

**Meeting of the Commonwealth  
Ministerial Committee on Belize  
24<sup>th</sup> September 2008  
Concluding Statement**

The Commonwealth Ministerial Committee on Belize was convened by the Commonwealth Secretary General on 24th September 2008 in New York in accordance the mandate given by the Commonwealth Heads of Government when they met in Coolum, Australia in March 2002, "to convene the Commonwealth Ministerial Committee on Belize when the occasion required it". The meeting was chaired by the Honourable Christopher Sinckler, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and International Business of Barbados.

The Committee met to review developments in the continuing efforts of Belize to bring an end to Guatemala's territorial claim. The Committee was briefed on the current situation by the Honourable Wilfred Elrington, Attorney General and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Belize

The Committee noted that the inability of the parties to resolve their differences through negotiation under the Agreement on a Framework for Negotiations and Confidence Building Measures between Belize and Guatemala signed on 7 September 2005, had resulted in a recommendation by the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS) on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2007, that the dispute be referred to the International Court of Justice for adjudication.

The Committee noted with satisfaction developments since then wherein the parties, having signaled their acceptance of the OAS Secretary General's recommendation, had engaged in meetings since 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008 to negotiate the Special Agreement required for submission of the case to the International Court of Justice,

subject to the conduct of required national referenda in the respective countries.

The Committee urged that the necessary steps for compliance with this requirement should be expeditiously concluded by the parties, to determine whether the people of Belize and of Guatemala approved referral of the dispute to the International Court of Justice.

The Committee expressed high confidence that the dispute could be resolved through the judicial procedure of the International Court of Justice, resulting in the satisfactory conclusion of the Parties' efforts toward the peaceful and definitive settlement of the territorial dispute, and urged the support and financial assistance of the international community to meet the costs entailed.

The Committee expressed satisfaction over the agreement by the Parties to maintain, during this phase of the process, the Confidence Building Measures that, through the support of the Organization of American States, had contributed immensely to stability in the adjacent border areas of Belize and Guatemala. The instrumental role played by the Office of the Organization of American States continues to be an essential requirement for the effectiveness of the Confidence Building Measures

The Committee reaffirmed its firm support for the territorial integrity, security and sovereignty of Belize.