



TOLEDO ALCALDES ASSOCIATION

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August 31st, 2017 Punta Gorda Town, Toledo, Belize. Toledo Alcaldes Association (TAA), as the collective traditional representative body of the Maya people in southern Belize, met, in Punta Gorda town, with the Attorney General of Belize, Michael Peyrefitte, and other representatives of the Government of Belize, including the Solicitor General, Nigel Hawke, and the Minister of Lands, Dr. Carla Bennett. This meeting was historic in that it marks the first time that a sitting Attorney General has travelled to the Toledo District to engage with the Alcaldes, the traditional leaders of the 39 Maya villages. The TAA, therefore, applauds and welcomes the effort and initiative of the Attorney General.

These meetings came about as a result of several requests from the TAA to the Attorney General's Ministry in relation to issues and concerns facing Maya communities, including issues related to the irregularity in appointment of alcaldes. The Alcalde system constitutes an important local governance mechanism for the Maya people in Belize. Alcaldes are an age-old customary form of Maya leadership and governance which predates European contact. Since 1858, Alcaldes has been recognized as part of the governmental system in Belize. However, it came to the attention of the TAA, earlier this year, that there has been an irregularity in the appointment of Alcaldes causing delays in alcaldes receiving their stipends for the last seven months. The Attorney General express regret that the issue of irregularity in appointment of the alcaldes persisted for so long, and recognized that the anomaly is not the fault of the alcaldes. The Attorney General, on behalf of the Attorney General's Ministry gave his commitment to the alcaldes that he would continue to dialogue with the leaders in order to ensure that the appointment of alcaldes and their deputies, are brought in conformity with the laws of Belize. Therefore, the TAA commends the decision of the Attorney General's Ministry to engage with the Maya people in order to regularize the Alcaldes appointment, and to declare jurisdictions, for all the 39 Maya villages in southern Belize. To this end, the Attorney General has agreed to regularize the appointments of, and conduct orientation for, all alcaldes and their deputies, on September 16, 2017 in Punta Gorda Town.

The TAA believe that these two day meetings were fruitful and promising. The Maya people remain optimistic in their expectation that this kind of dialogue will be the first of many, particularly as it relates to the implementation of the CCJ Order. End.