

Joint Press Release of the Governments of Belize and of Guatemala

1. The Governments of Belize and of Guatemala deeply regret the death of Guatemalan national Tomas Desdicho Ramirez, 26 years old, resident of the village of San Marcos, Municipality of Dolores, Department of Peten, Guatemala, in the afternoon of Saturday 29 March 2014, that occurred in the Chiquibul Reserve, Belize, in an incident involving the Belize Defence Force.
2. Both governments express their condolences to the family of the deceased Guatemalan citizen Tomas Desdicho Ramirez.
3. The Prime Minister of Belize and the President of Guatemala have been in telephone contact on the regrettable incident. The Prime Minister assured the President that his government will investigate the facts relating to the incident, and should it be found that there is culpability by persons involved they will be brought to justice in accordance with the law. The Government of Belize is committed to full transparency in this process and offered to share the reports with the Government of Guatemala.
4. The leaders agreed that the loss of human life does not conduce to the improvement of bilateral relations. Both leaders committed to making extra efforts to coordinate actions in order to avoid incidents of this type in the future which may lead to fatalities, and to ensure at all times the preservation of life, the respect for human rights and the maintenance of peace.
5. The Prime Minister of Belize invited Guatemalan authorities to participate in the medical autopsy of the deceased, as well as to support the investigation. Both governments have requested the support of the OAS to assist in this process.
6. Both leaders reiterated the urgent need to strengthen the bilateral relationship as agreed upon by the Foreign Ministers in the Road Map and Plan of Action signed in January of this year and to jointly address the challenges faced in the Adjacency Zone and the surrounding areas in particular security and the conservation of protected areas.
7. Both leaders reiterated their support for the rural development projects that are being implemented with the assistance of the OAS Office in the Adjacency Zone, the OAS Peace Fund and the European Union, in the communities along the Adjacency Zone and vicinities, with the primary objective of providing support to their development as well as to provide for the full conservation of the Protected Areas.
8. The Prime Minister of Belize and the President of Guatemala reiterated their commitment to the maintenance of peace and the promotion of friendly relations between both peoples and rejected any form of use of force to resolve any differences between the two countries. They also reaffirmed their commitment to submit their territorial, insular and maritime dispute to the International Court of Justice in accordance with the Special Agreement of 2008.

30 March 2014