



Organization of American States

BELIZE AND GUATEMALA AGREE TO OAS SECRETARY GENERAL'S PROPOSAL TO BEGIN NEGOTIATION PROCESS WITH MARITIME ISSUES

February 10, 2006

Ministers of Belize and Guatemala responsible for negotiations on the territorial differendum between both nations today agreed to a proposal by the Organization of American States (OAS) Secretary General to "begin a process of negotiation on the maritime area of the territorial differendum." The parties agreed their next negotiation meeting would be March 23 and 24 in Guatemala.

At today's meeting at OAS headquarters, the Chief Negotiator for Belize, Ambassador with Ministerial Rank Assad Shoman, and Guatemala's Foreign Affairs Minister Jorge Briz thanked Secretary General [José Miguel Insulza](#) for the proposal to continue the negotiation process that is now entering a new phase of talks. The Secretary General's proposal includes appointing a "recognized expert on the Law of the Sea" as well as inviting the government of Honduras to participate in the negotiation process.

Following the meeting, the Secretary General announced that "today's decision by both governments' representatives to start the negotiations with maritime elements of the differendum is a significant development, as everyone's believes this holds the best prospects for positive agreements in the least amount of time."

Belize's Assad Shoman described the session as "a very pleasant meeting between the delegations of Belize and Guatemala with the Secretary General participating and providing guidance and counsel." Shoman went on to note important areas of government-to-government collaboration, including on joint projects he said "are even helping to foster a better atmosphere for the negotiations in which we are engaged."

For his part, Guatemala's Foreign Minister Briz declared, "Today is a historic day which marks a positive step in the effort to resolve this longstanding territorial differendum." Acknowledging OAS efforts to help find a solution, Briz said, "We hope the two governments and their citizens will put in place conditions that are conducive to growth, wealth creation and standards of living that really contribute to the development of the region."

Secretary General Insulza proposed that the agreement reached at the meeting in Belize last November should be reiterated as regards the principle that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed." He stressed that "the agreements arrived at on the issues of the differendum will not enter into force until a final agreement on all of the related issues is reached in accordance with the legislation of each country."

Today's meeting was convened by the Secretary General to propose steps to be taken as discussions continue under the Agreement on a Framework for Negotiations and Confidence-Building Measures, signed by both countries at OAS headquarters in September 2005, and in keeping with the decisions by the representatives of both governments at their first ministerial level meeting held last November in San Pedro, Ambergris Cay, Belize.

Reference: E-023/06