



Press Release

PROPOSALS FOR RESOLVING BELIZE-GUATEMALA TERRITORIAL DISPUTE WIN BROAD INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

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The international community has strongly supported a series of proposals aimed at resolving the Belize-Guatemala territorial dispute. Drawn up by Facilitators appointed by both Parties, the proposals, which were submitted to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of both countries this past September 16, seek to provide an equitable, permanent, and honorable settlement to the centuries-old dispute. During a ceremony held in the Hall of the Americas of the Organization of American States, the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Colin Powell, Mexico's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jorge Castañeda, and El Salvador's Foreign Minister, María Eugenia Brizuela de Avila along with Britain's Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Latin America, Denis MacShane, all expressed their support for the Facilitators' proposals and urged the people of Belize and Guatemala to approve them. Secretary Powell noted that "a final agreement will remove a chronic obstacle to economic, environmental and social development in Belize, Guatemala and their neighbors. It will open the way to more trade, more travel, more cooperation on everything from fighting drug-trafficking to preserving the environment". According to the Mexican Foreign Minister, a firm basis has now been laid for the dispute to be resolved after more than two years of patient and enlightened effort. The Salvadorian Minister, meanwhile, hailed the Facilitators, saying that their work has given renewed dynamism to the principles of the Charter of the OAS. The British Under-Secretary of State stressed Great Britain's firm support for the efforts by Belize and Guatemala to settle their long-standing dispute, adding that his government intends to make a substantial contribution towards the Development Trust Fund. In his opening remarks, OAS Secretary General César Gaviria described the proposals as "balanced, comprehensive, definitive, honorable and lasting," and offered the Organization's full support to raise awareness of the proposals so that a successful conclusion to the process would demonstrate the political maturity of the governments as well as the political and social institutions and citizens of each country. The Foreign Ministers of Belize and Guatemala, along with the Foreign Minister of Honduras, as an interested party to the maritime aspects of the proposals, praised the culmination of two years of hard work, noting that the recommendations would now be put to referendum in both countries. The Belizean Foreign Affairs Minister, Assad Shoman, underscored the special significance of "this moment in the history of Central America" from which Guatemalans and Belizeans will benefit "by coexisting in peace, harmony and confidence" as they work together towards a better future. For his part, Foreign Minister Gabriel Orellana Rojas said the Guatemalan government had invested in the OAS "the trust it earned as the highest regional forum, convinced that the territorial dispute with Belize should be resolved based on the principles of international law in force in the Americas." Foreign Minister Guillermo Pérez-Cadalso Arias of Honduras



praised the Facilitators' spirit of "professionalism, independence and utmost integrity," describing their package of recommendations as "admirable for their imagination, creativity and balance." Representatives of the sub-regions of the Americas as well as the European Union also addressed the ceremony. Among them, firm support came from the Ambassadors of Costa Rica, representing the Secretariat pro-tempore of the Central American Integration System; Guyana, on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) group; as well as Canada; Brazil, representing MERCOSUR; and Colombia, representing the Andean Community. The Permanent Observer of Denmark (on behalf of the European Union) and Spain also supported the proposals. The Inter-American Development Bank, meanwhile, announced that the Bank would administer and contribute to the Development Trust Fund provided for in the proposals. In the closing remarks, OAS Assistant Secretary General Ambassador Luigi R. Einaudi said the Facilitators' proposals were daring, creative and valuable. He also thanked the member and observer states for firmly supporting the Facilitation Process by contributing to the OAS Fund for Peace, established to facilitate the peaceful resolution of territorial disputes in the Americas.

Reference: E-191/02