



**Ministry of Foreign Affairs
P.O. Box 174
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Belmopan, BELIZE C.A.**

**Summarizing the 13 Agreements between Belize and Guatemala
Signed, 17 December 2014**

- 1** *Protection, Conservation, Recovery and Return of Items of Cultural and Natural Patrimony Which Have Been Stolen, Pilfered, Looted, Exported or Trafficked Unlawfully*
SHORT TITLE: CULTURAL AND NATURAL PATRIMONY
Under this agreement, the Parties undertake to establish procedures to protect their national treasures and to develop necessary protocols for the return of stolen cultural and national patrimony; in the event that one Party's stolen patrimony is found in the other.
- 2** *Expedited Deportation*
SHORT TITLE: DEPORTATION
This agreement aims to expedite the process of deportation for individuals who have been found to enter the country illegally. This agreement applies only to first time offenders.
- 3** *Mutual Recognition of Driver's Licenses*
SHORT TITLE: DRIVER'S LICENSES
This agreement provides for the mutual recognition of driver's licenses issued in Belize and the Republic of Guatemala. Belizeans and Guatemalans who hold a valid driver's license from their respective country of origin, will be allowed to drive legally in the other country for a given period (90 days), before they are required to obtain a driver's license in the other country. This is to ease the process of acquiring a driver's license in the other country. It is expected that this will facilitate trade and tourism promotion, and will aid individuals who visit or reside in the other country.
- 4** *Equivalence of Studies and the Recognition of Educational Documents*
SHORT TITLE: EDUCATIONAL DOCUMENTS
In an effort to improve the efficiency of the accreditation process for educational documents, this agreement intends to simplify the various processes through different agencies, to certify an educational document acquired in either country. Under this agreement the respective Ministries of Education of both Parties will collaborate to review the relevant, respective curriculum and agree on their equivalencies. This will ease the process required for students to have their educational documents (such as diplomas, certificates and transcripts) recognized in the other country.
- 5** *Protection of the Environment and the Sustainable Use of Resources*
SHORT TITLE: COOPERATION ON ENVIRONMENTAL
Under this agreement, both countries will undertake joint efforts to improve the conservation and protection of the environment and protected areas. A Joint Coordinating Mechanism will be formed, whose membership will be cross-sectoral and whose work will include representatives of civil society. This Commission is to meet at least twice a year and its work will be focused in practical measures including: environmental safety, protection and management of watersheds and cultural and natural heritage sites, community development, environmental education, information and awareness campaigns, protection and monitoring of endangered species, among others.
- 6** *Harmonization of operating Hours at Legal Terrestrial Entry Points*
SHORT TITLE: 24 HOUR OPERATIONS
The official point of entry between Belize and Guatemala (Benque/Melchor) is currently in operation between 6:30 a.m. and 9 p.m., daily. This agreement allows for a 24 hour operating schedule. It is expected that the extension of opening hours will facilitate further trade and tourism between the two countries.

7 Electric Power Trade, Transmission, Interconnection and Grid Connectivity

SHORT TITLE: INTERCONNECTION

This agreement represents another step forward in the regional strategic initiative under the Mesoamerica Project to connect all electrical grids in the Central American region. It provides for the interconnection of Belize and Guatemala's power lines (Belize and Guatemala are already connected with Mexico), to enable these countries to buy and sell electricity on a competitive basis. This follows an initiative adopted by all countries in the Central American region, under the Plan Puebla Panama (now Mesoamerica Project) in 2001 to connect all Central American countries including Belize and Mexico, as a measure toward energy security and to ensure competitive rates. This development is a step in ensuring Belize's energy security by the availability of another option to source its electricity. It will also open the door to the possibility for Belize to market any surplus electrical power, abroad.

8 Transit of Students Through Terrestrial Ports of Entry

SHORT TITLE: MOVEMENT OF STUDENTS

A daily movement of students from Guatemala to Belize for the purpose of education has been occurring for years. It is estimated that there are currently around 800 Guatemalan school-aged children who cross everyday into Belize. This agreement aims to facilitate and better manage the flow of these students, and to better track their entry and exit. Despite the current flow largely being one sided, this agreement provides for Guatemala to facilitate Belizean students in a reciprocal manner should the need arise.

9 Programme for Seasonal Workers

SHORT TITLE: SEASONAL WORKERS

This agreement aims to better manage the entry and return of seasonal workers who move from one country to the other for certain periods of the year for employment purposes. It will ensure that necessary protocols are in place for the hiring of migrant workers, to protect their rights and the rights of the employers and to ensure the return of the seasonal workers to their country of origin, upon completion of contract. This agreement represents a departure from the approach that has applied previously, whereby seasonal workers who come to Belize are not sufficiently registered and monitored during their stay in the country. This has resulted in a lack of assurance of the return of seasonal workers to their country of origin, after the completion of contract. This agreement establishes the need for a contract to be signed between the employer and the employee, under the condition that the employee returns to his or her country of origin, upon the termination of their employment. The agreement strengthens the role of the Labour Department which will closely monitor and oversee this programme. While this agreement is expected to benefit mostly Guatemalans, there is also a provision for Belizeans who wish to pursue seasonal work in Guatemala.

10 Recovery and Return of Vehicles Stolen, Confiscated, or Impounded Illegally or Inappropriately

SHORT TITLE: STOLEN VEHICLES

This agreement aims to develop a protocol for the return of stolen vehicles from one Party to the other. Once a stolen vehicle and its legitimate owner have been identified, the agreement provides for the two countries to cooperate in facilitating the return of the vehicle to its rightful owner.

11 Issuance of Student Visas

SHORT TITLE: STUDENT VISAS

Students enrolled in a program of study at an educational institution of the Foreign Party, shall now under this agreement be able to obtain visas for the required duration of their studies. As it currently stands, Belizean students are required either to return to Belize and re-enter Guatemala every three months to validate their permit to stay, or find an Immigration Office to extend their Tourist Visa for another 3 months. While this agreement is expected to mostly benefit Belizean students, it does provide for the reciprocal treatment of Guatemalans who wish to pursue similar programs of study in Belize.

12 Cooperation on Sustainable Tourism

SHORT TITLE: TOURISM

The Agreement on Sustainable Tourism will allow for greater cooperation in the tourism sector between the two countries by exchanging information and good practices in several areas related to the industry.

13 Transfer of Prisoners for Serving of Penal Sentences

SHORT TITLE: TRANSFER OF PRISONERS

This agreement allows nationals who are serving a sentence in a prison of the Foreign Party, for a period longer than six months, to request that they be transferred to serve out their sentence in a prison in their country of origin. The convicted person is required to serve out the time as handed down by the courts. Belize already has a similar arrangement in place with Mexico.