

THE FUND FOR PEACE:  
PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT  
OF TERRITORIAL DISPUTES

---

THE ROLE OF THE OAS  
IN MEDIATING THE  
BELIZE-GUATEMALA  
TERRITORIAL DISPUTE



OAS PEACE FUND  
SECRETARIAT FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS



Organization of  
American States

The Fund for Peace: peaceful settlement of territorial disputes and the role of the OAS in mediating the Belize-Guatemala territorial dispute / [Magdalena Talamas, Chief, OAS Peace Fund].

p. : col. ill. ; cm. (OAS official records; OEA/Ser.D/XX SG/SAP/III.5.2).

ISBN 978-0-8270-6152-1

1. Peace. 2. Conflict management. 3. Peace-building. 4. Belize--Foreign relations--Guatemala. 5. Guatemala--Foreign relations--Belize. 6. Pacific settlement of international disputes. I. Organization of American States. Secretariat for Political Affairs. Department of Sustainable Democracy and Special Missions. Fund for Peace Section. II. Title: The role of the OAS in mediating the Belize-Guatemala territorial dispute. III. Series.

OEA/Ser.D/XX SG/SAP/III.5.2

THE FUND FOR PEACE:  
PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF TERRITORIAL DISPUTES

THE ROLE OF THE OAS IN MEDIATING  
THE BELIZE-GUATEMALA TERRITORIAL DISPUTE



# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

---





F

ollowing its independence from Spain in 1821, and separation from the Central American Republic in 1842, Guatemala began making gestures to the United Kingdom (UK) to recover the territory which encompasses present-day Belize and which was known at that time as British Honduras. In 1859, a Convention between Great Britain and the Republic of Guatemala Relative to the Boundary of British Honduras was completed with Guatemala recognizing the present boundaries of the settlement of Belize as definitive; however, in 1946, Guatemala's Government officially declared the Convention of 1859 void, claiming that the UK failed to comply with all its economic assistance clauses. In November 1979, the 34th United Nations' General Assembly passed a motion which supported Belize's "inalienable right for self-determination" together with "the independence and the preservation of the inviolability and integrity of Belize". The following year, at the 35th United Nations' General Assembly

another resolution was approved which called for the establishment of an independent Belize. The Assembly also provided a time-frame which stipulated that Belize should be an independent nation before the 36th United Nations' General Assembly in 1981. That same year, representatives from the UK, Guatemala and Belize signed a Treaty which registered Guatemala and the UK's acceptance of Belize as an independent territory, and announced cooperation between Belize and Guatemala in terms of security, trade and mutually beneficial projects. Four days after Belize's declaration of independence (21 September 1981), the state joined the United Nations. On January 8, 1991, Belize became a member of the Organization of American States (OAS). Eight months later, on 11 September 1991, Guatemala established diplomatic relations with Belize; however, this did not imply Guatemala's acceptance of the location of the borderline between both countries, only Guatemala's acknowledgement that the Belizean people had the right to self-determination.





# POLITICAL PROCESS

In March 2000, the governments of Belize and Guatemala restarted talks on their longstanding territorial differendum, under the auspices of the Secretary General of the Organization of American States. On November 8, 2000, Belize and Guatemala signed the first Agreement on Confidence Building Measures, through which the two parties agreed to respect an “ADJACENCY LINE” running generally in a south-north direction from the reference marker at Gracias a Dios in the south to the reference marker at Garbutt’s Falls and from there to the reference marker at Aguas Turbias in the north. The territory lying within one kilometer of the ADJACENCY LINE, in either direction (that is, to the east or west) is called the “ADJACENCY ZONE.” On February 7, 2003, the Foreign Ministers of Belize and Guatemala signed a second Agreement to Establish a Transition Process and Confidence- Building Measures, which was later amended in September 2005 through the “Agreement on a Framework for Negotiations and Confidence- Building Measures between Belize and Guatemala”.

Following signature of the 2005 General Agreement, two ministerial meetings Took place. At the second such meeting, in February 2006, the Secretary General proposed that the negotiation process concerning the territorial differendum begin with the maritime zone. For

this aspect of the differendum, the Government of Honduras was invited to participate. A Negotiating Group was formed, which met on several occasions at both the ministerial and technical level. Unfortunately, after almost two years of negotiations in which a certain degree of rapprochement was achieved, the Parties failed to reach an agreement. The Secretary General therefore recommended that the most appropriate venue for resolving the differendum would be the International Court of Justice. Both countries assented and on December 8, 2008, the Foreign Ministers of Belize and Guatemala signed, at OAS headquarters, the “Special Agreement between Guatemala and Belize to submit the territorial, insular and maritime claim of Guatemala to the International Court of Justice.”

The final decision to take the case to the ICJ must be confirmed through national referenda in both countries. Following a failed attempt at holding the referenda in 2013, the countries agreed to create the appropriate conditions so that a new date for holding the referenda could be fixed. To this end, on January 24th, 2014, the Foreign Ministers of Belize and Guatemala, together with the Secretary General of the OAS, signed the Roadmap Agreement for Strengthening Bilateral Relations and established the Belize-Guatemala Joint Commission to explore and develop projects and programs between the

two countries, with the goal of strengthening the ties of friendship and cooperation between them. The objective of the Road Map was to disengage the issue of the differendum from the urgent need to consolidate the bilateral relationship for the sake of regional cooperation and integration. Under this framework, sixteen bilateral agreements (thirteen formal and three informal) were negotiated and dozens of bilateral meetings among different sectors of society took place. This was a historic step that was accomplished within less than 12 months, which culminated in December 2014. For the first time in history, Belize and Guatemala sat down to normalize their good neighborly relations by formalizing how they will work together in the future on a vast number of issues of common interest and concern. The success of these efforts was key to continue to move the process forward. As a result, on May 25, 2015 the Foreign Ministers of Belize and Guatemala signed the Protocol to the Special Agreement with the OAS Secretary General as witness. This Protocol enables Belize and Guatemala to hold the referenda either simultaneously or separately on the date that is more convenient to each of the Parties







# ROLE OF THE OAS







T

he efforts of the OAS directed at helping the governments of Belize and Guatemala resolve their long-standing territorial dispute are carried out within the framework of the Fund for Peace: Peaceful Settlement of Territorial Disputes, more commonly known as the OAS Peace Fund, and consist of providing both political support to the process, as well as technical support in the field through its Office in the ADJACENCY ZONE, which functions as a civilian peace-keeping mission. Politically, the OAS is responsible

for fostering dialogue and understanding; promoting and facilitating the establishment of a climate of confidence between both countries; developing and recommending specific measures, mechanisms or processes aimed at preventing or resolving specific problems or incidents; monitoring the implementation and execution of the confidence-building measures, and suggesting alterations or revisions where necessary; conducting in situ visits in either of the two States; and convening and directing meetings between representatives of both countries.



# OAS OFFICE IN THE ADJACENCY ZONE (OAS/AZ)







C

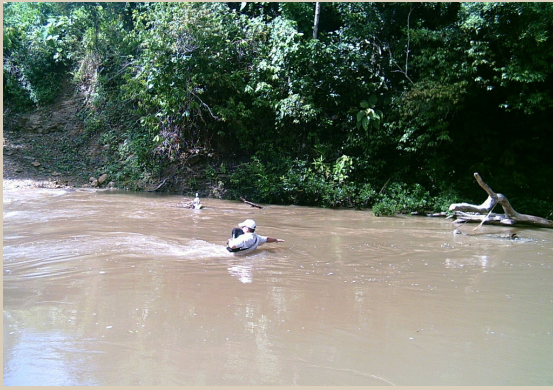
Central to the Agreement to Establish a Transition Process and Confidence-Building Measures of 2003 was the establishment of the OAS Office in the ADJACENCY ZONE for the

purpose of fostering community-to-community contacts across the Adjacency Line and verifying any transgression of the established confidence-building measures.

### The OAS/ADJACENCY ZONE Office:

- Investigates, verifies and helps defuse hundreds of incidents that occur within the ADJACENCY ZONE on an annual basis;
- Forges numerous alliances among bi-national counterparts;
- Offers specialized training and workshops in specific technical areas;
- Implements a very popular culture of peace program that benefits thousands of local students on an annual basis;
- Facilitates increased cooperation among the armed and security forces of Belize and Guatemala;
- Executes community resettlement projects;
- Provides humanitarian assistance to individuals and local communities;
- Implements rural development projects;
- Undertakes information campaigns on the Confidence Building Measures to inform communities about the Agreements in force.







# VERIFICATIONS

T

he OAS/ADJACENCY ZONE Office is charged with carrying out various activities, of which verifications, their follow-up and preparation of reports on any incident in the ADJACENCY ZONE are not only the most important regular activity but also provide the means to ensure a constant presence among the communities in the area. Their most tangible result is to detect any anomaly or conflict in its early stages, in order to respond immediately and thus prevent an escalation of the conflict that could damage relations between communities, the security and armed forces, as well as between the two countries. Verifications include an investigation of the geographic location of the events, its protagonists, and the parties affected; a

determination of the nature of the incident; an assessment of the situation following the incident; ongoing follow-up of the case; and reporting to the respective officials of each country. These reports are submitted to both Foreign Ministries. It is important to note that some verifications demand a high level of precision in terms of cartography and coordinates reading, particularly in cases where the verification sites are very close to the ADJACENCY LINE.

In these cases, the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH) supports the efforts of the OAS/ADJACENCY ZONE Office by providing experts and specialized equipment to ensure the utmost accuracy of the data. The PAIGH also offers GPS workshops to OAS Staff, as well as to the Belize Defence Force (BDF) and Guatemalan Army (GA) Officers. The OAS/ADJACENCY ZONE Office conducts over 100 verification activities on an annual basis, the majority of which are carried out in the jungle and rural areas under difficult circumstances where access to the sites where incidents occur is highly challenging. Visits to the sites of the incidents usually take days and are carried out by foot, mule or small rowing boats.



# SUPPORT TO THE ARMED FORCES







**T**he OAS/ADJACENCY ZONE Office is also mandated to promote increased communication and coordination, as well as rapprochement, between the officials of Belize and Guatemala and diverse government security entities, both local and central. In addition, the OAS/ADJACENCY ZONE Office coordinates, organizes and hosts quarterly Operational Coordination Meetings between the Belize Defense Force (BDF) and the Guatemalan Army (GA) to exchange information about the security situation in the Adjacency Zone, examine specific incidents involving either forces and to schedule link patrols.

The provision of communications equipment by the OAS to the security and armed forces of

Belize and Guatemala is contemplated in the agreement on confidence-building measures in force. Pursuant to this mandate, the OAS donates on an annual basis GPS (Global Positioning System) devices to both the BDF and the GA and offers training on the correct use of these units. Likewise, the OAS provides other types of sophisticated devices, such as solar panels, satellite radios and laptops with specialized software to help improve communications among the officers when they are deployed to remote rural and jungle areas, keeping the ADJACENCY ZONE better monitored and more peaceful. These devices not only enable connections to be faster and more timely but the officers are also able to rely on uniform equipment with precise data readings.

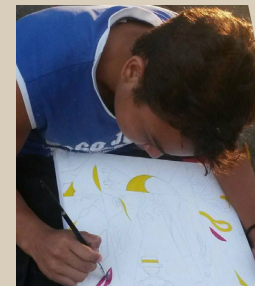
# CULTURE OF PEACE



Promovien



FONDO DE







Support for children and youth is also part of the ongoing efforts of the OAS Office in the ADJACENCY ZONE geared towards the promotion and development of a culture of peace. In coordination with the Mayors of the communities on either side of the ADJACENCY LINE, the OAS/ADJACENCY ZONE Office facilitates language, sports, carpentry, handicrafts, sculpture, music (wind and string instruments), singing, cooking, painting and theatre workshops and training programs for Belizean and Guatemalan students resident in the area.

The objective of this program is to help reduce tensions in the ADJACENCY ZONE by facilitating a climate of trust, interaction, dialogue and collaboration among the younger members of the communities living in the area. Specifically the program provides:

- Greater access to non-formal education for adolescents and for members of the community via the training workshops
- Development of technical and vocational skills that can enable the participants to engage in future productive livelihoods.
- Increased cross-cultural communication, teamwork, interaction, and cooperation between ADJACENCY ZONE community members
- Change in behavior and attitudes towards

neighboring communities and forged common values of peace, brotherhood and tolerance.

- Greater involvement of children and young people into the institutional life and everyday activities of their communities, and development of hobbies as a method of encouraging adolescents to find a positive direction in life.
- Strengthened partnerships between local government authorities, migration officers and schools on both sides of the Adjacency Line.
- Increased self-esteem and confidence among the youth in the ADJACENCY ZONE by developing problem-solving skills, empowering them to generate change and acting as agents of hope for a more peaceful and respectful coexistence.
- Increased enrollment of women in the culture of peace program, with females accounting for at least 50 per cent of such enrollment.



# 2013

Resettlement of the Retiro I and Sapote II communities to La Monteria, Guatemala



# 2008

Resettlement of the Santa Rosa Community





# RESETTLEMENT PROJECTS

## 2004

Resettlement of Nueva Judá



The Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures also contemplates the support of the General Secretariat of the OAS in relocating Guatemalan settlers living in the ADJACENCY ZONE administered by Belize prior to the year 2000 who voluntarily wish to be resettled in Guatemala. The OAS/ADJACENCY ZONE Office successfully executed three community resettlement projects: the Nueva Judá, the Santa Rosa, and the Montería (Retiro I and Sapote II) Community Resettlement

projects. In the case of Nueva Judá, between 2004 and 2005, the Office resettled 30 families (186 Guatemalan citizens). In 2008, 17 families from the Santa Rosa community (over 100 Guatemalan citizens) who were living on the eastern-side of the Adjacency Line were relocated to Guatemala. The most recent resettlement project was completed in November 2013 when the last 5 remaining Guatemalan families (34 Guatemalan citizens) living in the ADJACENCY ZONE administered by Belize were resettled to la Montería, Guatemala. These resettlement projects entailed surveying

and updating the population censuses, purchasing new land in Guatemala, constructing new housing with electricity, running water and sewage systems, moving the household goods from the old settlements, distributing property titles, dismantling the old settlements and harvesting crops. The Santa Rosa and Nueva Judá projects also included building schools and recreation centers for the communities. The resettlement of these families not only removed an obstacle from the political process but also improved the living standards of the relocated families.

# INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION







# T

he OAS/ADJACENCY ZONE Office is responsible for coordinating regular meetings and organizing training workshops for other relevant actors operating within the ADJACENCY ZONE, such as for mayors, municipal authorities, police officers and customs and border management officials, natural disaster response bodies, and institutions responsible for forest reserves, among others. The objective of these meetings and workshops is to promote a continuous interaction, cooperation and dialogue between relevant governmental and nongovernmental authorities of Belize and Guatemala, as well as to provide them with a better understanding of their responsibilities and role in strengthening the confidence-building measures in force. Regular interaction and information sharing through these initiatives help develop bonds and bilateral team efforts in specific action areas related to border management.



# TECHNICAL COOPERATION







Another important mandate of the Mission is to help promote development in the ADJACENCY ZONE. To this end, the Peace Fund is working with specialized agencies in both countries to provide practical assistance to the communities in the ADJACENCY ZONE. Depending on the specific project, the technical assistance provided can include the dispatch of experts, the training of local officials for 'capacity development', the supply of equipment or financial assistance.



# HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE







# T

he OAS/ADJACENCY ZONE Office provides humanitarian assistance in the form of aid and action designed to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain and protect individuals and communities in the ADJACENCY ZONE. It is governed by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence and it is intended to be short-term in nature. Specifically, support is provided through the provision of fuel for transport, food, bus tickets, donation of school supplies and toys, and overnight shelters. The beneficiaries are the schools, firemen, hospitals and needy families whose situation is directly linked to incidents in the ADJACENCY ZONE and to the strengthening of confidence-building measures in that area.



# COMMUNITY SUPPORT







**F**or the past 12 years the OAS Office in the Adjacency Zone has promoted and executed community clean-up and trash pick-up campaigns; supported telethons; built schools and fences; donated computers, software, and other specialized equipment to academic institutions and cultural centers; hired teachers; donated musical instruments; and renovated existing infrastructure, including repainting signs and basic up-keep.



# GROUP OF FRIENDS







The Agreement to Establish a Transition Process and Confidence-Building Measures of 2003 called for the establishment of a Group of Friends of the Belize-Guatemala Transition Process (the “Group of Friends”), consisting of OAS Member and Observer States, and others interested in supporting a peaceful resolution to the territorial differendum. The Group of Friends acts as an advisory body to the Secretary General and provides political and operational support for undertaking the various activities contemplated under the agreement on confidence-building measures in force. The members of the Group of Friends include Germany, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, El Salvador, Spain, United States, Honduras, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, United Kingdom, Sweden, Uruguay and the European Union.



# SPECIAL EVENTS







# T

he OAS/ADJACENCY ZONE Office receives various dignitaries throughout the year who come to visit the programs advanced by the OAS Office in the ADJACENCY ZONE, in particular within the framework of the promotion of a culture of peace initiative. Many of these public figures boast diverse backgrounds and consist of high-level international politicians, diplomats, renowned artists, writers, athletes, musicians, journalists, and other celebrities who, through their participation, help us promote inter-American principles and values related to peace and harmony. By taking advantage of their fame

and popularity, these individuals help the OAS raise awareness about important issues that require immediate attention in the ADJACENCY ZONE. Through public appearances, visits to the OAS/ADJACENCY ZONE Office or by using their talent to support specific programs, these celebrities make significant contributions to humanitarian causes and serve as staunch advocates of important causes. Their commitment and true concern for the plight of the communities in the ADJACENCY ZONE

have inspired many others to become civically engaged.

In 2012, as part of his tour of three Caribbean countries, in celebration of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee, Prince Harry of Wales visited the OAS Office in the ADJACENCY ZONE to observe the culture of peace program where children of Belize and Guatemala showcased their artwork and musical skills.





ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

TAMBIÉN LA GOBIERNA  
DONDE CASTILLA  
DE ARAGON  
DE LAS REJAS  
Y TORNIA PRESIDE  
DEL ESTAD OCCIDENTE

NO PARKING  
NO PARKING DISTANCE  
2 HOUR PARKING FOR CITY



The General Secretariat of the OAS would like to thank the following donors for their generous contributions to the OAS Peace Fund:

European Union, Canada, the United Kingdom, Spain, Sweden, Mexico, Turkey, Germany and the United States







---

OAS PEACE FUND  
SECRETARIAT FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS

---



Organization of  
American States