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PRESS RELEASE

Parliamentary Delegation Attends "Ukraine - Latin America and the Caribbean: Cooperation for the Future" Conference in Kyiv, Ukraine

A parliamentary delegation, led by Hon. Carolyn Trench Sandiford, President of the Senate, comprised of Senator the Honourable Collet Montejo, Vice President of the Senate, and Senator the Honourable Isabel Bennett Moody, and accompanied by the Honorary Counsel of Ukraine to Belize, Mr. Rolando Montero, visited Ukraine and participated in the First Parliamentary Conference "Ukraine - Latin America and the Caribbean: Cooperation for the Future" held in Kyiv from 29th November to 1st December 2024. The conference focused on strengthening diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties between Ukraine and Latin America and Caribbean countries.

During the conference, the delegation participated in meetings with the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and the Ombudsman of Ukraine and other officials, where the delegation was apprised of the continued efforts of the Government of Ukraine to seeking lasting peace, as well as of violation of human rights and the ongoing casualties of the war, the extent of gender based violence against women and children and the forced displacement of thousands of Ukrainian children. They also participated in a plenary session led by Ruslan Stefanchuk, Chairman of the Parliament, which included remarks and presentations by leaders in Government on potential ways of strengthening friendship and cooperation between the countries and on new products in the military defence sector.

The President of the Senate utilised the opportunity in the meetings and session to reiterate Belize's solidarity with President Zelensky and the government and people of Ukraine and of its record of condemning Russia's unjustified and unprovoked attack on Ukraine, a position based on principles of international law, fundamental to the maintenance of the international system of peace and security. These include respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity within internationally recognised borders, non-interference in the internal affairs of another state, the prohibition of the threat or use of force and for a peaceful resolution of disputes between countries. Heads of delegations, including the President of the Senate, were granted Certificates for Merit from the Ukrainian people by the Chairman of the Parliament on the occasion of the conference.

While in Kyiv, the delegation participated in a field trip to witness first-hand the impact of rocket strikes on residential areas and the safety and security measures in place to protect its citizens, particularly the children, to enable them to continue to lead productive lives while in a state of readiness. Included in the field trip was a visit to the Wall of Remembrance of the Fallen for Ukraine that memorialised the many citizens who died in the war with Russia. The delegation later travelled to Lviv, Ukraine where they met with Orest Chemerys, Rector of the Lviv National Medical University and a faculty official, to explore potential opportunities for Belizeans to pursue careers in the medical field in Ukraine.

Following the Ukraine visit, the delegation travelled to Hungary where they met with Belizeans living and studying in Budapest to explore potential opportunities for fostering ties with the Belizean diaspora and to hear first-hand the experience of pursuing studies in Hungary. They also met and held discussions with Sandor Bodo, a member of the Parliament of Hungary, on the potential for strengthening parliamentary collaboration and for increasing scholarship opportunities for Belizeans to study at universities in Hungary; with Sir George Popper, Prime Minister of the Knights of Malta State on the potential for strengthening their relationship with Belize, and with an expert in the field of geo-thermal energy to explore the potential for investment in this field in Belize.

The travel costs for the Belize delegation were covered by the Government of Ukraine and Friends of Belize in Hungary. The delegation returned to Belize on Thursday, 5th December 2024.

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