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PRESS RELEASE

The Senior Courts of Belize Judicial Education Institute to host landmark Conference on Criminal Justice Reform: Advancing the C.C.J. Academy for Law Needham's Point Declaration

The Senior Courts of Belize, through its Judicial Education Institute will host its first-ever conference on Criminal Justice Reform: Advancing the Caribbean Court of Justice's Academy for Law Needham Point Declaration.

The five-day Conference, which will take place from 2nd - 6th September 2024, is funded by the European Union (E.U.) and United Nations Development Programme (U.N.D.P.) PACE Justice Project and the U.S. Embassy International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Agency (I.N.L.) and the Government of Belize.

The Opening Ceremony will feature the Acting President of the Caribbean Court of Justice, Hon. Dr. Justice Winston Anderson, who will deliver keynote addresses, the Hon Chief Justice, Hon. Mde. Louise Esther Blenman, of the Senior Courts of Belize, will deliver and address and the Prime Minister Hon. Mr. John Briceño is also slated to provide official remarks, together with representatives, Mr. Aniceto Rodriguez Ruiz, Head of Cooperation from the E.U., Mr. Kishan Khoday, U.N.D.P. Resident Representative of Belize, and Mr. Heath Bailey, Director of the I.N.L.

This landmark and ground-breaking initiative is the first-ever in person conference to be hosted by the recently formed Judicial Education Institute, created by Chief Justice, Hon. Mde. Louise Esther Blenman. This seminal conference will focus on advancing the Needham's Point Declaration, a pivotal framework for criminal justice reform in the Caribbean. The Needham's Point Declaration underscores the need for swift and fair justice for the guilty and protection of the rights of victims by identifying key areas integral

to criminal justice reform, including policy and legislative interventions to address and reduce the backlog, encouraging effective police investigations and prosecutions and adequate representation for the accused and protection of victims' rights, and key judicial interventions.

The faculty for the Conference comprises an impressive array of legal luminaries and experts led by Chief Justice, Hon. Mde. Louise Esther Blenman, and includes the Acting President of the Caribbean Court of Justice Hon. Mr. Justice Winston Anderson and Belize's jurist Hon. Mr. Justice Denys Barrow of the Caribbean Court of Justice. This distinguished gathering of facilitators also includes the Presidents from regional Courts of Appeals, such as Hon. Mme. President Justice Alice Yorke-Soo Hon, Chair of the working session, Hon. Mde. Justice Minnet Hafiz-Bertram, Turks and Caicos, , and Jamaica, Hon. Mme. Justice Marva McDonald-Bishop. Among this erudite group are Hon. Mme. Justice Dame Linda Dobbs D.B.E., Judge of the Supreme Court of England and Wales, Judges of the Court of Appeal and High Courts from Belize, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and other Commonwealth nations. In addition to this impressive list of facilitators are the Directors of Public Prosecutions from Belize and Jamaica, King's Counsel from Barbados and Jamaica, forensic analysts from Belize and the U.S., along with wellness experts.

Participants include, police prosecutors, defence attorneys, Legal Aid Department, Attorney General's Ministry, crown counsel from the DPP's Office, magistrates and judges.

The Conference agenda covers a vast array of topics critical to effective criminal justice reform. Sessions will explore judgment writing, delivery of extempore judgments, the treatment of victims and vulnerable witnesses, digital forensic science, bail, and judge-alone trials. Other key areas include prosecutorial standards, the duty to court and client, sentencing guidelines, case management, identifying obstacles in case preparation and solutions, cross-examination techniques, advocacy skills, plea negotiations, the application of rules of evidence, and ethics. The Conference will also include topics such as holistic wellness and health.

The Judicial Education Institute's Conference on Criminal Justice Reform: Advancing the C.C.J. Academy for Law Needham's Point Declaration represents a historic milestone for Belize. Participants will have the opportunity to share knowledge, exchange best practices, and develop innovative strategies to improve the criminal justice system in Belize.

Through this anticipated intervention, Belize, with the support of its international partners, will continue to make significant strides and improving the criminal justice system in Belize. The outcomes of this Conference are expected to have far-reaching implications for Belize as we continue to collaborate to enhance the effectiveness, fairness and integrity of the criminal justice system in Belize.