



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG) JOINT PROGRAMME LAUNCHED TO SUPPORT SOCIAL PROTECTION AND LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN BELIZE

BELIZE CTY, BELIZE, 14 APRIL 2022 – The Government of Belize along with the programme's Participating United Nations Organizations (PUNOs)– International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Food Programme (WFP) –last Thursday launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Joint Programme to support in building a resilient Belize through universal, adaptive and sustainable social protection and local economic development.

This launch signified a major achievement for the Government of Belize as the programme factors in and prioritizes key outcomes outlined in Plan Belize and the Government's Medium-Term Development Strategy Priority Areas of Poverty reduction and Economic growth. The programme, which will run from 2022-2023, will also accelerate the government's commitments to the SDGs, through the enhancement of a social protection system and an enabling environment for local economic development.

In her keynote remarks, Hon. Dolores Balderamos Garcia, Minister of Human Development Families and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, emphasized the need to address the most vulnerable through coordinated partnerships to reduce poverty. She explained, "the SDG Joint Programme builds on the consensus that social protection is a human right; and supports poverty reduction and economic growth as articulated in our Medium-term Development Strategy." She elaborated on the need and relevance of a Social Protection Floor that establishes a basic set of rights for all Belizeans and lauded the Joint Programme as providing inclusive socioeconomic development as a key component.

Belize has a current debt/GDP of approximately 123% in which the COVID-19 pandemic has had significant social, economic, and political impacts. Additionally, poverty was already high, at 41% in 2009, and is estimated at 52% prior to COVID-19, in 2018, with children being the most affected. Birgit Gerstenberg, the UN Resident Coordinator in Belize, expressed the UN system's appreciation for the government's commitment as the Joint Programme will "enable economic opportunities, decent jobs, and livelihood opportunities that will sequentially improve the standard of living for the most vulnerable."

Additionally, Dr. Osmond Martinez, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Economic Development (MED), spoke of the SDG Joint Programme as a complement to the government's work to redistribute wealth and increase the social protection floor to ensure we leave no one behind. He also highlighted the programme support to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) as a pivotal role in poverty reduction and increasing prosperity and equity for all Belizeans.

The launch also provided a platform for discussion to identify immediate next steps and key milestones towards implementation of the programme.

END

For more information, please contact:

Stephanie Daniels, sdaniels@unicef.org | Communications Officer, UNICEF

Aurelio Sho, pdcc.ppu@humandev.gov.bz | Programme and Communications Officer, Ministry of Human Development Families and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs

