

**Statement  
delivered by  
The Honourable Ramon Cervantes  
Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and  
Immigration of Belize  
to the  
International Migration Review Forum  
United Nations Headquarters  
New York**

**May 19, 2022**

**Belize, welcomes this opportunity to address the First International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) as we continue to engage in local, national, regional, and global initiatives to address migration through the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration.**

**Belize is a country of origin, transit and destination for migrants. In addressing the full spectrum of migration, Belize has been guided by the 23 objectives of the GCM in managing migration at the local, and national levels, which exponentially relates to the regional and global levels.**

**We have been working to reduce the risks and vulnerabilities that migrants face by respecting, protecting and fulfilling their human rights, and providing them with assistance.**

**The plethora of GCM related policy instruments and best practices utilized by Belize span across various government ministries, in partnership with our international, regional and local organizations.**

**Mr President**

**In 2021 Belize implemented and commenced several initiatives including the following:**

- 1. Belize implemented a Migrant Worker Protocol**
- 2. Belize facilitated the regularization of irregular migrants whose immigration status had become irregular during border closure due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Belize waived the fees for nineteen months of payment from March 2020 to September 2021 to upgrade their status.**
- 3. We participated in several community outreach initiatives country wide, through the Ministry of Immigration with the International Organization for Migration**

- 4. We continued with the Digitization Project with the International Organization for Migration.**
- 5. We embarked in the implementation of the new ePassport System Electronic Passport Issuance and Control System (EPICS), which we will launch in October of this year.**
- 6. Special Work Permits were issued to Asylum Seekers**
- 7. We expanded a 2-year project with the United Nation High Commission for Refugees**
- 8. Belize established an online Temporary Employment Programme registration processing system**
- 9. We Established an online labour complaints mechanism**
- 10. In coordination with IOM Belize implemented the Assisted Voluntary Return Programme (AVR).**

**Other new initiatives planned for this year include:**

- 1. The updating of the Free Movement of Skills Committee legislation to include regulations as set out by the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME)**
- 2. The implementation of the Refugee Department's National Action Plan for Protection and Solutions via the MIRPS**

**3. And Mr. President, the jewel of the crown is Belize's implementation of an Amnesty Programme. This programme will offer permanent residence status to qualifying irregular migrants residing in Belize, who will then have a pathway to citizenship. This Amnesty Programme is expected to benefit close to 40,000 migrants, which is approximately ten percent of our population.**

**Mr President,**

**Although we face many challenges in the implementation of the GCM, Belize is doing its part to ensure that migrants are treated with dignity; and that they have access to justice, education for their children, basic health care, decent housing; and that their human rights are protected.**

**We will continue to work with our neighbours and the international, regional and local organizations as we move towards the full implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).**

**I Thank you.**