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### **PRESS RELEASE**

**The Senior Courts of Belize Judicial Education Institute to hold Closing and Certificate Ceremony for the Concluded Criminal Mediation Training 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

**Honourable Chief Justice Mde. Louise Esther Blenman, President of the Judicial Education Institute of the Senior Courts of Belize** announces the Closing and Certificate Ceremony for participants of the recently concluded training on Criminal Mediation.

The ceremony will take place on **Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2024** at the **Chief Justice's Courtroom**, located at the **Main Building of the Senior Courts of Belize, Treasury Lane, Belize City**. The event will **commence at 3:00 p.m.** and all attendees are kindly requested to be **seated by 2:50 p.m.**

The ceremony will feature an address by **Hon. Chief Justice Mde. Louise Esther Blenman**. Remarks will also be delivered by the **United Nations Development Programme Deputy Representative Mr. Micheal Lund** and **Hon. Mr. Justice Derick Sylvester, Chair of the Judicial Education Institute of the Senior Courts of Belize**. The closing remarks will be delivered by **Hon. Mme. Justice Candace Nanton, Judicial Programme Coordinator** for the Judicial Education Institute and one of the programme coordinators for the criminal mediation training.

**Dr. Sharmayne Saunders** of the University of the West Indies, Open Campus, Belize and one of the esteemed training coordinators of the criminal mediation training, will present highlights from the training, sharing key insights and outcomes from the week-long workshop.

This criminal mediation training was funded by **the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) PACE Justice Project** and

marks another important step in the ongoing efforts of the Senior Courts of Belize to improve the efficiency, accessibility and fairness of the judicial system in Belize.

The successful in-person criminal mediation training, held from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2024, provided essential skills in criminal mediation to foster a more efficient and restorative approach to the criminal justice system in Belize. The training was also facilitated by programme coordinators, **Dr. Christopher Malcolm, Senior Lecturer** at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica and **Mr. Burchell James, Financial and Management Consultant and International Trainer of Mediators** in Jamaica.

Participants who completed the training will be awarded certificates to recognize their accomplishments and contributions to advancing the use of mediation in criminal cases.

With this crucial training, the courts will have several criminal mediators at their disposal, which is expected to significantly reduce the backlog in the criminal justice system. By equipping legal professionals with specialized skills in criminal mediation, the courts can resolve cases more efficiently, allowing for speedier and more amicable resolutions. The criminal mediation training also advances the recommendations outlined in the CCJ Academy for Law Needham's Point Declaration and the Senior Courts of Belize Strategic Plan, which advocates for the greater use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, including criminal mediation, to improve the justice system in Belize.

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