

**OPENING STATEMENT**  
**12<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**  
**CONSIDERATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE**  
**UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF BELIZE**  
**23 September 2009**

Thank you Mr. President  
Excellencies and their delegation  
Members of the Human Rights Council

Mr. President, I wish to congratulate you on your recent election as President of the Human Rights Council, and I pledge the support of Belize in the discharge of your duties. We are confident that you will skilfully and competently guide the work of this session.

I wish also to thank the Working Group of the Council and the Troika: Brazil, Russia and Malaysia who worked with us in May during the UPR process as well as the staff of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights here in Geneva.

Mr. President, Belize is pleased to return to this hall for consideration and adoption of the Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of Belize, document A/HRC/12/4, which is before the plenary today.

Before I discuss briefly the recommendations of the Working Group, I want to reiterate commitment of the Government of Belize to human rights. Indeed the Government of Belize views human rights as fundamental to our development, our democracy and our very way of life. It is for this reason that my Government approached the Universal Periodic Review of Belize seriously and with the frankness and sense of commitment that is indispensable to making the Review meaningful.

The full and perfect realization of human rights, Mr. President, is a goal to which we aspire and to which my Government is committed to

taking the necessary steps to move steadily toward. In this regard we have given thoughtful and thorough consideration to the recommendations of the Working Group as contained in the Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of Belize. As will be recalled the delegation of Belize at the Review of Belize in May accepted the vast majority of the recommendations. Our delegation indicated then, that further consultations at home were required on a mere ten recommendations. I am happy to report that the final position of Belize in respect of all the recommendations including those ten recommendations are contained in the Addendum to the Report, document A/HRC/12/ 4.Add1, which my Government submitted a couple of weeks ago.

We are of the view that the recommendations generally will contribute to the improvement of the human rights situation in Belize. However, critical to implementation is support to ensure that our efforts are sustained and effective. For small developing countries such as Belize, technical assistance from the international community is important to the task ahead.

It is necessary to emphasize that Belize has taken a realistic approach in its reflection and consideration of the recommendations. I must therefore stress that Belize will continue to take a measured approach to the consideration and accession of new treaties which will include a thorough review of obligations and reporting requirements to ensure that we are fully able and ready to meet those obligations upon accession.

Belize recognizes and accepts that there is room for improvement on the timely submission of reports to the various treaty bodies. I am pleased to report that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Belize is in an advanced stage of discussions with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Office in Panama for the conducting of a workshop in Belize aimed at building the capacity of Government and stakeholders in drafting reports to the treaty bodies. We believe that such a training session will assist us immensely in improving our technical capacity to begin to meet those

many outstanding reporting obligations. We do not view this workshop as a one-off. We reiterate, therefore, our call on the OHCHR, and the international community generally, to assist in small countries like Belize in improving their technical capacity to meet their reporting obligations.

Belize notes that meeting reporting obligations is a shortcoming which plagues many small states. It may be necessary to re-think the existing process so that there can be more consolidation and streamlining of reports. This, for instance, would eliminate the need to present the same information to multiple treaty bodies. Such reform may go a long way in easing the reporting burden and will allow us to focus more on implementation. Notwithstanding the difficulties of meeting our many reporting obligations, we fully appreciate the importance that reporting plays in the monitoring and evaluating of the implementation of the various human rights treaties in Member States.

Similarly, my Government has made initial contact with the OHCHR to express its interest in exploring the possibility of establishing a national human rights institution. A full consideration of all aspects of the establishment of such an institution must be undertaken before a final decision can be taken. In the interim, however I must point out that, a number of existing institutions such as the National AIDS Commission, the National Women's Commission, the National Council on Aging and the National Committee for Families and Children are tasked with ensuring the implementation of the particular human rights treaty.

The National Women's Commission of Belize is presently engaging in a project aimed at building the capacity of Belizean women to become more active participants in local and national politics – a deficiency we readily acknowledged in our National Report.

These are only a few examples to demonstrate that in Belize we are already beginning to take action on a number of the recommendations. And we will continue in this vein as we work

toward that goal I mentioned earlier of a better and more perfect enjoyment of human rights in Belize.

Mr. President, Belize is proud of its achievements in guaranteeing the human rights of all its citizens. The fundamental human rights of all Belizeans are enshrined in our Constitution. We have made great strides in building a culture of human rights and we have progressed in nurturing the institutions which implement, support and monitor the exercise of human rights. We have crafted programmes to help our most vulnerable populations so that they may have dignity and full enjoyment of their human rights.

Yet we are fully cognizant that challenges persist, and that our efforts can be strengthened. The preparation of our National Report provided an opportunity to assess our human rights framework, the effectiveness of our implementation programmes and the reach of our human rights promotion initiatives. The interactive dialogue provided constructive and insightful comments and recommendations. We have found the UPR process forthright, but appreciative of our socio-economic context and our resource constraints. It is the view of Belize that the UPR has achieved its objective. It has compelled that self-reflection which is imperative for improvement. And it has provided the opportunity to reaffirming our unwavering commitment to human rights.

Mr. President, I thank you.