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DRAFT 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 (UPR), established in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 of 18 June 2007, held its fifth session from 4 to 15 May 2009. The review of Belize was held at the 3rd meeting on 5 May 2009. The delegation of Belize was headed by Ms Judith Alpuche, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation. At its meeting held on 7 May 2009, the Working Group adopted the present report on Belize .

2. On 8 September 2008, the Human Rights Council selected the following group of rapporteurs (troika) to facilitate the review of Belize: Russian Federation, Malaysia and Brazil.

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

(a) A national report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15 (a) (A/HRC/WG.6/5/BLZ/1);

(b) A compilation prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in accordance with paragraph 15 (b) (A/HRC/WG.6/5/BLZ/2);

(c) A summary prepared by OHCHR in accordance with paragraph 15 (c) (A/HRC/WG.6/5/BLZ/3).

4. A list of questions prepared in advance by Argentina, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands 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 UPR.

I. SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

A. Presentation by the State under review

5. At the 3rd meeting, on 5 May 2009, Judith Alpuche, Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation, opened her statement by referring to the national report that demonstrates significant strides made towards implementation of the international human rights treaties.

6. Belize is a party to the majority of the major international human rights treaties, as well as inter-American human rights instruments. While the obligations arising from these treaties are very important, resource constraints hinder timely reporting on implementation.

7. Belize has a strong commitment to the normative human rights framework, but faces challenges in its full operationalization.

8. Nothwithstanding resource constraints, the Government is conscious that Belize is not yet a party to some treaties. Belize is actively studying them. The overlapping nature of the United Nations and inter-American systems, however, is to be noted.

9. Belize's human rights architecture is legal and institutional in nature. The Constitution guarantees civil, political, cultural and social rights equally on the basis of non-discrimination to all persons, and ensures a just system of social security and environmental protection.

10. At the front line of the Government's efforts to promote and protect human rights is the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation.

11. Four quasi-governmental bodies have been established to ensure compliance with human rights commitments to key vulnerable populations: the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC), the National Women's Commission (NWC), the National AIDS Commission (NAC) and the National Council on Aging (NCA). Additionally, the National Human Development Advisory Committee, a multisectoral committee comprised of government and civil society representatives, provides policy advice to the Government taking into account sustainable development and other human rights issues.

12. A vibrant and active civil society sector has been instrumental in the promotion and protection of human rights with particular emphasis on public education.

13. An independent Office of the Ombudsman was established in 1999. While the Ombudsman Act gives broad powers to the Ombudsman to investigate wrongdoing, the success of the office has been its openness to help ordinary Belizeans and its credibility in acting as an honest and objective broker.

14. The Government of Belize has adopted a zero-tolerance approach to police violence. The Police Internal Affairs Department is tasked with conducting transparent investigations of police actions and citizen complaints. Where wrongful action has been determined criminal prosecution and/or disciplinary actions are taken. The Department has incorporated a human rights course at its raining academy, administered by the Human Rights Commission of Belize.

15. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women and the concluding observations of respective treaty bodies guide Belize's efforts to ensure the human rights of women. The recent strengthening of NWC to improve its capacity to monitor compliance with these important conventions will enhance the national machinery for the promotion of gender equity, equality and the advancement of women, and make the process of reporting on the implementation of the conventions easier.

16. Important achievements with respect to women's rights include: the extension of paid maternity leave from 12 to 14 weeks to ensure conformity with the ILO Maternity Protection Convention; passage of legal provisions for equal pay for equal work, recognition of the value of housework in divorce proceedings and legal recognition of common-law unions of 5 years or more for inheritance purposes. A National Gender Policy was adopted in 2003, and last month stakeholders met, under the auspices, of NWC to review this.

17. A National Gender-Based Violence Plan facilitates a strategic response to the persistent problem of gender based violence. The Women's Department, in partnership with NGOs, coordinates a sustained public education campaign to raise awareness and to inform women of available avenues of assistance. The Government has strengthened the Domestic Violence Act to provide for, inter alia, harsher penalties and the broadening of the categories of persons protected by the Act.

18. NCFC has spearheaded the development and implementation of the National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents 2004-2015. The Plan of Action, which focuses on education, health, child protection, HIV/AIDS, family and culture, enjoys bipartisan political support.

19. The Government has increased the age of marriage with parental consent from 14 to 16 years and the age of criminal responsibility from 9 to 11 years, following recommendations from the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

20. The Government has appointed a Special Envoy for Children to work in tandem with NCFC and the various stakeholders in safeguarding the rights of children.

21. The Government has established a permanent, multi-sectoral Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee. The Committee emphasizes prevention and maintains a widely accessible public awareness campaign on human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. It invests in providing protective services for victims and works on strengthening national prosecutorial capacity. The Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Act is under review with a view to enacting stiffer penalties and more robust provisions on commercial sexual exploitation of children and child adoption.

22. Rising levels of crime and violence continue to present significant challenges on various fronts. Over the last decade Belize has emphasized rehabilitation within its prison, offering prisoners programmes for rehabilitation, skills training and fellowship.

23. There are other challenges reflected in the national report as priorities, including HIV/AIDS, youth development, good governance, persons with disabilities and education.

24. The situation of the Maya of Belize is a matter of national importance. Belize intends to engage the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people.

25. On 12 October 2004, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) issued recommendations pertaining to the case *Maya Indigenous Communities of the Toledo District of Belize*. The parties were unable to agree on an implementation mechanism.

26. The villages of Conejo and Santa Cruz of the Toledo District sought to have their customary rights recognized by the Supreme Court of Belize in the *Cal* case. The Government respectfully refrained from taking any measures to implement the recommendations of IACHR as soon as the matter became the subject of litigation.

27. On 18 October 2007, the Supreme Court issued its ruling, which contained provisions similar to the recommendations of IACHR but pertaining only to the villages of Conejo and Santa Cruz.

28. The Government is committed to implementing the Court’s decision.

29. There are many complex matters affecting implementation. Parts of the land in question are within declared national parks; and some are settled or owned by non-Mayans. In some instances, cessation of existing licenses would have a direct economic impact. More importantly, there is a lack of consensus among the Maya themselves and, in the case of the

village of San Antonio, the residents have indicated that they do not wish to be included in the exercise since they prefer individual ownership to communal ownership.

30. Some interim measures, notably a cease-and-desist order, have been instituted by the Government, and remain in place, to ensure that the enforcement of the judgment is not compromised while the legal advisers of the Parties agree on a framework for the implementation.

31. Thirty-eight other villages in the Toledo District have initiated a class action suit. While this case is pending the Government has ceased the issuing of licenses relating to forestry or petroleum or the sale/transfer of land, with the single exception of the license granted for seismic testing in the Sarstoon Temash National Park in compliance with a separate court Judgement.

B. Interactive dialogue and responses by the State under review

32. During the interactive dialogue, statements were made by 20 delegations. A number of delegation thanked the Government for the comprehensive national report and for the responses provided to advance questions. Statements were made welcoming Belize's commitment to the UPR process and its constructive participation and consultations with stakeholders in preparing the national report .

33. The United Kingdom welcomed the appointment of a new Ombudsman in January 2009 and hoped she would be given adequate resources to fulfil her mandate and investigate human rights related cases. It expressed concern about continued reports of police violence and prison abuse and welcomed convictions of police officers involved in such incidents as well as human rights training at the Police Academy by the Human Rights Commission of Belize. It recommended that Belize (a) consider ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT-OP). It recognized the work of the Women's Department and NWC in the new Domestic Violence Act 2008 and the national gender policy, and welcomed the the Gender-Based Violence Plan, and recommended that Belize (b) continue to address the persisting gender inequality in the country. It urged the Government to recognize the social, cultural and property rights of persons belonging to minorities and indigenous Maya people, and take steps to eliminate all forms of discrimination.The United Kingdom noted that HIV/AIDS remains a major challenge in Belize and welcomed the multisectoral participatory approach to tackling it, with the National Aids Commission to coordinating a national response and action plan. It recommended that the Government (c) introduce human rights education for all government officials and departments to ensure that a human rights-based approach is mainstreamed across government policy. It further recommended that the Government (d) offer a standing invitation to all Special Procedures and seek international technical assistance as recommended by several United Nations human rights treaty monitoring bodies.

34. Algeria encouraged the authorities to persevere in their approach establishing interdependence between human rights and development. It emphasized the need for assistance from the international community to strengthen the capacity of Belize to meet the challenges it faces. It recommended (a) that the improvement of the situation of certain vulnerable groups, especially women and children, be given priority; (b) that Belize step up programmes aimed at eradicating poverty and improving social indicators, including in health and education; (c) that the institutional and legal authorities work towards completing the process already under way for accession to major international instruments of human rights; and (d) that Belize consider the

possibility of establishing a national human rights institution in conformity with the Paris Principles.

35. The Netherlands referred to the actions taken with regard to good governance mentioned in the national report, such as the new Prevention of Corruption Act, and the fact that Belize is party to the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption. It said, however, that recent international reports indicate that corruption is still a problem for Belize. It welcomed efforts with regard to women's rights, including the 2005 launch of the sexual and reproductive health policy, but said further efforts were needed to combat maternal mortality, noting that in 2007 the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had expressed concern about the high maternal mortality rate, urging Belize to take measures in this regard. It recommended that Belize (a) continue to strengthen its efforts to ensure that all police and security officers receive human rights training; (b) look into the possible ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption; (c) take further concrete measures to enhance women's access to health care, in particular to sexual and reproductive services, as recommended by, among others, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; (d) strengthen its efforts with regard to timely reporting to United Nations human rights treaty bodies.

36. The Russian Federation noted with satisfaction that since 1999 the country had had an independent ombudsman, and asked what main difficulties this body had faced in carrying out its activities. Secondly, it noted that the central prison is managed by a non-profit, non-governmental organization, and enquired if there is any public or State control over this organization's action. Finally, highlighting that 6 per cent of Belize's population suffer from some kind of disability, and that nevertheless there is no law which directly addresses protection of the rights of this category of the population, Russia asked if the Government planned to formulate such a law.

37. Italy acknowledged Belize's progress in the field of human rights promotion and protection. With regard to the death penalty, Italy commended Belize for its longstanding de facto moratorium on executions, recommending that the Government (a) consider the complete abolition of capital punishment in its internal legislation. With regard to reported episodes of police abuse and violence, it recommended (b) that further efforts be deployed in training security forces in the field of human rights; (c) that allegations of misconduct, abuse and violence by public agents be duly and promptly investigated; and (d) that adequate action be taken against those responsible for such crimes. Noting the request for legislative measures to fully guarantee the rights of sexual minorities, and in connection with the rights of persons living with HIV/AIDS, Italy recommended that Belize (e) take appropriate legislative measures in order to ensure that no person can be subject to criminal sanctions for same-sex activity between consenting adults.

38. Ukraine recognized progress achieved so far, especially in the promotion of women's rights. Noting concerns of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on widespread poverty among women, particularly in rural areas and among Mayan women, it asked what measures had been undertaken to fulfill the recommendations made by the Committee in this connection. It noted that HIV/AIDS is the most serious social and health problem facing the country. It recommended that Belize (a) continue to implement the recommendations made by the Committee and on a regular basis submit the relevant reports for its consideration; (b) further strengthen activities to prevent the spread of HIV and stigmatization and discrimination against people living with HIV.

39. The United States of America expressed its hope that the process of self-evaluation which Belize had already profited from would continue to be of help through and after the UPR process. It asked about Belize's position on the possible creation of a national human rights institute and recommended that the Government conduct a systematic evaluation on the merits of establishing a national human rights institution, as a separate institution dedicated to human rights would let the Ombudsman focus on more general oversight issues and would give the Government a body that could address a range of possible issues, such as property rights of the Mayan population.

40. Mexico asked how Belize would address the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child concerning the fight against trafficking in children and child pornography, child labour and the disciplinary measures applicable to children, within the framework of the consultations carried out by the Government concerning legislative instruments for the protection of children. It recommended Belize (a) to redouble its efforts in favour of the respect of the rights of indigenous peoples, in line with the dispositions contained in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; (b) to accede to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons Living with Disabilities; and (c) to consider adhering to their respective Optional Protocols as soon as possible. It emphasized the need to foster national capacities on human rights, both in technical and standard-setting levels. It encouraged the international community to provide the assistance required by Belize, as well as recommending the country (d) to continue in its pursuit of assistance in these areas.

41. Canada noted that UNICEF and the Committee on the Rights of the Child had expressed concern about the disparities and widespread poverty experienced by indigenous populations. It also noted recent reports alleging occasional excessive use of force by police officers, welcoming the information provided on the Government's efforts to address this issue. It asked what measures are being undertaken to ensure that those subject to the justice system have adequate legal representation. It noted that Belize does not have a national human rights institution accredited by the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. It recommended that Belize (a) implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to prioritize effective measures to reduce poverty amongst indigenous and minority children; (b) strengthen the office of Ombudsman and the police department's office of internal affairs in order to improve capacity to hear and investigate complaints; (c) provide defendants in all serious criminal processes with an attorney when they cannot afford one by themselves; (d) establish a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles.

42. Argentina noted that the Criminal Code and the Education Act of Belize allow corporal punishment of children within the family and schools, and recommended (a) considering the adoption of measures commensurate with international standards on the subject and public campaigns about non-violent forms of discipline. It noted that Belize prioritizes combating HIV/AIDS and has comprehensive policies to halt the spread of the disease. However, some reports show that people under 16 cannot access test services without their parents' consent. It recommended (b) considering the possibility of eliminating this requirement for people under the age of 16. It also recommended (c) considering the ratification of the following international human rights instruments: CESCR, which has been signed but not ratified, and the optional protocols to ICCPR, CAT, CPD and CED. On indigenous peoples' rights, Argentina took note of the information provided on the Mayan communities of Toledo, Santa Cruz and Conejo and asked what additional measures Belize is considering to implement the international standards

under the Universal Declaration on Indigenous Rights, particularly with regard to the provision of land.

43. Belize recognized that accession to international human rights treaties is necessary to consolidate the national human rights architecture that has been constructed and continues to be strengthened.

44. Belize is reviewing its national, strategic and action plan on poverty with a view towards ensuring that the actions taken effectively address vulnerable populations with emphasis on the lowest quintile. Belize has a policy framework for persons with disabilities, however Belize acknowledges the necessity of strengthening its efforts in this area and is seeking to engage its civil society partners in this regard.

45. Though the prison is managed by the Kolbe Foundation, a private entity, oversight is maintained by the Ministry of National Security. A Government-appointed superintendent of prisons monitors the functioning of prisons. Furthermore, a majority of the board of governors of the Kolbe Foundation are appointed by the Government.

46. Belize regards the rate of maternal mortality as a matter of priority. Through proactive and rigorous interventions by the Maternal and Child Health Unit in the Ministry of Health incidents of maternal mortality have decreased over the past two years.

47. The Office of the Ombudsman is well received. The Belizean people appreciate that it is an objective and honest broker that deals very sensitively with the concerns of the general population. The main limitation to its work is one of lack of resources.

48. Several initiatives focus on children’s rights and aim at adherence to the concluding observations of Committee on the Rights of the Child. This includes a national plan, developed in partnership with the ILO, on issues of child labour and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. As the result of a recent review on progress made over the past eighteen months, Belize is now seeking to engage NGO partners to consolidate the gains and further advance work in this area.

49. Maldives recognized Belize's efforts to create awareness, protect and educate children, in particular the National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents 2004-2015 adopted with the endorsement of both political parties. It encouraged Belize to seek technical assistance to fully implement this Plan of Action, as was recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. It noted important challenges remain, including, in terms of small States, the limitations on financial and human resources, and capacity-building. It agreed that meeting human rights reporting obligations remains a major challenge for small States, and highlighted the benefits and advantages of preparing a Common Core Document with the information that the State is required to send to each treaty report.

50. Azerbaijan said it found the national report and presentation open and constructive as it highlights initiatives and efforts of the Government for the promotion and protection of human rights, but also existing challenges, like gender-based violence, women’s limited participation in public life and the high rate of HIV/AIDS. It commended Belize for its human rights-based approach in development planning, social services and general policy formulation and execution, as well as for being party to core international human rights covenants. It commended the national gender policy and the National Gender-Based Violence Plan 2007-2009, but urged the Government (a) to improve the institutional capacity of the national machinery for the

advancement of women. It recommended Belize (b) to consider the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. It called on relevant international organizations and institutions not to spare their efforts in rendering assistance to Belize in human rights education, human rights monitoring and other related spheres.

51. Slovenia welcomed the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act in October 2008 and asked what steps the Government has made to fully implement it. It was also concerned about reports that corporal punishment of children within schools as well as in families is lawful and widely practiced, and asked if Belize intends to review its legislation with a view to prohibit all forms of corporal punishment of children. Following the observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Slovenia asked what the Government intended to do to improve the equal enjoyment of all rights of children belonging to minorities and indigenous peoples. It recommended Belize (a) to submit all overdue reports to United Nations human rights conventions' treaty bodies and to answer to questionnaires sent by Special mandate holders, since no reply was sent to 13 questionnaires within the deadlines in the last years; (b) to fully implement the Domestic Violence Act; (c) to review its legislation in a view to prohibit all forms of corporal punishment of children; (d) to protect Maya customary property rights in accordance with Maya customary laws and land tenure practices in consultation with affected Maya people of the whole Toledo district.

52. Turkey noted the concerns of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and UNICEF on the high rate of children living in poverty especially in rural areas, and on the high number of working children. It thanked the delegation for the responses provided on the revised Strategic Action Plan on Poverty, welcoming its focus on vulnerable groups. It asked for further information on support provided to economically disadvantaged families, particularly in rural areas. It also asked what steps are being taken to protect children from all forms of exploitation and abuse. It recommended the Government (a) to take further steps to guarantee the rights of children to an adequate standard of living and ensure that children from economically disadvantaged background are not exploited or abused. Noting the unemployment rates in the national report and recalling observations by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women that there remains a concentration of women in low-paid sectors of public employment and a considerable wage gap between women and men in Belize, it asked whether any special programme or micro-credit scheme exists to support women's entrepreneurship. It recommended Belize (b) to take targeted measures or affirmative action, where necessary, to ensure active participation of women in the labour market and to close the wage gap between women and men. It further recommended the Government (c) to ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

53. Germany highlighted the ruling of the Belize Supreme Court in favour of some of the Mayan villages regarding their use of their land rights. It recognized the detailed information provided by the delegation and also the difficulties of solving the situation and implementing the Court's ruling. It asked what the plans are for a way ahead because the non-solution of this issue affects the Toledo District economically as well as socially. It recommended Belize (a) to continue efforts to submit overdue reports requested by the committees of various international conventions to which Belize is a party, and also to seek technical assistance for the establishment of these reports; (b) to change the legislation concerning criminal responsibility of children and to raise the age limit for criminal responsibility to the age of eighteen; (c) to abolish corporal punishment for children.

54. Japan commended Belize for making measures against HIV/AIDS, a major national issue, and for establishing a National AIDS Commission. It also applauded Belize for having a National AIDS In The Workplace Policy designed to eliminate workplace discrimination against persons living with HIV/AIDS. It said it hoped that efforts will be made to ensure that these policies will be implemented countrywide, and that attention will be paid to ensure that those affected by HIV/AIDS are not subject to discrimination and violations of privacy due to a lack of understanding or prejudice. It said it was pleased to know that Belize is actively studying the international treaties and conventions, and recommended that Belize accede in a timely manner to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which it signed in September 2000, to further advance its human rights policy.

55. Trinidad and Tobago underscored Belize's commitment to democratic traditions and values, and the system of local governance that facilitates greater enfranchisement of rural communities, particularly of indigenous peoples. It also highlighted the establishment of an independent Office of the Ombudsman in 1999 and the election of the first female to that post in January 2009, as well as the creation of an Internal Affairs Department of the Police Service. Trinidad and Tobago identified with the challenges of small island developing States and small and vulnerable economies. In this regard, it fully endorsed the recommendation that enhanced capacity-building at the technical and policy levels be considered imperative to ensure that a human rights methodology infuses all policy and planning processes and to adequately arm the relevant agencies with the requisite tools needed to stand in the vanguard of the protection of human rights. It commended Belize for its proactive approach with respect to safeguarding the human rights and dignity of all Belizeans.

56. The Czech Republic expressed its appreciation for the responses to the written questions submitted. It welcomed the long-term National Action Plan for Children, and recommended (a) that Belize strengthen efforts towards its full implementation. It also recommend (b) that the age of criminal responsibility, as well as the minimum age for marriage, be increased so that they comply with international standards, and (c) that possible shortcomings in the registration procedure of all newborn children are rectified. In area of protection against torture, it recommended that Belize (d) accede to the CAT-OP and (e) submit its overdue CAT report in early course. In the area of protection of the rights of asylum-seekers, it recommended Belize (f) to review its legislation and practice with a view of ensuring effective access to asylum procedure and upholding of the principle of non-refoulement. With respect to the protection of the right to privacy and non discrimination, it recommended (g) to put and end to any discrimination against same-sex sexual activity between consenting adults, in particular to review any discriminatory legislation, and to adopt measures to promote tolerance in this regard, which would also facilitate more effective educational programmes for the prevention of HIV/AIDS. It recommended that (h) human rights training with regard to the protection of the human rights of vulnerable groups, in particular women, children, indigenous peoples and persons of minority sexual orientation or gender identity, be provided to law enforcement officials, judicial officers and and all State officials.

57. Jamaica commended Belize for the report presented and for its commitment to ensuring that the fundamental rights and freedoms of all its people are protected. It noted Belize had highlighted the need for further capacity-building and technical assistance in areas such as human rights education, monitoring and reporting, and encouraged the international community to give Belize its full support in its efforts to build a more just and equitable society.

58. Latvia noted that Belize has signed almost all major human rights treaties and is committed to the protection and promotion of human rights. It raised the issue of standing invitations to special procedure mandate-holders, an issue they had also addressed as a written question before the UPR session. While no requests have been made by special procedure mandate-holders to visit Belize, it recommended that the Government consider extending a standing invitation to all special procedures of the Human Rights Council.

59. Belize stated that it aspires to the goal of timely reporting, however, further consideration of streamlining the reporting process is encouraged, taking into account the constraints that small States face.

60. Belize is undertaking a multi-agency project for the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act. Much effort has been invested in training various stakeholders, particularly the front-line implementers, in the new provisions of the Act. A comprehensive public education programme is being implemented with NGO partners. Belize is improving protection for battered women at its shelters.

61. The social assistance programme has been upgraded through the doubling of benefits received by indigent families and incorporating conditionalities, thereby establishing a partnership with families.. The majority of beneficiaries are from the rural areas, particularly in the Toledo District. Belize is actively working with the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank to explore modalities for strengthening its social protection systems.

62. The unemployment rate for women, particularly single mothers, is a matter of concern for the Prime Minister. As a result the Women’s Department has benefitted from an increased budgetary allocation to pilot a comprehensive and holistic project that provides skills training, job placement and family support services to single mothers in south-side Belize City. The recently completed first round is being evaluated; the results will be used to strengthen the programme and consideration will be given to implementation on a national scale.

63. The issue of use of corporal punishment on children merits thorough national debate. Nevertheless corporal punishment has already been abolished in children’s institutions. There are rules and regulations for corporal punishment in schools. The Education Act is being reviewed with a view towards full abolition. NGOs have taken an ongoing role in promoting the national dialogue on the abolition of corporal punishment in all spheres.

64. Belize reiterated the measures undertaken to implement the Supreme Court decision, including continuing dialogue, a moratorium on the issuing of licences for mining, logging or the sale or transfer of lands in the area in question and sustaining an environment of trust and confidence.

65. Belize is considering draft legislation to have birth registrations done in the health system, as a vast majority of births in Belize occur within health institutions.

66. Belize recognizes that legal representation is key to true access to justice. The Legal Aid Office has recently been enhanced to provide legal representation to the indigent. While this is a step in the right direction, Belize acknowledges that more resources need to be invested in this area.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

67. The recommendations formulated during the interactive dialogue have been examined by Belize and the recommendations listed below enjoy the support of Belize:

1. Look into the possible ratification of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (Netherlands);

2. Ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR) (Turkey), which has been signed but not ratified (Argentina);

3. Consider the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPD) (Azerbaijan); accede to CPD and ICESR (Mexico);

4. Accede to ICESR in a timely manner as it was signed in September 2000 (Japan);

5. Consider adhering to the Optional Protocols to ICESR and CPD as soon as possible (Argentina, Mexico) as well as the Optional Protocols to ICCPR and to CED (Argentina);

6. Accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OP-CAT) (Czech Republic); consider its ratification (United Kingdom, Argentina);

7. Work towards completing the process already underway for accession to major international instruments of human rights (Algeria);

8. Implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to prioritize effective measures to reduce poverty among indigenous and minority children (Canada);

9. Fully implement the Domestic Violence Act (Slovenia);

10. Consider the possibility of establishing a national human rights institution in conformity with the Paris Principles (Algeria);

11. Conduct a systematic evaluation of the merits of establishing a national human rights institution (United States);

12. Provide human rights training with regard to the protection of vulnerable groups, in particular women, children, indigenous peoples and persons of minority sexual orientation or gender identity to law enforcement officials, judicial officers and all State officials (Czech Republic);

13. Continue to strengthen its efforts to ensure that all police and security officers receive human rights training (Netherlands); introduce human rights education for all government officials and departments and ensure that a human rights-based approach is mainstreamed across government policy (United Kingdom); deploy further efforts in training security forces in the field of human rights (Italy);

14. Strengthen the office of Ombudsman and the police department's office of internal affairs in order to improve capacity to hear and investigate complaints (Canada);

15. Consider the possibility of eliminating the required parents' consent for HIV testing for minors under the age of 16 (Argentina);

16. Strengthen efforts for the full implementation of the National Action Plan for Children (Czech Republic);

17. Rectify possible shortcomings in the registration procedure for all newborn children (Czech Republic);

18. Further strengthen activities to prevent the spread of HIV and stigmatization and discrimination against people living with HIV (Ukraine);

19. Strengthen its efforts with regard to timely reporting to United Nations human rights treaty bodies (Netherlands);

20. Continue to implement the recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and on a regular basis submit the relevant reports for its consideration (Ukraine);

21. Submit its overdue report to the Committee against Torture at the earliest time (Czech Republic);

22. Submit all overdue reports to United Nations human rights convention treaty bodies and answer the questionnaires sent by special procedure mandate holders (Slovenia);

23. Continue efforts to submit overdue reports requested by the committees of various international conventions to which Belize is a party, and seek technical assistance for the establishment of these reports (Germany);

24. Consider extending a standing invitation to all special procedures of the Human Rights Council (Latvia);

25. Give priority to the improvement of the situation of certain vulnerable groups, especially women and children (Algeria)

26. Take further steps to guarantee the right of children to an adequate standard of living and ensure that children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are not exploited or abused (Turkey);

27. Continue to address the persisting gender inequality in the country (United Kingdom);

28. Improve the institutional capacity of the national machinery for the advancement of women, for their active involvement in public life (Azerbaijan);

29. Consider the adoption of measures commensurate with international standards on the subject and the launching of public campaigns about non-violent forms of discipline (Argentina);

30. Review its legislation with a view to prohibiting all forms of corporal punishment of children (Slovenia);

31. Investigate duly and promptly allegations of misconduct, abuse and violence by public agents and take adequate action against those responsible for such crimes (Italy);

32. Step up programmes aimed at eradicating poverty and improving social indicators, including in health and education (Algeria);

33. Take further concrete measures to enhance women's access to health care, in particular sexual and reproductive services, as recommended by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, among others (Netherlands)

34. Take targeted measures or affirmative action, where necessary, to ensure active participation of women in the labour market and to close the wage gap between women and men (Turkey);

35. Redouble its efforts in favor of the respect of the rights of indigenous peoples, in line with the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Mexico);

36. Continue its pursuit of assistance from the international community to foster its national human rights capacities (Mexico).

68. The following recommendations will be examined by Belize, which will provide responses in due time. The response of Belize to these recommendations will be included in the outcome report adopted by the Human Rights Council at its twelfth session:

1. Consider the complete abolition of capital punishment in its internal legislation (Italy);

2. Increase the age of criminal responsibility and the minimum age for marriage so that they comply with international standards (Czech Republic); change the legislation to raise the age limit for criminal responsibility to eighteen (Germany);

3. Take appropriate legislative measures to ensure that no person can be subject to criminal sanctions for same-sex activity between consenting adults (Italy);

4. Establish a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles (Canada);

5. Offer a standing invitation to all special procedures and seek international technical assistance as recommended by several United Nations human rights treaty monitoring bodies (United Kingdom);

6. Put an end to any discrimination against same-sex sexual activity between consenting adults, in particular by revising any discriminatory legislation, and adopt measures to promote tolerance in this regard (Czech Republic);

7. Abolish corporal punishment for children (Germany);

8. Provide defendants in all serious criminal processes with an attorney when they cannot afford one by themselves (Canada);

9. Protect Mayan customary property rights in accordance with Mayan customary laws and land tenure practices in consultation with affected Mayan people of the whole Toledo district (Slovenia);

10. Review its legislation and practice with a view to ensuring effective access to asylum procedure and upholding the principle of non-refoulement (Czech Republic).

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

Annex

COMPOSITION OF THE DELEGATION

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

H.E. Mrs. Janine Coye-Felson, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Belize to the United Nations;

Ms. Ayesha Borland, Senior Foreign Service Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade;

Mr. David Grant, First Secretary, Embassy of Belize in Belgium.
