of violence against women and children, including educational and prevention plans (Chile);

98.15. Continue its efforts to protect and promote the enjoyment of human rights of the older persons (Singapore);

98.16. Continue developing current projects aimed at reducing poverty (Cuba);

- 98.17. Continue to implement its poverty reduction strategy and improve its maternal and infantile health care (China);
- 98.18. Continue its efforts in tackling HIV/AIDS (Singapore);
- 98.19. Continue its efforts in improving the quality of education at all levels as well as in increasing the student's enrolment in secondary education (Malaysia);
- 98.20. Continue implementing programmes aimed at guaranteeing quality education to all the population, with an emphasis on access, school enrolment and decreasing school drop outs (Cuba);
- 98.21. Ensure that persons with disabilities have the right to enrol in the electoral census and vote (Honduras);
- 98.22. Continue in its endeavours in consistently addressing the issues affecting indigenous peoples (Trinidad and Tobago);
- 98.23. Monitor continuously the extractive activities of oil companies in Mayan territory, which must always respect human rights (Spain);
- 98.24. Continue mainstreaming of promotion and protection of human rights in its development plans (Philippines);
- 98.25. Continue promoting its successful programmes and social policies, with international assistance and cooperation, to advance social development and achieve greater well-being of its population (Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of));
- 98.26. Continue its momentum on legislations and judiciary reforms toward strengthening the rule of law state, good governance and broader participation of people in socio-economic decision-making processes and human rights protection and promotion in the country (Viet Nam).
99. The following recommendations will be examined by Belize, which will provide responses in due time, but no later than the twenty-fifth session of the Human Rights Council in March 2014:
- 99.1. Ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Brazil) (Paraguay);
- 99.2. Proceed with ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and sign the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (France);
- 99.3. Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Montenegro);
- 99.4. Ratify the Optional Protocol to CAT and ICESCR (Maldives);
- 99.5. Consider the possibility of ratifying CPED and ILO Convention No. 169 (Ecuador);
- 99.6. Ratify the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (Paraguay);
- 99.7. Consider carrying out the relevant legislative reforms in order that the Constitution and secondary legislation clearly and unequivocally safeguard the rights listed in article 4 of the ICCPR in cases of states of exception or national emergency (Mexico);

- 99.8. Ensure that the Constitution and legislation include clear provisions on states of emergency, so as to ensure that none of the rights protected under article 4 of ICCPR are suspended in such circumstances, and that the requirements of such suspension are compatible with the above-mentioned Covenant (Uruguay);
- 99.9. Adjust immigration laws to international standards to which Belize is a party, to avoid discrimination against vulnerable groups in particular persons with cognitive disabilities and LGBT (Colombia);
- 99.10. Establish a National Human Rights Institution (Paraguay);
- 99.11. Consider ratifying the ICESCR and creating a National Human Rights Institution in accordance with the Paris Principles (Nicaragua);
- 99.12. Take measures for the establishment of a national institution for the promotion and protection of human rights in accordance with the Paris Principles, in particular with regard to its Constitutional protection (Mexico);
- 99.13. Establish a National Human Rights Institution in line with the Paris Principles and set out a detailed roadmap to this effect so that the Institute may commence its work at the earliest possible opportunity (Germany);
- 99.14. Develop a comprehensive policy for the development of human rights that includes a national human rights institution that allows for the articulation, coordination and implementation of policy in practice (Colombia);
- 99.15. Ensure that the Office of the Ombudsman is in line with the Paris Principles related to the National Institutions for promotion of human rights (France);
- 99.16. Ensure that the Office of the Ombudsman continues to operate at full capacity and is brought into conformity with the Paris Principles (Australia);
- 99.17. Provide state authorities, including law enforcement and judicial officials, with human rights training for the protection of women and members of minority groups, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons (United States of America);
- 99.18. Strengthen efforts to finalize and present pending reports to corresponding treaty bodies and consider extending a standing invitation to the thematic special procedures as part of its comprehensive cooperation with the international system for the protection and promotion of human rights (Mexico);
- 99.19. Extend a standing invitation to all special procedures (Montenegro);
- 99.20. Issue a standing invitation to the special procedures of the Human Rights Council (France);
- 99.21. Extend an open invitation to the special procedures of the Human Rights Council to visit the country, particularly those who are in a position to offer assistance to strengthen measures for the promotion and protection of human rights in Belize (Peru);
- 99.22. Take steps towards the abolition of the death penalty (Norway);
- 99.23. Abolish the death penalty and ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (France);

- 99.24. **Abolish the death penalty for all crimes and accede to the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR (Australia);**
- 99.25. **Undertake a public consultation on the complete abolition of the death penalty (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland);**
- 99.26. **Amend the relevant provisions of the Criminal Code in order to achieve the full prohibition of all forms of corporal punishment, including at home (Slovenia);**
- 99.27. **Raise the age of criminal responsibility so that it is in line with the international commitments undertaken by Belize (France);**
- 99.28. **Ensure the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity (Netherlands);**
- 99.29. **Take all necessary measures to guarantee the human rights of LGBT individuals and that they do not face persecution of any kind (Brazil);**
- 99.30. **Consider the possibility of adopting the necessary measures to eliminate all discriminatory treatment and criminalization based on sexual orientation (Argentina);**
- 99.31. **Review the Constitution and legislation, in order to explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity (Uruguay);**
- 99.32. **Review and adapt its Constitution and laws to ensure that discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited (Germany);**
- 99.33. **Review its Constitution and legislation to ensure that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited (Norway);**
- 99.34. **Ensure its Criminal Code provisions do not criminalize individuals based on sexual orientation (Canada);**
- 99.35. **Amend legislation in order to combat discrimination and hostility toward LGBT groups (Spain);**
- 99.36. **Repeal all provisions that may lead to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity and respect fundamental freedoms of all the citizens (France);**
- 99.37. **Eliminate provisions that favour discriminatory practices against persons based on their sexual orientation and gender identity (Chile);**
- 99.38. **Take steps to remove domestic legislation that outlaws same-sex activity between consenting adults, and develop policies to address discrimination against LGBT people (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland);**
- 99.39. **Reform existing laws that can be used to discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, including the provision of “unnatural crime” laws prohibiting “carnal intercourse against the order of nature” (United States of America);**
- 99.40. **Take timely and concrete measures such as raising the minimum legal age of marriage to 18 years in order to prevent children from becoming victims of child early and forced marriage (Netherlands);**

99.41. **Take steps to reduce the incidence of child, early and forced marriage, including by amending legislation where necessary to bring it into conformity with international obligations (Canada);**

99.42. **Adopt concrete measures, including special measures, such as acceding to ILO Convention No. 169, so that the Mayan indigenous peoples and certain persons of African decent have access to the labour market, housing and health care as well as combating poverty, exclusion and the discrimination they suffer from. Design intercultural and bilingual educational programmes to promote the integration of these ethnic groups (Honduras);**

99.43. **Encourage greater participation of indigenous peoples through the elaboration of a law regulating the right of these peoples to prior consultation (Peru);**

99.44. **Refrain from issuing new concessions for projects in Mayan territories without the free, prior and informed consent of the relevant Mayan community (Norway).**

100. **All conclusions and/or recommendations contained in the present report reflect the position of the submitting State(s) and/or the State under review. They should not be construed as endorsed by the Working Group as a whole.**

Annex

[English only]

Composition of the delegation

The delegation of Belize was headed by Ms. Judith Alpuche, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation and composed of the following members:

- Mrs. Orla Kantun-Coleman, Deputy Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
 - Ms. Ayesha Borland, Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Embassy of Belize, Brussels.
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