



**International Covenant on  
Civil and Political Rights**

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**Human Rights Committee**

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Agenda item 5

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties  
under article 40 of the Covenant**

**List of issues in relation to the initial report of Belize**

**Addendum**

**Replies of Belize to the list of issues\***

[Date received: 14 October 2018]

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

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## Preliminary Responses to the List of Issues in relation to the initial report of Belize

### Question 1

1. In the landmark case of *Caleb Orozco v The Attorney General of Belize et al. Claim No 688 of 2010*, the court expressly invoked Article 2 of the Covenant at **paragraph 93** of the judgement. In that case, the Court relied on another case, which in turn referred to Article 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (“ICCPR”). The court opined,

*“In Toonen v Australia ... the UN Human Rights Committee ruled that various forms of sexual conduct including consensual sexual acts between men in private under Tasmanian law were incompatible the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (‘ICCPR’). The UNHCR held that the word ‘sex’ in Articles 2 and 26 of the ICCPR were to be interpreted as including ‘sexual orientation’.” This interpretation has been adopted by other UN Agencies and bodies.”*

2. The court further stated at **paragraph 94** that “Belize acceded to the ICCPR in 1996 two years subsequent to Toonen. As such, it can be argued that in doing so, it tacitly embraced the interpretation rendered by UNHCR.”

3. We are unable to locate, at this point, a domestic case which directly illustrates how the phrase “public interest” in Section 3 of the Constitution would be interpreted. Reference may be made to the *Allyson Major and Attorney General et al. Claim No. 470 of 2014*. This case was based on amendment to the Firearms Act which stipulated that if you are ordinarily resident occupier of any land, house or premises in or on which any firearm or ammunition is found all were arrested, detained and charged. The burden was then placed on the persons arrested to prove they had no knowledge of the firearm or ammunition. Counsel for the Claimant contended that this was a breach of his client’s constitutional right of the presumption of innocence (**section 6(3)(a) of the Constitution of Belize, Cap 4, Revised Edition 2011**). In this case the court applied another case by the name of *de Freitas v The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture [1998] UKPC 30* which established the three pronged test which the court used to determine whether a restriction was reasonably justified in a democratic society. In that case the court asked itself the following questions: (i) whether the legislative objective is sufficiently important to justify limiting a fundamental right; (ii) whether the measures designed to meet the legislative objectives are rationally connected to it; and (iii) whether the means used to impair that right or freedom are no more than is necessary to accomplish the objective.

4. Reference may also be made to the Privy Council decision *Bermuda Commissioner of Police and Attorney General v Bermuda Broadcasting Corp, et al PC Appeal No. 48 of 2007 dated 23 January 2008*, which illustrates that to determine what is in “public interest” requires a balancing by the Court of the competing interests.

### Question 2

#### Answer to 2(a):

5. The following national specialised institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights in Belize exist:

- Professional Standards Branch (Belize Police Department) — investigate allegations of police misconduct include police brutality; to the public and internally;
- National Women’s Commission — advocate for and protects the rights of women;
- National Committee on Families and Children — promote and protect of children under the authority of the National Families and Children Act;

- National AIDS Commission — advocates for equality of all persons including persons living with HIV; promotes safe sex;
- National Council on Aging — advocate for and protects the rights of older persons;
- Office of the Ombudsman (OMB) continues to receive and investigate complaints by any persons or body of persons who claim to have sustained injustice, injury or abuse or other wrong doing by any authority.

6. In addition in June 2018 Belize enlisted the support of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in the conduct of a feasibility study on the establishment a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles.

#### **Answer to 2(b)**

7. Since the submission of the Report in 2017, the budgetary allocation from the Government of Belize has increased consecutively over the last two financial years. The budgetary allocation for the Ombudsman’s Office has increased by 8.7% allowing for an increase in technical and support staff. The Office of the Ombudsman is governed by the Ombudsman Act as an independent institution. In discharging his statutory functions the Ombudsman receives the full cooperation from all Government ministries and agencies. In 2016 the Belize Police Department (BPD) and the OMB signed a MOU in 2016. The MOU facilitates interagency cooperation in the investigation of complaints, training, public education and awareness, joint field operations, and development and implementation of SOP’s standards to fast track the investigation and resolve complaints.

### **Question 3**

8. The Constitution guarantees the protection of every person in Belize from any type of discrimination. Section 3 to 19 of the Constitution stipulate the entitlement of every person in Belize to fundamental rights and freedoms without regard to race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex and that all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. The case of *Orozco vs. AG et al* now interprets sex in Section 3 to include sexual orientation as one of the grounds.

#### **Answer to 3(b)**

9. The relevant provision of the Constitution is Section 20 which allows for persons whose rights have been, are being or are likely to be contravened to apply to the Supreme Court for redress. In the ground breaking case of *Wade vs. Roaches Civil Appeal No. 5 of 2004*, the Court provided elucidation on the meaning of Section 20 of the Constitution at page 33 of the judgement by relying on the case of *George Enrique Herbert v Attorney General (Action No. 398 of 2003, judgment delivered 24 October 2003)*. In the latter case, the court made the following observation:

*“The [breadth] and potential of this provision in the hands of the court cannot be underestimated. It enables the court, in a case where a contravention of fundamental rights is established, to fashion a remedy in order to do whatever it thinks appropriate for the purpose of enforcing or securing the enforcement of any of the Constitution’s provisions dealing with fundamental rights.”*

10. Administrative proceedings for victims of discrimination includes: The Public Service Commission, the Security Services Commission, the Judicial and Legal Services Commission, the Teaching Services Commission, the Office of the Ombudsman, and the Professional Standards Branch.

### **Question 4**

11. In practice the Department of Immigration and Nationality does not enforce the provisions of Section 5 (1) of the Immigration Act.

12. A comprehensive review of the Immigration Act is ongoing.

### **Question 5**

#### **Answer to 5(a)**

13. The National AIDS Commission (NAC) is collaborating with the Attorney General's Ministry in the drafting of an Anti-Discrimination Bill to address issues of discrimination in Belize in the private sector.

#### **Answer to 5(b)**

14. There are cases involving violence by LGBTI individuals against other LGBTI individuals, however there are no confirmed cases where it is motivated by hate. Where there are cases motivated by hate, such cases are isolated.

15. The BPD conducts regular human rights training for the police officers to sensitize them on these issues. Any complaints relating to the conduct of police officers should be reported to the Professional Standards Branch.

16. At this time we are not aware of any incidents of hate speech against LGBTI individuals.

17. As recently as September 2018, the Department of Immigration is reiterated its intention to undertake the comprehensive review of the Immigration Act to address ambiguities in the law including Section 5.

### **Question 6**

18. Belize has witnessed an increase in women leaders in senior government positions including Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Directors (Heads of Department). The 2018 CEOs listing indicates 32% of those serving as CEOs in the government service are women, an increase from the 25% serving in 2013. Regarding the participation of women in political and public life, as in many other parts of the world, an attitudinal change in order to encourage more is required to participate in national and municipal political levels. At the General Elections held in November 2015, the two principal political parties fielded three female candidates each. Two successful female candidates of the incumbent party were appointed as Ministers of State in ministries with substantive portfolios in addition to another female Minister of State appointed through the Senate. Of the total aspirants for the March Municipal Elections 2018, 28% were women.

19. To raise women's representation at all levels of our political system, the Women in Politics (WIP) Project continues to work towards building the confidence and improving the capacity of a critical mass of women in Belize to participate in and transform the political process at its highest level. Since the launch of the project a total of 98 women have received training in issues germane to politics and national development.

20. In 2017 the National Women's Commission hosted 200 women politicians, aspiring politicians, as well as women of leadership roles in organizations and communities for Belize's First Women in Politics Conference. The objective of the conference was to inspire, empower and educate to see higher representation of women in government and positions of leadership and for women to provide recommendations on improving the support given to them as politicians and aspirants. The recommendations from the conference will be used for future activities to build on the WIP Project.

#### **Answer to 6(b)**

21. The Equal Pay Act, Chapter 302:01 came into effect on 10 January 2004.

22. The Government Service is guided by The Government of Belize Pay Scale.

## Question 7

23. At this point in time, the Ministry of the Attorney General has no plans to undertake a review of the Constitution of Belize in relation to the ICCPR.

24. It must be clarified that the reference in paragraph 27 of Belize's Report CCPR/C/BLZ/1 is to Section 19 of the Constitution which requires a review of the detention at intervals not exceeding three months by an Independent Tribunal established by law and presided over by a person appointed by the Chief Justice. This review is not done by the Attorney General's Ministry as was erroneously stated in Annex II to the CCPR/C/BLZ/1.

25. The rights set out in Article 4(2) (the right to life, freedom from torture and inhumane treatment, contractual obligations and slavery) of the ICCPR are not derogated from during a state of public emergency in Belize pursuant to Section 18(10) of the Constitution.

## Question 8

### Answer to 8(a)

26. The Police Department views domestic violence by its members as a serious disciplinary that in March 2018 the Police (Amendment) Act was passed and Section 24(3)(z) thereof includes domestic violence by police officers as a "major infraction". Where there is a complaint of domestic violence against a police officer, such officer is immediately placed on interdiction, pending the outcome of such investigation. Where such officer is tried before a police tribunal or a court of law and is convicted, the penalty may range from a maximum fine or dismissal.

27. There are dedicated Domestic Violence Units in all Police Stations in Belize. The typically when complainant first goes into the Unit counselling is sought; for this the support of the Ministry of Human Development is necessary until counsellors can be posted within the Units. If the victim requests that charges be brought against the perpetrator then the police will charge and encourages this especially in the cases of repeat offenders. However, typically, 70%+ of victims withdraw their complaint at the Court stage.

### Answer to 8(b)

28. The implementation of the National Gender-Based Violence Plan of Action 2016–2020 has not yet started due to capacity constraints.

### Answer to 8(c)

29. Investigations are heavily dependent on the cooperation of witnesses. Police prosecutors undergo regular training in respect of domestic violence cases. Statistics will be provided subsequently.

### Answer to 8(d)

30. Haven House is currently the only safe house for female survivors of domestic violence and their children in the Belize District. It was established as an NGO in 1993 and it provides temporary housing for up to 21 days, counselling, and legal advocacy for residents. Mary Open Doors is a shelter located in the Cayo District which provides basic counselling, skills training and job placement for clients. It was opened in 2008. The House of Dorcas located in the Corozal District is also a relatively small shelter which began operations in 2013 and which works closely with the WD to provide similar services to victims of domestic violence.

31. The State Party clarifies that section 72 of the Criminal Code regarding marital rape has no restricted criteria as erroneously stated in paragraph 17 of the State Party Report. In fact, section 72 in effect, states that a male spouse commits marital rape against the female spouse where the male spouse has sex with her, without her consent and knows that she

does not consent or recklessly not caring whether she consents or not and regardless of the practical or legal status of the marriage.

32. The Government of Belize established the Office of the Special Envoy for Women, Children and Children with Disabilities which spearheads and carries public awareness and advocacy campaigns to address underlying attitudinal, systemic and cultural factors including by empowering women through her leadership.

### **Question 9**

33. Section 112 of the Criminal Code is compatible with the Covenant to the extent that it does not criminalize abortion where the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman. This is in keeping with Article 6 that deals with the right to life and the protection thereof.

34. The health sector offers access to abortion as per the proviso in the Criminal Code. In the case of rape or incest, the immediate care and treatment includes the provision of emergency contraception. In cases where the report is done late, and the pregnancy is established, the case is managed through the Department of Human Services. The decision for termination is based mainly on medical indications.

### **Question 10**

35. There are no measures being undertaken or planned towards the abolition of the death penalty or to accede to the Second Option Protocol of the ICCPR. The death penalty is a valid part of the Laws of Belize. Belize has not instituted an official moratorium, however, the death penalty has not been utilized in our jurisdiction for almost 30 years.

### **Question 11**

36. It is of great concern to the Government of Belize that homicide rates are relatively high, in many instances it is difficult to bring a prosecution to fruition because of witness tampering and intimidation. Prior to 2011 there was an additional issue with jury intimidation once a murder trial had started. Over the last 6 years Government has adopted a number measures in an effort to bring successful prosecutions in cases of murder and attempted murder, include:

1. Amendment to the Jury Act to allow trial for murder and attempted murder by a judge alone;
2. Amendment to the Evidence Act to mandate the judge to consider the testimony of a hostile witness in a murder or attempted murder trial;
3. Amendment to the Evidence Act to empower the Court to accept the tendering of statement of a deceased witness or a witness who is absent from the jurisdiction at the time of trial or a witness who fears for his/her safety;
4. Witness Anonymity Act awaiting the assent of the Governor General.

37. There is no evidence to support the involvement of members of the Coast Guard in the disappearance at sea of three Belize City fishermen in August of 2015. The allegation stemmed from a rumour that due to a previous altercation on land between the Coast Guard and the men that went missing. Reports were filed at the Office of the Ombudsman and the Belize Police Department on the nature of the interaction. There was no evidence to support involvement of members of the Coast Guard in the disappearance of the fishermen.

38. The Professional Standards Branch has been established at every district, each are adequately staffed. Section 18 of the Summary Jurisdiction Procedures requires a complaint to be instituted.

39. The Criminal Code CAP 101 of the Laws of Belize, R.E. 2011, Section 32(a) and (b) prohibits the excessive use of unwarrantable personal violence or ill-treatment to any person. The Professional Standards Branch of the Belize Police Department receives citizens' complaints, facilitates the transparent investigation of police actions, and provides an avenue for redress of wrongful police action. Depending on the severity of the allegation and outcome of the investigation, officers can be charged criminally and/or disciplinary.

40. Regular training is done with the members of the Coast Guard, the Belize Police Department, and the Belize Defence Force to discourage excessive use of force and firearms by police officers and security forces. The Ministry of National Security has identified focal persons from these agencies for the establishment of a committee to review the Convention Against Torture and recommendations will be made for legislative changes.

41. The Independent Complaint Commission is in the process of becoming operational with a target date for early 2019. A person has already been identified and hired to head the Commission.

42. Branches of the Professional Standards Branch (PSB) are being established countrywide. The responsibility of the police officers assigned to these branches is to receive, investigate and address complaints by any persons or body of persons who claim to have sustained injustice, injury or abuse or other wrong doing by any police officer as well as, recommend programs to reduce the incidence of police abuse and enhance the police development of the police officers. The PSB branch offices are physically separate from the police stations, the purpose is to give aggrieved persons more confidence to come forward to lodge complaints. The establishment of these branches will be complemented by a program of public education to further educate Belizeans on citizens' rights and responsibilities.

43. Officers have already been identified for the Corozal and Orange Walk Districts and for San Ignacio and Banque Viejo towns. Four (4) officers have been assigned to the Belize City Office as this is where the largest number of complaints are registered. Belmopan City as the headquarters of the PSB is headed by a Senior Superintendent, who is assisted by four (4) officers.

#### **Answer to 11(f)**

44. The investigation of the cases referred to in the State Party's Report at paragraph 38 have been completed; these cases are still before the Court.

#### **Question 12**

45. The Minister of National Security issued a directive for the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee to implement the recommendations by the Subcommittee for the Prevention of Torture. Among the list of priorities, the Committee has initiated preliminary work to expressly define torture.

#### **Question 13**

46. In 2011, the Minister of Education signed statutory instrument that lifted the suspension of sections 50.2 and 51.4 of the Education and Training Act that prohibit corporal punishment in schools.

#### **Question 14**

47. It is not a practice of the BPD to detain persons as a means of intimidation. Continuous training is given to officers to ensure that the rights of detainees are respected.

48. Where there have been allegations of arbitrary detention of persons beyond 48 hours without charge, investigations have been carried out and there have been instances where persons have brought civil actions and have been successful. For example, in the case of

*Attorney General of Belize v Micah Thompson et al Civil Appeal No. 40 of 2011*, the Respondent's quantum of damages was increased for false imprisonment.

49. To address prolonged pre-trial detention, particularly for cases of murder, the Criminal Procedure Rules (CPR) now specify the timeframes in which persons can remain in custody for the preparation case files and for trial of summary and indictable offenses. Cost Orders may be levied for any delays in following the timetable.

50. Section 162 of the IPA has not been amended. However, Belize Courts are bound by the CCJ decision in *Romeo Da Costa Hall v The Queen* [2011] CCJ 6 (AJ) in which the CCJ, our apex court, held that a convict must be given credit for the time which was spent awaiting trial. This has been followed religiously by our Supreme Court and Court of Appeal.

### **Question 15**

51. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecution has been building capacity over the last few years. There are now 3 prosecutors assigned to the single court in the Orange Walk District, two prosecutors assigned to the single court in Belmopan City, one prosecutor assigned to the single court Dangriga Town, and seven prosecutors assigned to the three courts in Belize City.

52. As of February 2018 two additional now assist with the backlog in the criminal division of the Supreme Court.

53. The minimum age of criminal responsibility in Belize is 12 years in line with international standards.

### **Question 16**

54. Although Belize has a reservation to paragraph 6 of Article 14 of the ICCPR regarding compensation for wrongful imprisonment, Section 5(6) of the Constitution does provide that any person who is unlawfully arrested or detained shall be entitled to compensation from the person or authority responsible. The case of the *Attorney General v Micah Thompson et al Civil Appeal No. 48 of 2011, Civil Appeal No. 49 of 2011 and Civil Appeal No. 50 of 2011* is instructive on this point. In this case, the Court of Appeal judges increased the quantum of general damages from BZ\$25,000.00 to BZ\$30,000.00 to each claimant for false imprisonment.

55. While the Government of Belize accepts the principle contained in Article 14 (3) (d) of the ICCPR it applies in certain defined areas, the problems of implementation are such that full application cannot be guaranteed at present.

56. The above notwithstanding, free legal representation is afforded to capital cases of murder as specified in Section 194 (1) of the Indictable Procedure Act and is applied based on existing resources.

57. Ministry of Human Development provides financial assistance to juveniles on a case by case basis for legal representation.

### **Question 17**

58. The Belize Central Prison has a capacity of 2,100 inmates and currently holds 1,200. The Belize Central Prison follows the minimum standards for prisoners. Regarding improvements to detention conditions in prisons and in police stations, the revised Prison Rules continuously improve on the standards for prisoners. The committee mandated by the Minister of National Security to ensure Belize's compliance with commitments made through the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment is tasked with ensuring that the rights of those detained are respected.

59. Over the last 5 years, there have been only three female juveniles housed on two separate occasions within the adult female inmates' facility.

### **Question 18**

60. The Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Act-2013 (TIPPA) prohibits all forms of trafficking and increased the punishment of up to 12 years' imprisonment if the victim is a child, and up to 25 years' imprisonment in cases involving sexual assault or other aggravating circumstances. The law also elevated the offense of trafficking from that of a Summary offence tried in the lower courts to an Indictable offense tried before the Supreme Court and increased the penalties.

61. Section 5 of the TIPPA elevated the existing Anti Trafficking in Persons Committee's status to that of a Council, with its own Secretariat The Anti-trafficking in Persons (ATIPs) Council has oversight and coordinates a cross section of Government Ministries and seeks to increase prevention and protection efforts, increase the number of investigations and successful prosecution of traffickers, reduce the vulnerabilities and the demand that fosters all forms of trafficking through public education and awareness, victim care, training and increase knowledge generation through data gathering and data management.

62. In 2017, ATIP's Council and the Belize Police Department conducted a series of trainings to build the capacity of the police officers attached to the Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) and Criminal Investigative Branch on human trafficking, victim identification and referral to the investigative unit within the BPD. The Council also partnered with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and international organizations to provide training to teachers, national utility workers, social security board inspectors, and private employers in the tourism sector on human trafficking, victim identification, and reporting. Extensive training was conducted with immigration officers, customs officers, labour officers, social workers, prosecutors and judges. Public education through the placements of billboards on major highways, public service announcements on the media and information sessions with communities are ongoing.

63. To increase the number of investigations, prosecution and convictions of TIPs crimes, the BPD created a TIPS Unit in 2018. This Unit is dedicated to the investigation of TIPs cases only. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) has the mandate to prosecute the alleged traffickers. Given the serious nature of TIPs crime, many of the TIPs cases are prosecuted directly by the DPP. For the period 2013 to 2018, the BPD has followed a total of 19 Trafficking in Persons (TIP's) cases from which nine (9) cases are awaiting trial; there are two (2) cases with convictions, two (2) cases otherwise disposed and six (6) cases still under investigation.

64. Earlier this year, and as a result of the concerns about police officers performing extra duties for night clubs and bars, a directive was issued prohibiting police officers from providing off duty services to these establishments.

### **Question 19**

65. There are no plans to review the necessity of requiring a Tax Clearance Certificate from persons intending to travel abroad. The Ministry of Finance sees this requirement as a tool in the administration and enforcement of Belize's income tax laws. Belize levies taxes only on income earned in Belize. It is intended as a tax enforcement mechanism and is not intended to restrict the freedom of movement of persons.

### **Question 20**

66. On April 25, 2017, a Technical Working Group was formed with its main objective being to submit a written paper with the input from all members of the Refugee Eligibility Committee ("REC") addressing recurring concerns and matters raised regarding the

*Refugees Act.* It is salient to note that the above issues were addressed in a written paper and submitted to the Refugee Department for their consideration.

### **Question 21**

67. Belize acknowledges the need to decriminalize irregular immigrants under the Immigration Act. The Government is moving towards a data driven comprehensive migration policy which will include aspects of decriminalizing irregular immigration as well as the matter of appeals against Orders. To do will require consideration investment in technology and capacity building.

### **Question 22**

68. The libel and defamation law only restricts freedom of speech in circumstances where a person's reputation is being tarnished. Section 12 of the Constitution provides for freedom of expression. However, the right is restricted for the purposes of protecting the reputations, rights and freedoms of other persons. In the case of *George Price v Harry Lawrence (Action No. 272 of 1981)*. The court analysed Section 12 of Constitution by stating that a person can publish and re-publish anything provided that it is within the limits or parameters of the law of libel.

### **Question 23**

69. There are no plans at this time to adopt legislations to expressly prohibit propaganda for war or advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

### **Question 24**

70. Belize has approximately 96% birth registration for children under age 5. The Ministry of Health continues to work towards universal birth registration and there is active consultation among the main stakeholders on viable means of addressing these identified bottlenecks. In the meantime, the Ministry now requires the registration clerks to visit parents at the bedside in an effort to complete the registration process.

71. Persons under the age of 16 must obtain the consent of their parents or legal guardians.

72. The Families and Children's Act mandates the reporting of child abuse and The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children contain provisions to protect children from sexual abuse. Where a report of sexual exploitation or sexual assault can be proven, the child is immediately taken away from that environment and placed under the protection of the Child Protection Services of the Human Development Department. The child transitions into either substitute care with family members or appointed caretakers. Later it is determined whether the child will remain with family members or placed into a permanent adoptive home. Victims of sexual exploitation receive counselling from the department throughout the process to ensure their mental health and wellbeing.

### **Question 25**

73. Measures are yet to be put in place to amend the Representation of Peoples Act (ROPA) to allow persons (1) certified to be insane or otherwise adjudged to be of unsound mind and (2) convicted persons serving prison sentences exceeding twelve months to have the right to vote.

## Question 26

74. The Government has taken the necessary steps to monitor continuously the extractive activities of oil companies in Toledo District. Prior to granting an exploration license to companies interested in oil extraction in the Toledo District, consultations are carried out in relevant communities to obtain the informed consent of the villagers. In 2018, US Capital Belize Corp, applied for an exploration licence to carry out drilling activities in rural Toledo. Before reviewing US Capital's application the Government, led by the Attorney General's Ministry, held consultations in July 2018 with ten (10) Maya villages within and near the area of interest. The purpose of these consultations was to present the villagers with information relating to the application and to ascertain whether they consented to the issuance of the exploration license. Nine (9) of ten (10) of the villages granted their informed consent.

75. With regard to the implementation of the Consent Order of the CCJ, in January 2016 the following steps have been taken:

1. The Toledo Maya Land Rights Commission (the "Commission") was established by the Government as the body with responsibility to oversee the implementation of the terms of the Consent Order;
2. The Commission in collaboration with all affected persons and/or organizations including the Maya Leaders Alliance and Toledo Alcalde Association has developed a Work Plan;
3. Bilateral Technical Committee has been established to support the work of the Commission as well as provide a space for dialogue with all affected parties and held its first meeting on the 8th day of October, 2018;
4. Also, a draft customary land tenure policy has been prepared, which is geared towards analyzing existing laws and policies, with one of the ultimate aims being the demarcation of lands in the Toledo District;
5. Until the Commission fulfils its mandate in the protection of Maya customary land tenure, the GoB in consultation with the Maya representatives, has developed a joint "**Reporting and Dispute Resolution Framework**" to address complaints which may arise in relation to this paragraph 4 of the Consent Order.

## Question 27

76. The preparation of this National Report began in 2015 and concluded in 2017. During this time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as the coordinator of the Report, undertook wide consultations with groups such as: United Belize Advocacy Movement (UNIBAM), Human Rights Commission of Belize, (HRCB), Belize Coalition of Persons with Heritage of African Descent (BCHAD), Office of the Ombudsman, Tikkun Olam, an advocacy NGO for sex workers, PETAL, an advocacy group promoting empowerment through awareness for lesbian and bisexual women, (Belize Family Life Association BFLA), the National Trade Union Congress of Belize, and the National Evangelical Association of Belize.

77. In the validation workshop held in January of 2016, an invitation was sent to the general public in which CSOs such as the National Garifuna Council, UNIBAM, BCHAD, Tikkun Olam, HRCB and the National Evangelical Association of Belize were present.

78. The National Report is posted on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website.

79. During the extensive period it took to produce the Report, the Ministry had to constantly update members of civil society organizations who were aware of the drafting of the report and were interested in the status of submission of the Report. As is the custom, following the presentation to the Committee, the Ministry intends to showcase the report and recommendations on the homepage of its website.