

Belize



Speech by

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(BELIZE)**

**On the occasion of the United Nations Conference on
Environment and Development
(Rio + 20)**

BELIZE'S ADDRESS TO THE RIO+20 CONFERENCE

**HON. LISEL ALAMILLA
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GREETINGS AND INTRODUCTION

Distinguished delegates, Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, a Pleasant Good Afternoon.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Brazil for demonstrating its commitment in furthering the goal of sustainable development. This is indeed a laudable goal that is not only a professional call for us as delegates of our countries to seek to craft technical solutions and responses, but it is also a moral imperative for us to act in a way that is responsible not only for the present generation, but also those that would come after us: Our children, and their children's children.

It is indeed a great honor and pleasure for me to address this conference on behalf of my country Belize. Twenty years ago I was not in this position as the Minister responsible for Sustainable Development in my country. I was employed as a part of the NGO conservation community. Although I now wear a different hat, I must say my work in terms of its commitment in finding the appropriate balance between man and nature that would account for an improved quality of life while at the same time maintaining integrity of the resources and the ecosystems which support them, have not changed.

In relation to the general goal of this conference to further efforts at sustainable development at global and national levels, it is my observation that sustainable development means different things to different people in time and geographical space. For us in Belize sustainable development means ensuring that all segments of the population benefits as the country defines and implements sound and comprehensive socio-economic strategies. This definition is underpinned by five (5) National Policy Objectives, these include:

- Enhancing and sustaining economic growth;**
- Improving access to quality social services;**
- Modernizing the State and improving governance;**
- Ensuring safety and security in Belize, and**
- Implementing measures that would be based on identifying the appropriate balance between social and economic development, and integrity of the environment.**

CONTEXT: NATIONAL STATUS

Belize is characterized as one of the least populous nations in Central America. The Country has a small and open economy that is based on its

natural resource base. Given its geography and political history, Belize is a part of the CARICOM member states and as such is a part of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

CHALLENGES

The conceptual challenges facing Belize in regards to the issue of sustainable development relates to finding the appropriate balance between the socio-economic needs of the people and the integrity of the natural resources. Although Belize has endorsed the Millennium Development Goals (MGD's) we have found it challenging to make the targets that have been identified for this function. This is particularly in relation to the sustainable development and poverty alleviation goals. Much of this relates to the shocks to the national economy from the global economic downturn and natural disasters. These shocks have especially impacted the national capacity to respond to the call of sustainable development. Capacity limitations relates to both human and financial resources as well as the broader institutional framework to realize these development goals.

Some indicators of the inability of the State to respond effectively for these challenges include: worsening poverty, high unemployment rates, increased in homicide and violent crimes, and drug trafficking as well as resource depletion and degradation of the environment and the illegal harvesting of

fish, timber and other natural resources arising from illegal incursions from neighboring states.

POLICY INTERVENTIONS/RESPONSES

Perhaps the most recent and substantive intervention by the Government of Belize has been to dedicate or name a Ministry to specifically deal with the issue of sustainable development which I'm sure we will all agree is an important macroscopic and cross cutting issue; thus, coming out of the March 2012 General Election as a Ministry labeled the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development with additional responsibilities for the environment, climate change and protected areas management. The Government of Belize has also made a range of intervention at the macro-policy level. These have included the genesis of:

- A document titled "Vision 2030" which is in effect a long term development strategy for the nation going up to the year 2030;**
- A National Medium Term Development Strategy which has a five year lifespan;**
- The National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan; and**
- Belize Rural Area Development Strategy.**

At the Sectoral level there has also been a definition of range of policies and strategies. These include:

- **The National Tourism Master Plan;**
- **The National Land Use Policy;**
- **The National Energy Policy;**
- **The National Biodiversity Policy and Action Plan;**
- **The National Protected Areas Policy and Systems Plan and**
- **The Living Aquatic Resources Bill which is a comprehensive revision of the Fisheries Act.**

At the pan-sectoral level there are a range of coordinating institutions and mechanisms geared at harmonizing inter-sectoral approaches to management.

These include:

- **The National Climate Change Committee (NCCC);**
- **The National Human Development Advisory Committee (NHDAC);**
- **The National Resources and Environmental Policy Committee (NREPC);**
- **National Protected Areas Committee (NPAC);**

- **Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT);**
- **Coastal Zone Management Authority (CZMA) and**
- **National Environmental Appraisal Committee (NEAC).**

REVELANCE OF RIO+20

The Government of Belize endorses fully the concept and functional activities and outcomes of the current Rio+20 forum and objectives which is geared at taking stock of where we are collectively in terms of national, regional and global approaches to sustainable development. This initiative also will be examining the challenges that we face at various levels in achieving the sort of national and global targets as well as treating new and emerging issues. We recognize that it is a national imperative to deal with the macroscopic challenges facing us both at the national level as well as the global level. These include, of course, issues such as fossil fuel dependency, climate change impacts, and in general vulnerabilities of small and emerging economies such as Belize to move forward with its environmental sustainability agenda given the scope and depth of the challenges arising from sort of global economic dissonance. We fully endorse and support the goal of the conference in regards

to the green economy and the institutional frameworks to accommodate sustainable development.

WAY FORWARD

In concluding I wish to point out and reiterate the following:

- The need for the clear understanding that there are common challenges being faced by both the developed and developing nations in relation to population growth, unsustainable use of natural resources, poverty, the dependency on fossil based fuels and its attendant impact on the climate system globally;**
- The need to reiterate the special circumstances for small island developing states and the need for specific interventions within the context of sustainable development;**
- The critical need for developing new modalities of engagement between the developed and developing countries in regards to honouring commitments to agreed sustainable development goals and related initiatives;**
- In relation to trade and aid, the need for the international community to create an enabling environment for developing nations to transition to**

green economies – interventions would include financing, capacity building and technology transfer;

- Strengthen mechanisms to create and enhance coordination and collaboration between Governments, Civil Society and other stakeholders working towards common goals that would relate to sustainable development.**

In closing, I wish to signal that Belize will stand shoulder to shoulder in solidarity with the International community in its commitment to pursue and realize the goal of sustainable development.