

BELIZE

No. 9/1/13

SENATE

Wednesday, 30th November 2016

10:12 A.M.

Pursuant to the direction of Mr. President, in writing, dated 22nd November 2016, the Senate met in the National Assembly Chamber in Belmopan on Wednesday, 30th November 2016, at 10:12 A.M.

_

Members Present:

Senator, the Honourable Lee Mark Chang – President
Senator, the Honourable Godwin Hulse – Leader of Government Business
and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment,
Sustainable Development and Immigration
Senator, the Honourable Dr. Carla Barnett – Vice-President and Minister of
State in the Ministry of Finance
Senator, the Honourable Vanessa Retreage – Attorney General and Minister
of Natural Resources
Senator, the Honourable Macario Coy Sr.
Senator, the Honourable Stephen Duncan
Senator, the Honourable Francine Burns – Temporary
Senator, the Honourable Eamon Courtenay
Senator, the Honourable Tanya Santos – Temporary
Senator, the Honourable Paul Thompson
Senator, the Honourable Markhelm Lizarraga
Senator, the Honourable Rev. Ashley Rocke
Senator, the Honourable Elena Smith

Members Absent:

Senator, the Honourable Aldo Salazar
Senator, the Honourable Valerie Woods

MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*.

PRAYERS *by Senator Rev. A. Rocke*.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE OF NEW SENATORS

MR. PRESIDENT: Mr. Clerk, kindly administer the Oath of Allegiance to the temporary Senators.

SENATOR F. BURNS: I, Francine Burns, do swear that I will bear true faith and allegiance to Belize, and will uphold the Constitution and the law, and that I will conscientiously, impartially and to the best of my ability discharge my duties as a Senator and do right to all manner of people without fear or favour, affection or ill-will. So help me, God.

SENATOR T. SANTOS: I, Tanya Santos, do swear that I will bear true faith and allegiance to Belize and will uphold the Constitution and the law, and that I will conscientiously, impartially and to the best of my ability discharge my duties as a Senator and do right to all manner of people without fear or favour, affection or ill-will. So help me, God.

MR. PRESIDENT: Welcome Senator Tanya Santos. Welcome to our Senate; we look forward to having a constructive debate today; and to you, Senator Francine Burns, welcome again.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the Senate received a memorandum from our Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 21st October 2016. The subject is 'Mexico-Point of Agreement Adopted by the Mexican Senate', where the Point of Agreement reads: 'The Senate welcomes the 35th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States of Mexico and Belize, and hopes that cooperation between the two countries will translate into development for their respective peoples.' Our Honourable Senate congratulates the two countries for its 35th Anniversary.

SENATOR E. COURTENAY: Mr. President, with your leave, we on this side of the House, particularly in the name of the People's United Party, think that this is a fitting and an appropriate occasion for us to salute the passing of His Excellency Fidel Castro Ruz, the former President of the Republic of Cuba.

It is well known in the annals of history that President Castro, *El Comandante*, is, in fact, one of the leading visionaries in the world. He has, during his time starting in the struggle for the liberation of his own country, led liberation struggles across the entire world, and specifically in the case of Belize he caused Cuba to be among the first nations, and, in fact, one of the leading nations when we, as a country, struggled for our just desserts as an independent country.

The People's United Party believes that the historic and revolutionary cooperation between Belize and Cuba, whether it be in the field of education, in the field of health, in agriculture, in trade, is a true symbol of development assistance. It is a true symbol of solidarity, and it is a true and respectful relationship between two sovereign countries. Cuba asked nothing of us. They continue to support us, to work with us on the basis of a principled foreign policy, a principled trade policy, and a principled policy of cooperation.

We on this side call for the immediate end of the blockade, the illegal blockade by the United States of America against the people of Cuba. We call for an end to it. We call for the deepening of the relationship between Cuba and the United States of America.

Finally, Mr. President and Members of the Senate, we in the People's United Party have had a long and fruitful relation with the communist party of Cuba. In the name of the Leader of the People's United Party, we renew our commitment to our brothers and sisters in the communist party of Cuba and look forward to continued cooperation between our two political parties. It is appropriate, Mr. President, that we recognize the passing of *El Comandante*, a citizen of the world, a servant of the world, a man who lived for his people. I thank you.

MOTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OR SITTINGS OF THE SENATE

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Thank you, Mr. President, and, first of all, I want to welcome with a warm heart the two new Senators, Senator Francine Burns on our side and Senator Tanya Santos, welcome to this august House.

I also want to share similar sentiments with respect to the comments made by my colleague, Senator Courtenay, on the passing of His Excellency Fidel Castro, President of the Republic of Cuba. And, as he said, Cuba and Belize have had a very, long standing relation, a very cordial relationship. They've done a tremendous amount for our country and have asked nothing in return, only further cooperation. So our condolences and sympathies from this side go to the people of the Republic of Cuba. And we also hope that the relation between Cuba and the United States, like what has happened in the rest of the world, improves. Thank you.

Mr. President, I move that at its rising today the Senate adjourn to a date to be fixed by you, the President.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is that, at its rising today, the Senate adjourn to a date to be fixed by the President.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

A. GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

I MOTIONS

1. **Resolution Authorizing the Accession by Belize to the United Nations Convention against Corruption Motion, 2016.**

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, I move that - **WHEREAS**, the United Nations Convention against Corruption (“the Convention”) was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on the 31st October 2003 at United Nations Headquarters in New York, pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 58/4, and in accordance with article 68 thereof, entered into force on the 14th December 2005;

AND WHEREAS, the Convention having the purposes –

- (a) to promote and strengthen measures to prevent and combat corruption more efficiently and effectively;
- (b) to promote, facilitate and support international cooperation and technical assistance in the prevention of and fight against corruption, including in asset recovery; and
- (c) to promote integrity, accountability and proper management of public affairs and public property,

has introduced a new fundamental principle, as well as a framework for stronger cooperation between States to prevent and detect corruption, by, among other things, introducing a comprehensive set of standards, measures and rules that all countries can apply in order to strengthen their legal and regulatory regimes to fight corruption;

AND WHEREAS, Belize has been a long-standing State Party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, as well as to the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, and the Government recognizes that implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption will build on the existing frameworks in Belize for the promotion of integrity in public life and prevention of illicit profit from corrupt practice, and further promote the commitment of Belize to inter-State cooperation in the fight against crime and corruption, and ensuring the recovery of the proceeds thereof;

AND WHEREAS, the Government of Belize considers it prudent to now become a State Party to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and, it being already in force, is desirous of acceding to the Convention, pursuant to paragraph 4 of Article 67 of the Convention;

AND WHEREAS, paragraph (a) of section 61(A) (2) of the Constitution of Belize provides that the Senate shall authorize the ratification (including adherence or accession) of any treaty by the Government of Belize;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Senate authorizes the Government of Belize to accede to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, a full text of which is hereto annexed.

Mr. President, with your permission, I’ll just say a few words. I would like to, of course, just quote a little bit from the Foreword of this document. It says “Corruption is an insidious plague that has a wide range of corrosive effects on societies. It undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to the violations of human rights, distorts markets, erodes the quality of life, and allows organized crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish.” It goes on to say, “This evil phenomenon is found in all countries—big and small, rich and poor—but it is in the developing world that its effects are most destructive. Corruption hurts the poor disproportionately by diverting funds intended for development,

undermining a Government's ability to provide basic services, feeding inequality and injustice and discouraging foreign aid and investment. Corruption is a key element in economic underperformance and a major obstacle to poverty alleviation and development." These are key words. It is a fairly comprehensive document, and I am sure my colleagues will appreciate.

There are a few things I would like to point out, of course, just quickly, on page 7, if I may draw your attention to Article 2(a). It defines really the use of the term what a public official is, and I will just read quickly. It says, "(i) any person holding a legislative, executive, administrative or judicial office of a State Party, whether appointed or elected, whether permanent or temporary, whether paid or unpaid, irrespective of that person's seniority;" and, "(ii) any other person who performs a public function, including for a public agency or public enterprise, or provides a public service, as defined in the domestic law of the State Party and as applied in the pertinent area of law of the State Party;" and "(iii) any other person defined as a "public official" in the domestic law of a State Party. However, for the purpose of some specific measures contained in chapter II of this Convention, "public official" may mean any person who performs a public function or provides a public service as defined in the domestic law of the State Party and as applied in the pertinent area of law of that State Party." I read that, Mr. President, because it fairly coincides with section 131 of our Constitution which defines "public officer", and, as we proceed today, we will be looking at integrity in public life, and there is a law dealing with that. We will be appointing our Members of the Integrity Commission. But in that law it talks about persons in public life which covers only Members of the House of Representatives, the Members of the Senate and, indeed, Mayors and other people. This definition is an expanded one, and I think at some time, and I cite that we may have to or should amend that piece of legislation like many other legislations to cover all persons who have access to the public purse and who are in a position to be an offender under this Convention.

I also wanted to point out that, as one reads through it, you will see that it does not only affect people in the public service. It affects people in the private sector as well. There are a lot of requirements that are required, people in the NGO community, etc. So it will require quite a significant amount of work to really implement in its fullest. There is already a lot of work and a lot of institutions that are associated with this concept such as the FIU. We have several agreements for mutual legal assistance, and we also have other agencies that are part and parcel of this. So we are not really starting from scratch, but it will require some work to fully implement over time. Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR M. LIZARRAGA: Thank you, Mr. President. Like my previous colleagues, I would like to welcome the new Senators once again, and it pleases me, it extremely pleases me, to see that today we have five women in the Senate, almost half. I don't know if this is a first, but congratulations.

Mr. President, I agree totally with what the Leader of Government Business has said. I am absolutely glad that he read the Foreword to this document where the Secretary General, Kofi Annan, at the time wrote the words that he read. Additionally, Kofi Annan said that this hopefully "will warn the corrupt that betrayal of the public trust will no longer be tolerated. And it will reaffirm the importance of core values such as honesty, respect for the rule of law, accountability and transparency in promoting development and making the world a better place for all."

Mr. President, as you know, the business community for many years now, beginning way back when the Leader of Government Business shared the very

seat that I share today, we have been championing for these very things. I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank those people in our society, those in the business community, and especially those in the teaching community that stood up recently for these very same things, that, perhaps, tipped the scale and have us with this document today in front of us to consider. As most of us know, Mr. President, and, as the Leader of Government Business just stated, this is but the beginning of a long journey. This is the beginning of a journey that should hopefully take us towards changing our attitudes, our attitudes towards accountability, our attitudes towards transparency and our attitudes towards the use of public funds. It lays great responsibility not only for those people in public service but also for those people in the private sector. It is a very comprehensive roadmap guide as to what are the areas that we need to look at and what are the areas that we need to ensure have strength and teeth. It speaks not only to the strengthening of laws, but it speaks to the strengthening of institutions, and, if I might add, it speaks to a change in attitude in the institutions of governance.

It is an extremely, comprehensive document, Mr. President, and I would not be able to go through and highlight all that I would love to highlight, but basically in the statement of purpose it says it is, “(a) To promote and strengthen measures to prevent and combat corruption more efficiently and effectively; (b) To promote, facilitate and support international cooperation in asset recovery.” That is one of the highlights of this document that it seeks. A section of it seeks to address the possibility of asset recovery.

As you know, Mr. President, the Chamber of Commerce has been involved in a committee that was set up and in which Senator Dr. Barnett sits on, among other members of the private sector and the government, and they and the government recognize that there was much work that needed to be done. Some of the areas that were immediately identified that needed strengthening are the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Auditor General’s and the Contractor General’s offices, among others. A review is presently being undertaken, and I am sure Dr. Barnett will probably speak about it. We are trying to come up with a road map and a matrix of where we are legally and where we need to go, what areas of the law need to be addressed immediately and, perhaps, what areas we can deal with afterwards.

But part of this Convention calls for the establishment of an Anticorruption Secretariat and it is not, at least to the best of my knowledge, we have not identified how this Secretariat will be composed, where it will be, who will be in charge of it, how it is setup, who will be the members, etc. I am hoping that perhaps that today we may hear some more from that whether we are going to work within an institution that has already been established or we are going to set up a new one from scratch.

Mr. President, as you know, a date has been set for December 9th, on World Anticorruption Day, for us to sign and accede to this Convention. Part of the strategy identified by this working group is that they will begin to do a talk show circuit where bodies from the government, the business community, the Chamber of Commerce and the unions will be doing their rounds in the media and on the talk shows. So hopefully you will hear more details in the coming days leading up to this Anticorruption Day. Also there is talk of trying to set up a tertiary level school debate under the auspices of the Social Security. We are trying to see if Social Security can sponsor such a debate. A mixer will be arranged for the Chamber and interested parties on the 7th of December. And, again, Mr. President, the Convention will be signed on the 9th of December at the Prime Minister’s Office on Coney Drive. Additionally, it is my understanding that

the United Nations has raised some US\$150,000 to assist us in our work leading from us signing on to this Convention.

Mr. President, we are happy that this first step has been taken. We congratulate the government, and we ask the government to please, especially coming up to March of next year in the budget, to look at all the things, at all measures, that we will need to put into place, all the institutional strengthening that we will need to put this Convention into effect.

If you read the Convention in Article 6, Mr. President, and this matter is extremely concerning to us at this time because we don't know much about it. Article 6 speaks about preventive anti-corruption body or bodies, and it speaks to this body being able to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the policies in this document and increasing and disseminating knowledge about the prevention of corruption. That to us is very critical. We believe that a massive campaign needs to take place in our country, not only on the effects of corruption but also on what it is that, as citizenry, we should be aware of, what all corruption entails and how do the citizens, and especially the NGO community, can participate in this endeavor because this document also advises strongly for the participation of all our citizenry, especially the NGO community. And this body will, of course, need the necessary resources, Mr. President, specialized staff and training so that they can carry out their functions properly. As I said earlier, Mr. President, the step we take today is but the first step in a journey that will perhaps last our lifetime. But hopefully, Mr. President, that meaningful steps and at least those items that we address today, as one time the Leader of Government Business stated, we will never be able to stop corruption, granted, perhaps, as you plug one hole another needs to be plugged because another one will be opened up. But we have to have the institutions and the capacity and the attitudes to take out that double-sided machete whenever we need to take it out.

We have to, Mr. President, begin, as a first step, to aggressively address the appropriate legislative and administrative measures. That is going to be no easy task, but it is a task that can be completed. A lot of the legislation, and, perhaps, more so than just passing additional legislation is the will and the desire and the institutional capacity and institutional independence to enforce the existing legislation that we have because we have a lot of legislation already on the books that deal with corruption, but there seems to be either the lack of will or the lack of ability to enforce even the laws that we have on our books. So attitudes need to change as well.

Systems need to be strengthened that promote transparency and prevent conflict of interest. That is another major item for us. Conflict of interest, we've seen so many instances of conflict of interest in the news recently, Mr. President. Those things should be illegal. We need to have codes of conduct for public officials and private citizens as well, private business people.

It talks about public procurement, Mr. President, and the management of public finances. It speaks to establishing appropriate systems of procurement, based on transparency and competition and objective criteria in decision-making that are effective in preventing corruption. We keep crying for those things in this Senate time and time again. And the public distribution of information is key and critical when it comes to procurement procedures and the issuing of contracts, when we talk about the spending of public monies. Tendering rules need to be made public. Public procurement decisions should be made public. We should know why government is buying or going to buy from one person other than the next, and, of course, it should be based on competitive criteria. And, of course, one that we hear constantly about is that we need to take appropriate measures to

promote transparency and accountability in the management of public finances. We need to adopt measures and procedures for our national budget. At this time we don't even see our quarterly budget reports. They are practically non-existent, but this document calls for timely reporting on revenue and expenditure. We need to implement an accounting and auditing system and standards that have a strong relationship with oversight. And we need to talk about efficient systems of risk management and internal controls. It is very comprehensive, and I am only at Article 9.

It talks about the responsibility for public reporting, adopting procedures or regulations allowing members of the general public to obtain, where appropriate, information on the organization, functioning and decision-making processes in the public administration, simplifying administrative procedures to facilitate public access to the competent decision-making authorities and publishing information which may include periodic reports on the risks of corruption in its public administration.

So, Mr. President, the commitment that we make today needs to be a serious one, and we need to lend it not only verbal support or support of the pen but we need to lend it financial support. Our attitudes need to support it. Of course, it speaks as well to what we need to do to dissuade and discourage and stop corruption in the private sector as well. We need to stop the misuse of procedures and regulations by private entities as well. We need to stop this where private businesses encourage, promote and participate in the corruption of public officials as well. We need to strengthen our domestic laws and regulations regarding the maintenance of records.

It speaks in Article 13, of the participation of society as well in this process. "To promote the active participation of individuals and groups outside of the public sector such as civil Society, NGOs and community-based organizations, in the prevention of and the fight against corruption and to raise public awareness regarding the existence, causes, and gravity of and the threat posed by corruption." We need to inform our citizenry that when they participate in a corrupt election, when they participate in receiving gifts around election time, that that is corruption, and that at the end of the day they pay for it. We need to include it in our school curriculum. We need to start teaching our children from a very early age how to identify corruption, what is corruption, instilling values and morals in our curriculum. "Respecting, promoting and protecting the freedom, as well, to seek, to receive, and publish and disseminate information concerning corruption." And in another part it speaks to individuals having that right without fear, without intimidation, and without victimization. And I am only at Article 13 of some 70 Articles, and I can go on, and, perhaps I should. I have a lot of time.

It speaks about, with your permission, of course, Mr. President, it speaks about preventative measures for money-laundering, and we know that we have had to address these things because we've seen what de-risking has done to us because we've been tardy in implementing a lot of the conventions and a lot of the agreements and not putting a lot of the things we need to put in place to have avoided de-risking. So we need to address those as well. The costs to this will not be cheap, the cost for the private sector and the public sector, but, Mr. President, it is a cost that we most now bear because not bearing this cost will be more detrimental to our country's economy, our survival, our future.

Chapter III, Article 15, speaks of bribery of national public officials. Article 17 speaks about embezzlement, misappropriation or other diversion of property by a public official. How many times have we seen this, public poverty

being diverted? Read the Auditor General's reports. Or it is diverting property that is supposed to be public that ends up being private, and we have to pay for it.

Trading in influence, this is a big one, insider trading both in the public and private sectors and with collusion many times by both. I will give you inside information, and it's worth so much, and you will have the first crack at it. Any undue advantage for a person because of this knowledge should be criminal.

The abuse of functions, how many times have we seen public officials abuse their powers either through acting or failing to act? And then, of course, there is a section that deals with illicit enrichment. How many times have we seen people in the public service enter with virtual little or no assets and in a few years their assets abound? And we all know these things. We all know that, and this is no state secret. So hopefully now, Mr. President, we will be able to begin to address these things.

You know, and I want to read this section because it says, and it is very critical because almost every Article says it, "Each State Party shall consider adopting such legislation and other measures as may be necessary to establish as criminal offences," etc. Each State Party shall consider adopting. If it is left to the State Party, Mr. President, with the most humble of respect, I say this, we have seen that nothing happens. *No pasa nada*. That is what everybody says. Nothing happens. So today I say to the citizenry, today I say to the NGO community, today I say to the social partners, today I say to the Opposition party, and even the Government Senators, we are the ones that need to lend an eye to this process. We are the ones that need to ensure that these things that need to be enacted, that the legislation that needs to be passed, that the institutions that need to be strengthened, will be strengthened. It is up to us because, for the last 35 years, we see progressively every year things getting worse when it comes to corruption and the mismanagement of public funds. The Auditor General has been unable to give her opinion in the last two reports because she is not provided with sufficient documentation in the spending of a billion-dollar budget or more, and she can't give an opinion. And, in March, that is going to be another story because we know that the path that we have undertaken of poor accountability and poor transparency in the spending of public monies has led us to this world now where we are on the brink of financial chaos.

And, to paraphrase an article I read in a recent newspaper, the Government has the ability to print money and sign checks that we will pay for. They will come to us for more taxes. They will squeeze, and we will have to pay. So for that very reason because we have to pay we need to start paying attention and we need to start being involved. I say, "Thank God for the teachers." (Applause) And I congratulate the few of us that stood up in the business community as well and the citizenry that supported the protest and the march that led to these actions. It's about time, man. Mr. President, I think I've made my point, and there is no need for me to go through the 70 Articles.

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator Lizarraga, you still have about 15 to 20 minutes, if you want to use it you know. You are quite free to use it. That's your right.

SENATOR M. LIZARRAGA: Thank you, Mr. President. I will not continue except to say, Mr. President, that I am happy that the Government in its wisdom has sought to put in some corrective measures. Today we will be talking about the establishment of the Integrity Commission, among other things. And forget the reasons why we are here today and why these pieces of legislation were tabled. We need to congratulate the Government for doing so, and we need to

support and encourage prod, push and pull, if we have to, in encouraging them to continue to do the work that needs to be done because it is only the Government of the day that has the capacity, given the composition of the House and given the composition of the Senate right now, at least, to make this legislative proposals and amendments. And I truly hope that they got the message. And I truly hope that we don't have to go back to the streets, and we don't have to threaten shutdowns, and we don't have to continue to use the public pressure that it seems to take to bring them here today. I would hope that the Foreword that the Honourable Leader of Government Business read from Kofi Annan would have sunk in sufficiently, right.

And I am going to just read a little bit. "Corruption is a key element in economic underperformance and a major obstacle to poverty alleviation and development." Let those words stay with us today. Let us look around in our country to see how much more we could have done for our people, how much more developed we could have been, and how much more support we could have given to the private sector with these millions and billions of wasted dollars in our country's history, when our economy right now is on the brink, when our imports far exceed our exports, when world prices for primary products continue to fall, when we need to be encouraging more foreign exchange earnings, when we need to start to emphasize the importance of human development and the human person, when we begin to realize that depriving people by keeping them in poverty really is a disservice not only immediate but long term, and when we see through science the impact, the cerebral, the mental capacity of people being affected because they live in poverty, because they cannot have access to proper nutrition, proper health, proper housing and proper sleep because their roof is leaking or because 15 of them are in a little room. When we begin to look, analyze and contemplate these issues, we realize how "corruption is a key element in economic underperformance and a major obstacle to poverty alleviation and development." Those are serious words, Mr. President.

And I hope we take this document seriously and give it the attention it truly deserves because, if we continue on the path that we have been going on for the last 35 years, you know, Mr. President, that our GDP income, for example, is second only lowest to Haiti in the region. Imagine that, a country with so much natural resources and so much going for it! And we are here struggling along with almost half of our people living in poverty. The businesses are closing down, and industries are underperforming.

I am truly happy today to see that we have the Honourable Senator Hulse who is my friend for many years. And I have a lot of hope that he is going to inject some new enthusiasm, some new life into that Ministry that he now holds, the Ministry of Agriculture, because we need it. We need to strengthen and we need to support that industry. We really and truly have to. We need to start focusing on making proper use of the resources and the natural resources that we have in this country to provide employment and to provide economic benefits for our people. Given the financial situation we are in and the humongous national debt that we have, Government will need more taxes to pay for those loans and to pay for the three-times super bond that we have now. We owe almost three super bonds. Where is that money going to come from? It is going to come from us. We need to create employment. The industry needs to be promoted, nurtured, and supported. We need to cut back all of this red tape in our country and become more efficient. And most of this red tape and most of the harassment that businesses get in this country today is due to corruption. They rob you down, shake you down and find a million-and-one obstacles to prevent the legitimate business people from doing business properly, but yet those that facilitate and grease the wheels could get anything and do anything. That is a reality. That is a

fact, and we know it. And I say it not to keep repeating but I say it because it is important that we truly, given the words of Kofi Annan, that we truly begin to contemplate, meditate, spend time thinking about his words and the things that we need to do to turn this country around.

I hope, Mr. President, and I pray that we, having embarked on this first step, can in an year or in two years stand up in this Honourable House and be proud of the work that we have done in putting an end to corruption in our country. It is disgraceful, disgusting and illegal. It is immoral. The business community has indicated that it is willing to continue this engagement. We did work through the Honourable Leader of Government Business in the Political Reform Committee way back then when we started this process. This is not something new. It's a process that goes way back. And publicly, again, I thank the Honourable Godwin for the good work that he did then, and I would hope that he would recapture some of that vigor that he had then in pushing and prodding for us to implement those measures that we need to implement by this document and by presenting them in this Honourable Senate for us to approve willingly. The journey begins, Mr. President, today, and we will know shortly how serious we really are about bringing this country to its full and true potential. And the measure will be directly related to how many of these 70 Articles we seek to address and implement. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for your patience.

SENATOR REV. A ROCKE: Mr. President, if you would allow me, I too want to welcome our new Senators, Senator Santos, to these Chambers and also to the returning Senator, Senator Burns. As well we, also, as the church, want to express our deepest condolences to the People's Republic of Cuba. We are sure that the *Comandante* Fidel Castro was a true champion for his people, helping them to achieve their just human rights and giving them the opportunity to be seen in the world in that regard, standing tall and strong in a world that is changing. We also hope that his soul will rest in peace.

In the Christian circle, there is a phrase like this, "People don't do what you expect. They do what you inspect". In saying that, as I read the article given to us concerning the United Nations Convention against Corruption, I almost felt like I was reading some of the pages of the bible, in the way we have to treat each other, in the way we ought to behave in public life and that sort of things. Today, in my mind, is a very historic day for Belize, for the people and Government of Belize. It is historic because this document has been around for almost thirteen years, and it is just now that we have decided, as a people, that it speaks to our situation particularly as it relates to our sustainability as a people. The church then therefore rises to support this intention to ratify this document, the United Nations Convention against Corruption. We hope and, indeed, pray that this is the start of a beautiful experience where the Government and people of Belize will realize that this is the way to go, if we are going to truly achieve sustainability, not just for five years from now or ten years from now but for many of the years that we've wasted. We will now take those years and make up for it, as we attempt to correct some of the abnormalities in our society. We, the church, do rise in support of this ratification.

SENATOR E. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. President. Let me as well welcome our two new colleagues today. Returning Senator, Senator Burns, and Senator Santos, welcome. And, as my colleague said earlier, it's good to see that we have two more females added to the Senate today. That is good. We hope that we can keep it that way.

Mr. President, there is a saying that says, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step". And so we believe that what we have before us today is

a first step. We know that the NTUCB has been working with the Chamber of Commerce and the Committee but as well has been clamoring for this anti-corruption Act to be signed on to. We also know that the teachers of this country took a stand, and we spent 11 days out to ensure that this would be signed.

Having said that then, we must commend the Prime Minister and his Government on this first step towards minimizing corruption. We must though understand that it is but only a first step. While we are happy with this initial step, we must be vigilant in our monitoring of its full implementation. As mentioned earlier, we have to ensure that there are legislative changes and other mechanisms in place to ensure that we accomplish what these articles are asking us to accomplish. We cannot expect that by signing on to this miracles will happen. We must work, and the work must be done by all of us. We must all be looking out. We must all participate in the different measures that will be put in place, so that we can ensure, so that we can be safe and we can know that whatever it is that, as a country, we need to do to minimize corruption it will be done because we will all be participating.

In Chapter II, Article 6(2), it speaks that, “Each State Party”, it says, “shall grant the body or bodies referred to in paragraph 1 of this article the necessary independence, in accordance with the fundamental principles of its legal system, to enable the body or bodies to carry out its or their functions effectively and free from any undue influence.” And I must highlight the words “independence” and “free from any undue influence” because we tend to think that because we are the Government of the day that we must assign or we must nominate persons who are strong supporters of the government, whether it be the People’s United Party in government or this government. But we have to understand that we must also identify persons who are independent, even if they support the ruling government, that they must be independent in their thinking because when we have such persons nominated then we will ensure that these things become independent or that they act or that they govern independently and that there is no undue influence placed on these bodies.

And so, while we are happy that we have made the first move, I must reiterate that we must ensure that enforcement is done and we must ensure that what we do is a deterrent to corruption and that no one is spared from such enforcement. There must be no sacred cows in this, none whatsoever. And so, as an organization, we support this ratification, the accession of Belize to UNCAC because we believe that it is a great start. And I must, again, commend my BNTU and my fellow colleagues in the teaching profession for standing up so that today we could be here speaking on this matter and agreeing to its ratification. I thank you. (Applause)

SENATOR T. SANTOS: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, today I am compelled to speak on this matter because I have seen firsthand in my personal and professional life how corruption hurts people, how corruption hurts this country and how corruption can destroy.

Mr. President, this morning we are asked to authorize the accession by Belize to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. The People’s United Party supports this Motion. It is past time that we, as a nation, take concrete actions to willfully, fairly and effectively address corruption. Mr. President, in 2008, the UDP campaigned on one of the message of anti-corruption. So convincing was their message, Mr. President, the message of zero-tolerance, that they won by a landslide. The people wanted it. The special machete for corruption was promised, but, alas, it never appeared. Could it be because corruption has been redefined, Mr. President, so there is no need for a corruption machete? Is it

that since 2008 there is a Belizean definition for corruption, a Belizean definition of nepotism, a Belizean definition of illegal? I say, “No, no, and no.” We hear terms such as factual guilt and legal guilt in respect to alleged crimes committed by certain Ministers. These are genuine terms, Mr. President, which bewilder and bamboozle the Belizean people but do nothing to address the scourge of corruption.

Mr. President, it is hard to move anywhere in our society and not have corruption staring you in the face. I see it everywhere I go, public sector, public sector, churches, NGOs, literally everywhere, and I am not exaggerating. It has pervaded and permeated into every nook and cranny in our society. In fact, I have come to the conclusion that corruption appears to be the status quo, and if you don’t participate you are the odd man out or, in my case, the odd woman out. This is not the nation that our forefathers, men and women like the Right Honourable George Price, the Honourable Philip Goldson, and the Honourable Gwen Lizarraga, toiled for. In this regard, in my view, we are a failed people and a failed nation. Have we lost the value of a hard day’s work for a fair day’s pay? Have we lost the God-given values of honesty, integrity, compassion, and humility? What I see in our everyday behaviors or attitudes and our actions leads me to believe so. Yes, we have failed.

Mr. President, one year into its third term, the UDP Administration would have you believe that there is no corruption, only despicable acts. There is no nepotism because they are not normal people. The law wasn’t broken because we amended it. Mr. President, I am reminded of the words of the French economist, Frédéric Bastiat. “When plunder becomes a way of life for a group of men in a society, over the course of time they create for themselves a legal system that authorizes it and a moral code that glorifies it”. Is this where we are, Mr. President? Is this our new moral code in Belize?

While the UNCAC is not the cure-all of anti-corruption for Belize, it is a good start. It is expected to be far more effective than the corruption machete has been proven to be. It outlines preventive measures, international cooperation, asset recovery, criminalization and law enforcement. I will list just a few of the articles the convention defines under Chapter III, which is criminalization and law enforcement. And I am sure we can identify, in our minds, individuals in the past and today, in high and in humble places, private and public life, engaged in these criminal offences. These include: Article 15, bribery of national public officials; Article 17, embezzlement, misappropriation or other diversion of property by a public official; Article 18, trading in influence, you do this for me and I will do that for you; Article 20, illicit enrichment; Article 21, bribery in the private sector; Article 22, embezzlement of property in the private sector. We must take action, Mr. President, action to put our country back on track.

As the other Senators have mentioned, signing the UNCAC is only a first step. No present or future leader should be able to conveniently define corruption. No present or future administration should be able to abuse its power and abuse its people in the process. In fact, no one in public or private life, now or in the future, should be able to insult and cheat the Belizean people with acts of corruption. This is not who we are. This is not who we want to be. This is not our destiny. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of Indian independence, told us that the world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything. Mr. President, the days of watching are done. My Belize must not be destroyed. We all have our role to play in ensuring that this Convention is put into full effect. We support the signing of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

And in closing, Mr. President, I would like to echo the words of the other Senators in thanking our teachers. I am the product of wonderful parents and good teachers, and I want to thank our teachers for standing up for this country. We would not be here today, in my view and in the view of many, looking at this Resolution had the teachers not done what they did. So I express my appreciation for that valiant effort by our teachers. Thank you, Mr. President. (Applause)

SENATOR E. COURTENAY: Thank you very much, Mr. President. I rise and join my colleague, Senator Santos, in offering our support to this Resolution. But, Mr. President, our support has to be critical support because, as has been pointed out already, we are embarking on a road, but we have to check Google maps to make sure that we are going down the right road. This Resolution says, “NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate authorizes the Government of Belize to accede to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, a full text of which is hereto annexed.” Regrettably, Mr. President and colleagues, the nearly 50 reservations entered by State Parties to this Convention are not before this Honourable Senate. We are called upon to authorize the government to accede to a Convention for which there are nearly 50 reservations without the Senate considering those reservations.

It is disappointing, Mr. President, and regrettable that there is an ad hoc committee comprised of Government, labour and business community but not the Opposition. It is disappointing that this ad hoc committee is about to end its work on the 9th of December, and we are here today and we do not know what is the result of its work. We have no report from the ad hoc committee which would inform our deliberations today. We have an ad hoc committee that unfortunately, Mr. President and Members, has not had the benefit of the participation of the Opposition on this very important issue; an issue that we support.

We find it unacceptable and disappointing that the Government has brought this Resolution knowing full well that it is the beginning of a journey. We have no road map. We have no timetable. We have no legislative agenda. We have no administrative reform agenda, and yet the Senate is being asked blindly to authorize the accession to this Convention. Mr. President, that is wrong. We are not here as rubberstamps. We are not here to be taken for granted. This is not a circumstance where because we are all together in the fight against corruption that we can just go blindly and give our approval. Let me give you some examples of the reservations that have been entered. United States of America has a long reservation. Canada has a long reservation. This Convention proposes criminalization of certain things, and Canada is very clear. It says, “Article 42(2), provides that a State Party may establish jurisdiction based on nationality. Given that Canada has effective and broad territorial jurisdiction over corruption offences, Canada does not intend to extend its jurisdiction in the case of an offence committed by a Canadian national beyond that existing territorial basis of jurisdiction.” Canada is saying that, even though the Convention wants you to establish criminality on the basis of nationality regardless of where the crime is committed, Canada is not going to do that, it is going to confine its criminality to its territory. What is the position of the Government of Belize? When passports are being sold around the world illegally, what position will the Government of Belize take? We are not told.

Mr. President, Article 44 deals with extradition. Article 44 expressly contradicts our extradition laws. But there are many countries like El Salvador who has entered a reservation with respect to extradition, and it says, “With respect to the provisions of Article 44, the Republic of El Salvador does not regard the above mentioned Convention as the legal basis for cooperation in connection with extradition. With respect to Article 46, paragraphs 13 and 14, the

Republic of El Salvador states that the central authority, as regards El Salvador, it is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the acceptable language is English.” And it goes on to say that it will not extradite its nationals. So there are countries, at least ten of them, who have taken exception to the provisions in the Convention dealing with extradition. What is the position of the Government of Belize when it comes to extradition? Will citizen Kim be brought to Belize? We don’t know, and they are asking us to give our blind approval to this Convention.

Interestingly the United States of America, Mr. President, has this curious reservation. It says, “The United States of America reserves the right to assume obligations under the Convention in a manner consistent with its fundamental principles of federalism, pursuant to which both federal and state criminal laws must be considered in relation to the conduct addressed in the Convention.” What is interesting about that, Mr. President, is that the Kingdom of the Netherlands says not a bit of it. And they record their objection to the selective application of the Convention by the United States. And the Kingdom of the Netherlands says that it considers that reservation which the United States has entered, which consists of a reference to the federal structure of a state or to its national legislation, it leaves it uncertain to which extent that state,” meaning the United States, “accepts to be bound by the obligations under the treaty.” I don’t need to read more of the objection of the Dutch Government to the reservation. My point is simply this. What is the position of the Government of Belize with respect to how the United States of America says it will apply this Convention? And we are here being asked to rubberstamp because all of us are happy that we are now embarking on this road in the fight against corruption.

I don’t know whether my colleague, Senator Duncan, has read Article 40. Let’s look at Article 40. Article 40, bank secrecy, “Each State Party shall ensure that, in the case of domestic criminal investigations of offences established in accordance with this Convention, there are appropriate mechanisms available within its domestic legal system to overcome obstacles that may arise out of the application of bank secrecy laws.” Where will the balance be struck, protecting bank secrecy or criminalization and opening up of bank accounts?

The point we make is simply this, Mr. President. Whilst we acknowledge that this is certainly an advance, certainly a step in the right direction, we say it is wrong for the Government of Belize to bring this matter to the Senate asking for us to authorize the accession to the Convention without a full, wholesome and serious consideration and deliberation by the Senate. Mr. President, let there be no doubt about it. The People’s United Party supports the accession to the Convention. It is that we are disappointed in the cavalier way in which the matter is being taken up today. We say, and I associate myself with the views expressed by Senator Lizarraga and Senator Smith with respect to what is going to happen hereafter. We need to hold the Government to the commitments that it is undertaking. We are going to shortly discuss the Integrity Commission, and we are going to see today in this Senate how serious the Government’s commitment is. Mr. President, it is our respectful view that the Senate ought to consider the ramifications seriously before it gives the Government its authority to accede to the Convention. The party, I understand, is planned for the 9th of December. We have 8 days to do the work that is necessary, and we strongly urge the Government to consider whether this matter should be referred for a full deliberation by the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee of this Honourable Senate. I thank you, Mr. President. (Applause)

SENATOR P. THOMPSON: Mr. President, good morning, I too would like to welcome the two new Senators this morning. Mr. President, I rise to make my contribution to Belize’s ratification of the United Nations Convention against

Corruption. My colleague, Senator Hulse, read a few sentences from the Foreword of the UNCAC document that Kofi Annan wrote. I will repeat a couple of those sentences. In the Foreword of the UNCAC document, Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary General in 2003, said that, “Corruption is an insidious plague that has a wide range of corrosive effects on societies”, and he went on to express his satisfaction that we now have an instrument to address this scourge at the global level. Mr. President, for years my colleague and friend from Cayo, Mr. Dan Silva, has been insisting that Belize needs to sign the UNCAC. I can tell you today that he was never more right. Although we agree on this side to sign on to this Convention, I too will be a bit critical and show how we got to this point. So permit me, please, to give you a recent, short chronology of events in Belize in regards to the subject of the corruption and the signing of this UNCAC.

In a television interview on August 1, 2016, the Prime Minister Dean Barrow said, and I believe he was at the Biltmore Plaza. He said, “I cannot sit here and tell you there is no corruption in Government, there is no corruption in Cabinet. I won’t do it”. But then three weeks later on August 25, 2016, on his return from a trip aboard, when asked if in the face of all the corruption in Belize whether we will sign on to the UNCAC, the Prime Minister said, “We are going to be duplicating efforts. We are going to be saddling ourselves with expenses. It is more of an expense than I think we can afford.” Three days later, on August 28, 2016, of this year, I submitted a Motion to this very Chamber for Belize to sign on to this Convention. My Motion was denied. In fact, it was not even tabled. However, five weeks later on October 4 of this year, a press release from the Government of Belize announced that Cabinet had agreed to accept the recommendation of the Government/Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry working group on the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and that they will sign the Convention on December 9, 2016.

Mr. President, a stranger from aboard may wonder what happened between August 28 and October 4 of this year. What happened in those five weeks that made the Prime Minister and his Government changed their minds? Well, let me tell you what happened. The teachers of Belize got enough of the talking and no action. They got enough of the corruption and no punishment, and they took to the streets. The teachers went on strike demanding, among other things, that the Government immediately sign the UN Convention against Corruption. That same Convention saw the sitting President and Vice-President of Guatemala hauled off to jail on corruption charges in the middle of last year. The teachers and the people of Belize became convinced that if that can happen in Guatemala then it is that same Convention that is needed in Belize. But I suspect the same reason the Belizean people wanted the Convention against Corruption was the same reason the Government wanted no part of it.

So, Mr. President, although the Government’s press release on October 4 made no mention of the teachers, let it be known that were it not for the teachers we wouldn’t be here today. I salute the teachers and I salute all other entities and persons who made signing this clarion call over the years, including our very own Party Leader, who in his budget speech earlier this year emphasized that Belize must cease to be a rogue state and join the 180 nations all across this world who have signed on to this United Nations Convention.

In closing, Mr. President, I want to reiterate that the only reason this current administration reluctantly accepted to sign this Convention is people pressure. People pressure forced them to sign on. It was also people pressure that moved them to call off the seismic exploration near our barrier reef a few weeks ago, and it is people pressure that have them finally reconstituting the Integrity Commission and installing the thirteenth Senator. I urge my Belizean people to

take notice of this current administration. Over 150 years ago Frederick Douglass declared, "Power concedes nothing without a demand". And today that maxim still holds through. This Government concedes nothing without a demand. Unless the people rise up nothing good is done for them. This is the mode of this UDP Government. So I salute Luke Palacio and the BNTU Council of Management and all the brave teachers of Belize who paid the price so we could be here today. And concurrently we must give respect to the people of Belize whose support of the teachers was invaluable. The support of the parents allowed the teachers to strike not one day, or two days, or three days, but a full eleven days. Maximum respect to the BNTU and all the people of Belize! Thank you. (Applause)

SENATOR DR. C. BARNETT: Thank you, Mr. President. I rise to give my support to the accession of Belize to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. I was whispering with my colleague a little while ago because we were, in the good old days of 2003/2005, involved in a lot of the discussions around corruption and reform and all of those things. And we were recalling that in 2003 or 2004, when the decision was made by the then Government to sign the OAS Convention against Corruption, and, colleague, you may have been in the Cabinet at that time, the decision was made not to sign the UNCAC but to sign the OAS Convention. And we've come full circle.

There is a fair amount of what seems to me to be a misunderstanding of what signing the UNCAC means. Sometimes I listen on the media and read what people write, and sometimes it sounds as if people expect that there is some, I describe it as an airplane coming in on the 9th that is going to bring all of the solutions to the problems, and all of a sudden things are going to be better, and we won't have to worry about corruption anymore, but that is not what is going to happen. What we are doing in acceding to this treaty is to commit to yet another intergovernmental agreement and approach to dealing with the problems of corruption in Belize along with the other countries that are party to the UNCAC.

The primary objectives of the UNCAC, and we can identify three main ones: to promote and strengthen measures to prevent and combat corruption more efficiently and effectively, and the key words there are more efficiently and effectively because we are not coming from zero. We have been doing things from way back in the good old days of 2003/2004, when we had the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act and all of those things. It is part of that same process. Another main objective is to promote, facilitate and support international cooperation and technical assistance in the prevention and fight against corruption. And what this is recognizing is that we are not unique in Belize. We are part of an international system, and the same kind of issues that we face here in Belize other countries have faced, and so the UNCAC provides a platform for collaboration and cooperation, learning from each other, and also to collaborate and cooperate when there is need to follow up on crimes that are committed under this Convention. And, finally, the third main objective is to promote integrity, accountability and proper management of public affairs and public property.

And I won't go through the particular articles, all of them, just to identify that the Convention provides for preventive measures such as the laws and the institutions in place, preventive measures to fight against corruption. It also provides for such things as improvement in our procurement processes, in our hiring processes, and in our management of both people and resources in the public sector. It provides for reporting on performance of public institutions. It provides for measures relating to strengthening of the judiciary in relation to dealing with issues of corruption. With regard to the private sector, it provides for enhanced accounting, auditing standards, where appropriate, effective, proportionate and administrative, and/or criminal penalties for failure to comply

with requirements under those improved processes in the private sector, also, the promotion of standards to safeguard the integrity of private entities, including codes of conduct, those kinds of things.

And a critical aspect of the Convention is the provision for the participation of a wider society, and this is important because the input of wider society, both in terms of the implementation of the UNCAC and then the operation of laws and bodies established, is going to be important in determining the success or failure of this enterprise. So part of what we expect to see, as we move ahead, is an enhanced role of civil society, the NGO community, in terms of information sharing, in terms of oversight and participation in the various aspects of both legal and administrative reform that will come out of the implementation of the UNCAC. So those are the main aspects of this important Convention that I would want to highlight in terms of its impact in the local, in the national domain.

It also provides for international cooperation, mutual legal assistance, some things that we are already doing under other laws but are also captured here. One of the issues that were raised by Senator Courtenay is the issue in relation to extradition. That is a concern for other countries, and my understanding, I am not a legal luminary like yourself, Sir, but my understanding is that the treaty provides a basis for extradition in cases of offenses that are identified in the Convention between countries that may not have an extradition treaty. So if I don't have an extradition treaty with you I can use the provisions of the Convention to agree on extradition in the case of offences that arise from the Convention.

I want to talk a little bit about what comes next. The work of this small ad hoc committee really does come to an end. That committee was really just to look at the scope of what may be implied by the signing on to the UNCAC and to recommend an appropriate timing for signing on. It wasn't about whether we sign or not sign. I think it was a given that we were going to sign on to the UNCAC, but it was really to determine whether or not there were huge things that had to be done before we sign on, that if we did not do them it would have a negative impact on Belize, if we sign without doing them. And based on all of the discussions that we had and based as well on all of the information that is in the public domain, and I want to encourage everybody who is interested, anybody listening, young people who want to understand what the UNCAC is about. The United Nations Organization on Drugs and Crime has a website that is full of all kinds of information on the Convention itself, explaining the Convention, reports made by countries under the Convention, the issues that are of concern to some countries that are party to, and the reservations that other countries have entered into on signing. All of that information is available on that website and in relatively easy language. It is not too legalistic, in many instances. And so I would encourage people to go and look at that website as the source of information. The UNODC is the agency that has jurisdiction over the implementation of this Convention. But let us talk about what happens after the 9th.

What happens after the 9th for Belize will be no different from what happens after the 9th in every other country that has signed on, especially for those countries that have signed on after the treaty came into effect, and in the Caribbean, for example, Grenada signed on last year. They are in the process of going through the same things that we are going to be going through. An important thing to note is that, in implementing the United Nations Convention against Corruption, the United Nations system through the UNODC, through the UN Governance Focal Point, which for Belize would be in Panama, through the UNDP, its office here and its resident representative in El Salvador, those agencies are prepared and are committed and draw on the expertise both from the UNODC

and from other countries that are going through and have gone through the implementation to assist countries in implementing the UNCAC.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, in accordance with Standing Order 10 (8), I move that the proceedings on the order paper may be entered upon and proceeded with at this day's sitting at any hour though opposed.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is that the proceedings on the order paper may be entered upon and proceeded with at this day's sitting at any hour though opposed.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

SENATOR DR. C. BARNETT: Thank you very much, Mr. President. As I was saying, in the process of implementing the UNCAC, we will be drawing on the assistance of the United Nations Development Program, the UNODC and all of the various experts. And we have already had conversations, discussions, exchange of correspondences, to define how that process is going to work. It would be in the nature of a cooperation arrangement between Belize and the United Nations Development Program. And, as you heard Senator Lizarraga indicate earlier, there is a commitment of resources in finance and in persons, and one of the very first exercises that will have to be done by Belize, as every other country that has acceded to the UNCAC has had to do, is to assess our legal and administrative system in relation to the requirements of the UNCAC. That is an exercise for which the UNDP is preparing a project outline, and it is fleshing it out because it will identify the human resources, the financial resources and particular skills that are required to come in and look at the totality of what we have in terms of our laws and administrative arrangements in relation to what the UN Convention against Corruption requires. That is an exercise that we expect to begin very early in the New Year. We expect to complete the project document by January. And the UN resident representative for Belize is going to be here next week, and we can get greater formality in that. But we are already at the stage of exchanging of correspondences.

And one of the important things that will have to be discussed and agreed very early will be the implementation arrangement. How do we decide which group, how stakeholders participate in the oversight of implementation and how all of that proceeds? The working group that has been in placed leading up to the signing is not assuming in any shape or form that that is the group that is going to be overseeing at all. We have to have an engagement with the UN system. We have to discuss, understand the best practices that have been implemented elsewhere, and then we will formalize a process that will guide the undertaking of what we call the gap analysis or review of status or whatever form of words we want to see that will identify the various things that have to be done. And at the end of that gap analysis and at the end of that review process that the United Nations system will help us to do, we will have a very clear set of issues that have to be addressed, laws that have to be revised, institutions that have to be strengthened and we will have to set about establishing a process for addressing all of those issues. And it is against that gap analysis that Belize would be judged in terms of its effective implementation of the UNCAC.

So once we establish where we are in relation to the treaty, to the Convention, as a result of that work that we are going to go through along with

the UN system, we are going to know where we are, and we are going to measure how far we go and how fast we proceed, as we implement the various amendments to laws, strengthening of institutions and processes that will have to take place. So, as I say, this is what other countries have gone through, and so we are doing it in the same way that other countries who have recently signed on to the UNCAC have done it.

What we are also going to be participating in, once we sign in, is the process of mutual review because what happens in the context of the UNCAC is that all of the state parties that are members of the Convention meet in Assembly and look at how countries are performing in terms of the commitments that they make in implementing. And we are going to be participating in assessing other countries, and other countries are going to be participating in assessing us. I believe the next cycle of reviews is going to be completed somewhere around 2018/2019. So we will have our first review under this process within the next three years or so. All of this is going to be mapped out within the next several months, as we undertake along with the UN system the analysis of where we are.

I want to just conclude by emphasizing that we are really not starting from zero. A number of the institutions and laws that need to be in place are already there. So that what we are going to be accessing over the next several months is what we need to do with those institutions. There is going to be a need to decide where the overall authority under this will lie, and that will as well come out of consultations and discussions, as we proceed with the gap analysis that we are going to do. But, as we proceed with this, we will be looking at a number of institutions that already exist. The Integrity Commission, for example, that we are going to be fleshing out today could very well see a transformation in the way it is comprised, in the reach of its scope, and in the range of actions that it is required or empowered to undertake. We can see, for example, that there is going to be close collaboration with the Financial Intelligence Unit because a lot of what is required under the Convention is already written into the FIU legislation. The role of the Contractor General will come up, of great priority, because the whole issue of procurement and implementation of government contracts is critical to the corruption issue. And so we are likely to see that law come up very early for review, the strengthening of the office, and all of those institutions that are already in place, that were all set in place when we joined the OAS Convention in 2004/2005 or whenever it was, and all of those institutions that began to be set up. Those institutions are going to be reviewed in order to strengthen and to see what needs to be done to make them have the effect that they are supposed to have.

I want us to recognize that efforts to combat corruption, to improve governance, management of public resources and public assets. It's not a thing that you do and it comes to an end. It is a continuing process. It goes on, and at every stage of the game we are seeking to improve what we are doing. I also want to emphasize that the direction in which we go and the effectiveness that the steps that we are going to take will have, the effectiveness of all of this, will depend on not only Government. Far from it, it will depend as well on the roles that are played by all the stakeholders, including the Opposition party, including labour, including the business community and the churches, including all stakeholders in the process. I foresee, for example, that in the implementation we are going to have all of these stakeholders explicitly included, but it will require that these stakeholders play the role that they are supposed to play. It is not, you know, coming to the meeting and not doing the work. It is really about participating effectively because at the end of the day the effectiveness of what we are setting about to do will be determined by the thoroughness of what we are doing at this stage.

Throughout all of this we are expecting that the United Nations system will be working along with us, working beside us, guiding and helping us to identify the technical resources that are necessary whether it is in terms of reviewing our laws, proposing amendments to laws, arranging for communication between agencies in Belize and other countries that have gone through the sort of South-South Cooperation that we hear about from time to time. So we are going to be expecting that support. We've already gotten commitment of some resources, an ongoing commitment, to help us to identify additional resources to do what is quite a considerable task.

One of the messages that we've conveyed in the early discussions with the UN representatives is that we are not seeking to establish a brand new range of institutions on top of what we already have. What we are seeking to do is to ensure that where we have existing institutions we strengthen them and where we have gaps we fill them so that we are not using our limited resources inefficiently. We are trying to make as efficient a use of the resources that we are able to identify both in the implementation and in the onward operation of the various institutions and organizations that are going to be responsible for the various aspects of the UNCAC in its implementation.

So, Mr. President, clearly there is a lot of work that we are going to be doing over the next several months and onward because it is not only about implementation. It is also about operations, the operationalizing of various aspects of the UNCAC and also reporting on the effectiveness or otherwise in our implementation and operationalizing. So there is a lot of work that we are going to be doing. So this is the beginning of a long process. It means that we are going to be participating along with the other State Parties to the UNCAC in its evolution because even this treaty in its implementation, as it goes along, countries have found issues and have been able to determine appropriate responses that may be suitable for one and not for the other. So we are entering into an arena in which we will also be able to learn from the other States Parties to this Convention. So clearly on our side we are fully in support of this accession. It's not signing and ratification, it is direct accession. Once we sign on the 9th it means Belize has done what needs to be done to be a party to the treaty, and then it's up to the UN which has like 30 days or so, I believe, to complete what it has to do up there. But we will have completed everything that we need to do on the 9th of December which is World Anti-corruption Day. So the struggle will continue, and we will be seeing a lot of work come out of this process. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, I have just a few closing words, but I think it is important. You know it has been a very useful debate. I am really appreciative of the comments and observations of Senator Courtenay. He is always enlightening, and everybody else. But, Mr. President this will be stargazing, if I said, but I will stargaze. We would not have been here at all if those deep down, fundamental moral convictions that we were all brought up with in this Christian society, which the church continues to support, were adhered to, where we knew inside of us that we should do the right thing. I like the statement that my young colleague, Senator Tanya Santos, made. When you try to do the right thing you are the odd person out, it seems. Everybody is almost against you. So there is this phrase, "When you want to be right, you have to fight". This corrupt business, and we've been around for a long time trying to deal with it. Senator Barnett, myself, and Senator Courtenay were in the Political Reform

Commission. Senator Lizarraga as he mentioned, and he talked about my burst of energy, but I will remind him that on December 20 I would have completed my tenure, as the bible prescribes. I should be retiring, leaving it to you, young people. At the good old age of 70, I don't know how much more fight I have to push this on. I see Ms. Tanya smiling, but that is up there. Carlos and I were in this battle years ago. It's a good thing I see all of you, young people, in your thirties and forties here.

The point is that this corrupt practice comes from a dependent society, as I have analyzed it. And it is a mindset in a dependent society where we have to get some special advantage at any cost. We have to try to expedite a process, and we see business persons paying for that. The persons who slow down the process in the system want you to pay so you can expedite it, or the circumvention of some law, some rule or some responsibility, and it becomes a quagmire of a mess. Before I was actually appointed a Minister of Government, I was on the outside, and I saw all sorts of things, how this could be done, how it could be done, what you could do, and how you could do it.

And this is why I made the statement, Senator Lizarraga, that sometimes it almost looks like an impossible task, because as you will proceed with the hearings for the Senate investigation on Immigration and Nationality, I hope lots of things come out and that you will see some of things we tried to put in which I thought, "Aha!" It is like my deceased great friend, Bert Tucker, would say it. "It is like woodlice. You killed the nest or you think you killed the nest and they burst out somewhere else. It is this mentality of, "I must get something. I am entitled. I have to have a benefit. I will pay for it at any cost," and it takes two or more to tango. And so the private sector together with public officials are all in this messy dance. And, when you try to stop it, as I have tried, and to say things like I always say, "It would be my mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter, I don't care," you run into problem number two which is proof. There are three esteemed colleagues here from the Bar, all of whom I know and respect very well, and the first thing they will tell me is, "Godwin, you have to have evidence." And getting that evidence is not the easiest thing, not the easiest thing. Things go missing out of the file. People do things by word of mouth. It is not accepted in court. They call that hearsay, all sorts of battles to, and people walk away and smile. In fact, indeed, even with the requirements now, and, what we call it, politically exposed persons, even that is a broader net cost to try to deal with some of these. It is my hope, it is my pray, it is my wish, that in this matter of trying to deal with corruption we could dispense for the time being or we could suspend our adversarial processes between political parties and, I would dare say, I wish even the courts.

We are to echo what Senator Santos just said a while ago, what the Prime Minister said, factual guilt and legal guilt. And I interpret that to simply mean that, yes, I might have heard things, might have seen things, might have known to my heart that something was going on, but how on earth do you bring the proof to do that? I remember there was a time when we talked about, what was it called? It was some kind of wealth, and we were going to look at people who suddenly got wealthy and were able to get boats, trucks and cars that you see they didn't have before, and how on earth you prove it? We are going to see, as we proceed down this road, that the last statement that I am going to make here will come true. At the end of the day, in a society of 350,000 people where everybody knows everybody, where everybody is related, where everybody is connected, it is hard like hell to bring the hammer down on your brother or your sister or your cousin or your auntie or somebody because the whole clan will coil around to bring about the protection. And the society is so involved in this that I don't know. I see the institutions being proposed. I hope they will work.

But the only thing that I think that we must all commit to do is to cleanse and to look inside of us. There is this little song, *The Man in the Mirror*, and I said it this morning to my driver when coming up. Look at the man or the woman in the mirror and see if it is me, see if it is me who wanted that little advantage, if it is me who was going to circumvent this, get away with something that we know we should have not gotten away with, accept an advantage or a privilege or say, “No, no, man, not me, don’t bring that to me at all.” And it is only when we have that internal commitment and foist it and teach it to our children and teach it back in the schools and teach it back in the churches that the people will learn. And it is only when in this society shame becomes alive and well again. There was a time when I was young that, if anybody published your name that you didn’t pay a bill, you hold your head down. There is a company on Douglas Street. Quick something they call it; I don’t remember. They started to publish the names of people who owe, and nobody cared. You can publish the names all you want, and nobody bothers about that. Shame is no longer alive and well. There was a time, if you said, well me, I still hold on to the good name that I think I have. I cherish it, but I don’t know if down the line my generation will care about no name. Those are values that you need. This is a value based thing. It is not only rules. It is not only a Convention. It is not only domestic law. It is that value based thing that says, “No, man, I won’t do that. That is wrong.” And this incorporates the entire society. When I was the Minister of Natural Resources, a lot of people came to me, people in the legal profession, and they would say to me, “Minister, man, why are you worrying about this stamp duty? Or why are you worrying about that? This is what is paid. This is this, and the law says this.” And inside of me I am saying, “Lord, man, but the man is getting away with Belize. I can’t bother with that at all. We have to do this.” And you get into this mess, and people will think, “What are you playing? And everybody is doing it.” And we have all of that that plague our society.

So that may be a whole philosophical discussion, but I wanted to register that until and unless we commit ourselves in the business community, in the church, in the union, in the Opposition, in the Government, to really work towards this so that we look at what we can do to deal with those persons who try to get that advantage, whether it is a contract or a get-ahead of the line. How can we highlight that? How we deal with people who want to pay to expedite a process? How we deal with people who want to circumvent the law, etc., and how we stand up? A quick example, I had moved some time ago, right through this House, a law amending the Immigration Act that called for a Nationality Committee. I thought, okay, here we are going to go now, we are going to publish the names of people who are getting these things so that the whole country will see, so that the media will see and they will say, “Yes, I do not know anybody with that name like that who lives there. So that must be fraudulent.” The Committee was going to be made up of the church, the union and the business. I didn’t even want to appoint anybody. I told the organizations, “You name your people. Let’s get it on. I will have nothing to do with that.” I just opened it and that was it. I never knew when they met and met since. And what happened? I never heard anybody, not even the media pick it up and say, “Okay, we saw this list of names of people getting nationality. Does anybody know whether these people live there or don’t live there, etc.? No. People said, “No, that won’t work. People will get around it.” And I still hear stories that, oh, this one is doing this, that one is bringing that file, and that one is fixing this.

Lord, man, if we don’t jump in this boat together, as an engineer, I have stopped many times along the highways, and I tell the people, “Man, the gravel you are putting in there is not washed. You are putting in dirty gravel and sand gravel. You have to wash the sand. You have to wash the cement.” “Boy, you are

playing. Don't worry about that." That's what they say to me. It is all to get an advantage in some sense or another, and you become some kind of I don't know.

We are talking about agriculture, my good colleague said it, and I can bet you, I can bet you, when I institute a rule or regulation that says that productive sector has first priority and the people who produce in this country are going to be the people, as long as they have quality products, who are going to sell their products in this country first because it is going to be best quality, you don't want to again hurt the Belizean people, but as long as it is quality goods and it is a reasonable price product, because you need the foreign exchange and you need the jobs and all of that, you watch how the people in the distributive trade will bring the hammer down on me because of what I am doing. They will say that I am stopping their business because they are importing this and that and that is their business. It is all part of not having the concept of a growing, beautiful, lovely nation that could be on top of the world, and every way you do it you have all sorts of things coming at you because to do the right requires a fight. Let us all commit to do the right and take on the fight. I move the Motion.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, that Motion is referred to the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee for examination, consideration and report.

2. **Resolution Authorizing the Ratification by Belize of the Framework Agreement between the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the Government of Belize for the Deepening of Bilateral Cooperation Motion, 2016.**

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, I move that - **WHEREAS**, the Framework Agreement between the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the Government of Belize for the Deepening of Bilateral Cooperation (hereafter called "the Agreement") was signed on 6th July 2016;

AND WHEREAS, the objective of the Agreement is to provide a legal framework to encourage co-operation in *inter alia*, trade, investment, tourism, energy, marine affairs, education, agriculture, and any other area of mutual interest;

AND WHEREAS, the Government of Belize is desirous of ratifying the Agreement pursuant to Article VI of the Agreement;

AND WHEREAS, section 61(A)(2)(a) of the Belize Constitution as amended by the Belize Constitution (Sixth Amendment) Act (No. 13 of 2008) provides that the Senate shall authorize the ratification to any agreement by the Government of Belize;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate authorizes the Government of Belize to ratify the Agreement, a full text of which is hereto annexed.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is, **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that this Honourable House, being satisfied that the Loan proceeds would significantly assist the Government of Belize in its endeavor to reduce environmental pollution through the improvement of solid waste management practices in emerging tourism destinations in northern and

southern Belize, approve and confirm that the Government may enter into a Loan Contract with the Inter-American Development Bank on the terms and conditions set out above for financing the said Project, and further authorize the Minister of Finance to execute and deliver the said Loan Contract and all other documents associated therewith.

Madam President, this is a bilateral cooperation between two CARICOM partners. The Treaty of Chaguaramas gives authority to this, as I recall. And this is really two sister countries within CARICOM agreeing on certain things which cannot be greater than what the Treaty of Chaguaramas prescribes on it. It is no less, but it kind of selects it out between two sister CARICOM countries.

SENATOR E. COURTENAY: Thank you, Madam President. I will be brief. Madam President, I do not understand what the Government of Belize and the Government of Guyana are doing. We have a revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, a Treaty that all members of CARICOM are parties too, and a treaty that covers all the areas in this so-called Framework Agreement. Whether it be trade and investment, tourism, energy, marine affairs, education, agriculture, sports, culture, security, youth affairs and other areas of mutual interests, they are all covered by the Council of Finance and Planning, the Council for Trade and Economic Development, the Council for Human and Social Development, COHSOD. I have the Treaty here with me, and it is all covered.

I am signaling dangers. Guyana is a more developed country. Belize is a least developed country. The structure of the revised Treaty with which you, Madam President and Senator Hulse, are very familiar provides special and differential treatment for least developed countries like Belize vis-à-vis more developed countries like Guyana. Is this Framework Agreement attempting to treat us as if we are on the same level within the CARICOM framework and thereby conceding the special and differential treatment that we, Belize, are entitled too.

Secondly, Madam President, this Framework Agreement provides for further agreements to be entered into. "The Parties may enter into complementary cooperation agreements in specific areas of common interest which will form an integral part of this Framework Agreement. For the implementation of this Agreement, as well as complementary agreements emanating there from, the Parties may include support of regional, multilateral or any third party considered necessary. Then it provides at Article V, "Any dispute arising with respect to the interpretation or application of this Agreement shall be resolved in good faith through the Joint Commission. Failure to reach a reasonable agreement, the matter shall be referred to and resolved through the diplomatic channel." We are attempting to establish an alternative dispute mechanism. Chapter 9 of the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas has comprehensive provisions for dispute resolution between member states of the Caribbean Community.

It is patently clear, Madam President and Members of the Senate, that we cannot erode the benefits that Belize has under the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. And when I did my consultation with Members in the Government I was told this is just an agreement for us to agree, a Framework Agreement. So nothing is given up, nothing is lost, and I wanted to complete the sentence, then nothing is gain. Why are we signing this if we do not have an intention to enter into substantive agreements? And if we enter into substantive agreements then we are starting to talk about derogations from the existing Treaty.

I simply say this, Madam President. We on this side are fully supportive of

deepening the integration process. We are concerned that we are embarking on a slippery slope. I am told that, well remember we had the rice issue. This will allow us, when we have a rice issue, to talk about it. It means that we are operating then outside the legal regime of the revised Treaty. We have a history of difficulties: we had the patty war; we had the Red Stripe war; we had the matches war. Are we going to have these little agreements all over the place? When Jamaica and Trinidad quarrel about natural gas, are they going to enter into a Framework Agreement that we don't know about? When you can't get vegetables from St. Vincent and Dominica and Barbados wants it, are they allowed to enter into an agreement that we don't know about? We sound a word of caution, Madam President, and we urge the Government to make haste slowly. Let us get legal advice from our trade lawyers. Let us get appropriate sign off from CARICOM Secretariat that this is consistent and in keeping with our Treaty obligations before we put our foot wrong. I thank you, Madam President.

SENATOR V. RETREAGE: Thank you, Madam President. I will just briefly like to respond to some of the submissions made by Senator Courtenay to say that the signing of this agreement for the deepening of bilateral cooperation is not contrary in any way to the Treaty of Chaguaramas, firstly.

Secondly, it does not erode any right that Belize has as an LDC under that Treaty, and neither does it grant on Guyana any more rights than it currently has as a MDC under that Treaty. This is simply an agreement which sets the framework for deeper cooperation between two countries who currently are members of CARICOM, and that is simply what it is. There are many reasons why countries may wish to sign, and the Treaty allows for bilaterals to be signed. And I accept what Senator Courtenay is saying, in moving forward and in putting any agreement in place which comes from this framework, there will be the need to examine that agreement closely to ensure that the contents of those agreements are not in contravention of the Treaty of Chaguaramas. This agreement, however, is not in contravention of that Treaty.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Madam President, I move the question.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, that Motion is referred to the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee for examination, consideration and report.

3. **Resolution Authorizing Ratification by Belize to the Special Agreement between Belize and Guatemala to Submit Guatemala's Territorial, Insular and Maritime Claim to the International Court of Justice Motion, 2016.**

4. **Resolution Authorizing Ratification by Belize to the Protocol to the Special Agreement between Belize and Guatemala to Submit Guatemala's Territorial, Insular and Maritime Claim to the International Court of Justice Motion, 2016.**

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Madam President, there are two Motions following dealing with the Ratifications by Belize to the Special Agreement

between Belize and Guatemala to Submit the Territorial, Insular, and Maritime claim to the International Court of Justice Motions, and I would like to take them together, if I have the concurrence of the Senate to so do.

MADAM PRESIDENT: Honourable Senator, I believe you have the concurrence to deal with both of them at the same time. They're both part and parcel of the same undertaking.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I move that:- **WHEREAS**, the Special Agreement Between Belize and Guatemala to Submit Guatemala's Territorial, Insular and Maritime Claim to the International Court of Justice (hereafter called "the Agreement") was signed on 8th December 2008;

AND WHEREAS, the objective of the Agreement is *inter alia*, to submit to the International Court of Justice, subject to the consent of the people through the conduct of a referendum, any and all legal claims of Guatemala against Belize to land and insular territories and to any maritime areas pertaining to these territories, to declare the rights therein of both Parties, and to determine the boundaries between their respective territories and areas;

AND WHEREAS, the Government of Belize is desirous of ratifying the Agreement pursuant to Article 6 of the Agreement;

AND WHEREAS, section 61(A)(2)(a) of the Belize Constitution as amended by the Belize Constitution (Sixth Amendment) Act (No. 13 of 2008) provides that the Senate shall authorize the ratification to any treaty by the Government of Belize;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate authorizes the Government of Belize to ratify the Agreement, a full text of which is hereto annexed.

=====

WHEREAS, the Protocol to the Special Agreement Between Belize and Guatemala to Submit Guatemala's Territorial, Insular and Maritime Claim to the International Court of Justice (hereafter called "the Protocol") was signed on 25th May 2015;

AND WHEREAS, the objective of the Protocol is to amend Article 7.2 of the Special Agreement Between Belize and Guatemala to Submit Guatemala's Territorial, Insular and Maritime Claim to the International Court of Justice, to allow that the referendum be held simultaneously or separately on the dates most convenient to the Parties;

AND WHEREAS, the Government of Belize is desirous of ratifying the Protocol pursuant to Article 4 of the Protocol;

AND WHEREAS, section 61(A)(2)(a) of the Belize Constitution as amended by the Belize Constitution (Sixth Amendment) Act (No. 13 of 2008) provides that the Senate shall authorize the ratification to any treaty by the Government of Belize;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate authorizes the Government of Belize to ratify the Protocol, a full text of which is hereto annexed.

SENATOR E. COURTENAY: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President and Members of the Senate, we on this side wish the record to reflect that we absolutely and completely are committed to having the people of Belize decide whether or not the Guatemalan claim to Belizean territory is going to be decided by the people of Belize. How it is to be resolved is a matter for the people of Belize to decide. The Special Agreement and the Protocol to the Special Agreement has as one of its central features the holding of referenda in Belize and Guatemala in order for the people to determine whether or not the International Court of Justice shall be the body that will resolve the Guatemalan claim. Our commitment to the paramount power and decision making authority of the Belizean people is unswerving.

That having been said, Madam President, we are here today to consider an Agreement and a Protocol, and it begs the question, why now? Next week will make 8 years since the Special Agreement was signed, and it has not been ratified by Belize during that time. It is approximately 14 or 15 months since the Protocol was signed, and it has not been ratified. In moving the Motion, the Leader of Government Business provided no explanation to this Honourable Senate, no explanation to this country, as to why it is that the Government of Belize at this point in time seeks to have the authority to ratify these two agreements, the Special Agreement and the Protocol. It is the position of the People's United Party, we have said it before and we are repeating it now for the record, now is not a convenient time for the process of a referendum to be held in Belize.

Madam President, let us be clear. The Republic of Guatemala at the highest levels of its government have been and apparently intend to continue to behave in a hostile manner towards the Government and people of Belize. When you sign a treaty, an agreement, and a protocol, and commit in good faith to its implementation, you do not behave like a rogue, you do not behave like a tyrant, you do not malign your neighbor, you do not lie on our Foreign Minister, you do not tell lies on our Prime Minister and ask us to believe that you are acting in good faith. (Applause) We in the People's United Party have said it, and we say it again, until the Government of Guatemala adopts a good neighborly attitude towards the Government and people of Belize, we say it is not an appropriate time

to embark on the road to a referendum. We do not, Madam President, believe that now is that appropriate time.

It is remarkable to us that the Government of Guatemala has withdrawn its Ambassador to Belize. He has not yet return to his post which is a diplomatic insult to Belize. In those circumstances, we reject any attempt to move this process forward. When full ambassadorial relations, and I mean a presence in Belize, is established, then we can begin talking about moving forward with this process. On 10th November the Guatemalan Armed Forces detained, stopped, SATIM from going up our side of the Sarstoon River. That is unacceptable, Madam President, and there has been no reason or rational explanation from the Government of Guatemala or the Government of Belize as to how that matter has been resolved.

It is remarkable that the Foreign Minister of Belize can tell us that his colleague is not taking his calls. They can't arrange a meeting. To quote the Foreign Minister that he has "tried to engage the Foreign Minister, but he is not disposed to sit with us yet, and neither is he disposed to cause his technical people to sit with our technical people to work, and so we haven't made any headway on that front", speaking about the Sarstoon Protocol. If that is the way the Government of Guatemala behaves, if that is the way the Foreign Minister of Guatemala behaves, then why is it that we are moving forward at this particular time? We say that now is not the appropriate time for us to be dealing with this issue.

It was on the 17th of October of this year when six Belizeans were detained by Guatemalan military forces, and they were told by the Guatemalans that Belize only has 3 miles in the southern waters and that all the rest is for Guatemala. We still have no explanation as to how that matter has been resolved. On 23rd of September 2016, President Morales took to the floor of the General Assembly of the United Nations and maligned and libeled the Government and people of Belize. We do not, on this side of the Senate, believe that the diplomatic atmospherics are appropriate for us to conduct a bilateral relation with a country that has adopted a hostile attitude towards Belize. I remind this Honourable Senate that we are still waiting for an explanation and a rationalization of the plett matter.

But something is radically wrong, Madam President. At the diplomatic level there appears to be no contact, and yet the Brigadier General Jones tells us that he and General Perez-Kaskas. How is it in a democracy where we have civilian control of the army that we cannot have fruitful diplomatic discourse but the military are having fruitful discourse and resolving issues? It is a dangerous sign, Madam President, when the Generals are talking and deciding things and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs are unable to speak. That is unprecedented and unacceptable in a democracy such as Belize.

But we have a difficulty, Madam President, because when one looks at the Protocol that we are considering today, this is what Mr. Carlos Raul Morales Moscoso signed his name to on behalf of his government on the 25th of May 2015. Considering that the Parties remain committed to the creation of a climate of confidence between their people," not true; "Reiterating the commitment of the Parties to promote good neighbourliness," not true, "and bilateral cooperation," not true, "and the need to implement the thirteen Agreements signed on 17 of December 2014 in Placencia as well as the undertakings made at the meeting of the Belize-Guatemala Joint Commission of 10th October 2014, held in Guatemala City", not happening, not true. In the meeting in Istanbul they committed that by the end of this year there would be a Sarstoon Protocol, not true. The point I

make, Madam President and colleagues, underlines every international agreement, is the fundamental principle of good faith by the parties, and Guatemala has demonstrated a catalogue of bad faith in relation to Belize.

But we have even more fundamental concerns about the approach of our government on this matter because what we witness today is what I would describe as salami/sausage diplomacy. The first slice that we got was the Special Agreement. You didn't get the whole sausage. You just got a slice. The next slice we got was the Protocol; approve that. But these documents require a referendum, and we hear that there is going to be an amendment to the Referendum Act. We haven't seen it. Approve this first that is going to have a referendum, but we are not going to show you the amendment to the Referendum Act. That will be the third slice you will get. Sometime later next month they will bring us back here and they will say, "You have already said that we are going to referendum. Now here is the law under which we will go to referendum". The fourth slice, Mr. President, over and over we have been advised that the Maritime Areas Act needs to be amended. We are talking about resolving this dispute with a law that is inimical to our interest. When are we going to get that slice? We have said the Constitution of Belize needs to be amended in order to legally carry this process forward. It is another slice. It is piece by piece and slice by slice. That approach we do not support.

It is the view of the People's United Party, Mr. President, that we need to have a comprehensive and holistic approach to Belize/Guatemala relations, including the resolution of the Belize/Guatemala dispute, including the holding of the referendum, including the education exercise that has to be undertaken, and that is why we have repeatedly call for the recreation of a national team that looks at this matter not slice by slice, piece by piece, issue by issue, but in a holistic way so that we can plan a strategy, implement a strategy, so that we can establish a timetable. Why are we being asked to give the authority today and we don't know when the referendum is going to be held? What is the timing? But there is a deeper problem here, Mr. President, from our perspective, the House of Representatives, the representatives of the people have not yet spoken on the Special Agreement and the Protocol. The point I make is that whether or not the Special Agreement is ratified is a constitutional and legal issue, but this is primarily a national issue. It is a political issue, and the true representatives of the people, those elected by the people, should speak on this issue before the Senate is asked to give the Executive authority to ratify the Special Agreement and the Protocol. So we say that we are being previous, Mr. President, and we call on the House to consider the Special Agreement and the Protocol before we give our sign off.

Now, Mr. President, there are serious issues that have to be tackled. The People's United Party wishes to be pellucid. There should be no referendum on the Belize/Guatemala issue and the ICJ based on the current list of electors. The list of electors is contaminated and corrupted. There is an urgent need for re-registration, and we are saying that before there is any referendum there must be re-registration so that those persons who have bought their passports, those persons who do not belong on that list, those persons and you all recall the pictures of a particular former Minister carrying boxes out of the Immigration Office, delivering nationality to people, that those people should not be allowed to vote in any referendum on the ICJ. And we are firm on that, Mr. President, re-registration so that root Belizeans, true Belizeans are the ones who decide this issue, re-registration before any ratification of the Special Agreement.

We insist that the Referendum Act be amended and that the Senate knows what the proposed amendment is before we give authority to the Minister to ratify the agreement, and we say the same thing with respect to the Sarstoon Protocol. Guatemala cannot be treating us like children and tell us that they will agree to a Protocol by the end of the year, and at the end of the year they come and say, “I am not talking to you,” and we are going to say, “Well, we are happy with you, and we are going to go ahead and ratify the Protocol and the Special Agreement.” No, Mr. President. We are saying that we must have the Sarstoon Protocol in place, a protocol that respects Belize’s right to its part of the Sarstoon River before this Special Agreement is ratified. I repeat, Mr. President, that there is a need for a national plan and a national team to address this issue.

I wish to draw to my colleagues’ attention to Standing Order 68A(1), simply by way of reminder. Standing Order 68A(1) says, “The Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee shall be a Committee of the whole Senate and shall have the duty of considering any of the following constitutional and foreign affairs measures, namely- (b) whether the Senate should authorize the ratification of any treaty by the Government of Belize.” That is what we are embarking on today, a duty to consider whether the Senate should authorize the ratification of any treaty by the Government of Belize. It is not a matter of coming here and standing up and saying a few words and saying, “All those in favor, the ayes have it” No, Mr. President. We have a duty. We have to discharge our constitutional duty, and it is the firm proposal of this side that the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee, which is a Committee of the whole Senate should meet. We should request the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the CEO of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ambassador of Belize to Guatemala, the Brigadier General of the Belize Defense Force, and all other persons who are concerned and wish to be heard on whether or not there should be a ratification of these two instruments before we approve it. We cannot truly say that we are discharging our constitutional duty today, if we simply go through a little motion here and say we approve. We need to know why the Government is saying to do this now. We need to know what the Ambassador in Guatemala is saying. We need to know why the Foreign Minister can’t speak to his counterpart and why the General can speak to his counterpart. In essence, what we are calling for, Mr. President, is an informed consent, an informed decision by the Senate on this very important matter, nothing more and nothing less. We have a duty to perform, and I am calling on my colleagues. We have waited for 8 years. Let us wait for 8 more days or 8 more weeks or 8 more months. There is no rush. Let us not rush into this. Let us do it right. I thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR M. LIZARRAGA: Thank you, Mr. President. Senator Courtenay, I would like to thank you very much for that well-articulated presentation, very enlightening and informative. You addressed a lot of my concerns, but I would like to ask, I guess, some questions, and, perhaps, hopefully we can get some answers. I especially like the gravity that you put to us in the Senate about bringing in the players, the Minister, the CEO, the Ambassador, for us to truly understand what is happening live or on the ground before we can make a decision. Like you, one of the questions I had was, why now? Why not wait and do them all together next week or whenever it is that they are going to make the proposals to the referendum and give us the proper explanations, etc., which we have not been given?

In looking at these both agreements, Mr. President, I guess in a simplistic way what we are saying is to let us agree that we can now go separately. Before it was that we had agreed that we were going to take this to the people in a referendum in both countries and that we would have gone, I believe, it was 6th

October in 2013, both of us would have gone and have a referendum in our countries and both of us decide together. The question I have is, Mr. President, what is the wisdom? And I am sorry, but I don't think I heard you address it. But what would be the wisdom of going separately? What would be the pros and the cons? But you did say, Senator Courtenay, that it is important for us to have this national education process, which, I think, is still severely lacking in our country on this matter. We need to know, as a people, certainly as a Government, as legislators, we need to know what it is that we expect from this process. We need to be absolutely clear so that all of us can go out and champion for whatever process we are going to embark on, and I think that process is not yet complete. A while ago, I think, Ambassador Murphy was commissioned to start this public campaign, and I don't know what happened to that, but it just fell by the wayside, and we have not seen anything, if any, from that process.

But, again, what are the pros and cons of going alone? Should we go first, or should we wait for Guatemala to go first? I suspect that Guatemala is not going to have an opportunity, or if what they say is true that they will do it when they have a General Election, it will be until 2019, that they would then surface this matter again. Do we wait until 2019 to see what they decide first, or do we go first? What is the strategy? I concur with Senator Courtenay completely that there needs to be this body. I remember they had the Belize/Guatemala Commission at one time, and I was a part of it. We were told that the business community would have presented a lot of issues when we were looking at solving the issue then. We made approaches to the business community, and it went well. You don't hear anything more from the business community in Guatemala because we have established good contact. So I believe in the work of this joint group, this joint commission. But we don't know, like Senator Courtenay had said, we don't know what is the strategy. We don't know, my goodness, why aren't we even talking to them? I mean, our Foreign Minister can't talk to them. They are acting like bullies in the Sarstoon. I mean, are we going to appease? Why are we doing this? Is this a strategy of appeasement? What is the strategy? What happens if we go first and our people are not properly schooled in what it is that we expect to get? What are the risks? What do we stand to gain or stand to lose? What are the worst case scenarios? I mean, I think that most Belizeans will concur, including myself, that we have not been thoroughly schooled on what the true risks are of all the different scenarios.

So, Mr. President, I agree that Guatemala has not been acting properly in creating this climate of confidence that, they say, we would have when we signed the 2015 Agreement. I agree that we are not really seeing this good neighborliness and bilateral cooperation when we are not even speaking at the diplomatic levels. So there are some fundamental issues that we need to address, as a country, if what we sign on to, we say that we would use all our efforts to resolve the differences that subsist so that we do not pass them on to future generations. That's what they agreed to. So I certainly would like to say that Senator Courtenay has made some very convincing arguments today. He has made a proposal, and I would like to suggest that we should listen to him carefully. There is no rush. We can wait a week, 8 days, eight weeks, or even 8 months, as he suggested, because Guatemala is not going to take this to their people in a referendum before 2019, I would suspect, unless somebody know different, but then I am not privy to that information. So I think that there is no rush, and I think that we should deliberately and soberly, Mr. President, consider all that Senator Courtenay has raised today, and, again, Senator Courtenay, I truly appreciate your input.

In Article 7, one last point, in Article 7(1) of the 2008 Agreement speaks to "The Parties commit themselves to undertake the procedures set forth in their

respective national systems to submit to referenda the decision to bring to the International Court of Justice the final settlement of the territorial dispute.” I stand to be corrected, but I believe that this law that we are seeking to change next year that actually Guatemala and Belize signed on to at that time we had the 60%. If I am not mistaken, this change to our Constitution that changed it to 60% was signed in, I think, it was April. The Referendum Act was signed in April of that year, right. So Guatemala, when they signed this in December, they knew. They signed this and agreed to it. It says, “The Parties commit themselves to undertake the procedures set forth in their respective national systems to submit to referenda.” Our referendum law had been changed for months and months. So why are we changing it back now? Is it to suit them? Is it to appease Guatemala? Is that the only reason, or is there some other strategy that we don’t know about? Certainly, if it is appeasement, then I agree with Senator Courtenay that at the very least we should see and expect that a protocol be signed for the Sarstoon before we seek to appease them. Otherwise why would we want to change our Referendum Act next week from 60% to 50%? Is it to make it easier? For who?

Mr. President, the question to be submitted to the referenda, “Do you agree that any legal claim of Guatemala against Belize relating to land and insular territories and to any maritime areas pertaining to these territories should be submitted to the International Court of Justice for final settlement and that it determine finally the boundaries of the respective territories and areas of the Parties?” Suppose this agreement goes against what we agree, are we committing now, today, by this, and I stand to be corrected. Perhaps the Attorney General can help lend some clarity. But, if we go to the ICJ and the ICJ makes a ruling, are we committing now by this document that we will accept the rulings of the ICJ? Or by going to a referenda will that mean, this being the question, that we will accept the ruling of the ICJ, if it means that we are going to be losing territories? There are a lot of questions that, I think, need to be clarified. Senator Courtenay even inferred that some constitutional amendments need to be made before we go. So there is a whole process. There are a lot of questions that still need to be answered in a lot of people’s mind, including my own. And I think that process needs to be given a chance before we commit to something that is going to turn around and bite us. I support your proposal, Senator Courtenay, and I appreciate the clarity that you have lent to the discourse today. Thank you.

SENATOR E. SMITH: Mr. President, I would like to thank as well Senator Courtenay. I think he did a very good job there in enlightening us quite well. I was looking for that very Standing Order that he read because I wasn’t sure, you know. And I think that some of the points that you raised they are also concerns that we have as well. And one of our first thought that came about was that it seems as though the tail is wagging the dog. Why are we here? Why has it not gone to the House before it is here with us? And then we have to question, are we disregarding parliamentary procedures by doing so? These are questions that we have, and maybe someone who is more verse in this matter may be able to respond to those questions.

And then we also had the question of the 60% threshold as it relates to the proposed amendment to the Referendum Act. Why are we now moving to a simple majority, a 50 plus 1. Is it that we are allowing Guatemala to once again bully us? It seems that Guatemala says, “Jump”, and we say, “How high?”

Now Guatemala’s aggression has become amplified as it relates to the Sarstoon. Every time an incident occurs there is clear indication that they are ratcheting up their stand, their modus operandi. They continually and openly impede all freedom to traverse our waters by way of their armed forces which is tantamount to military threat. These acts are clearly violations of our geographical

and political and territorial sovereignty. Now, while there was a commitment by the Government to have countrywide public consultations to educate the people, it seems that that has failed miserably. We know that there were a few private consultations held. I know that a meeting was held with us, as NTUCB and as BNTU, but we have not heard much of the public consultations, and so it leaves us to wonder about this education campaign. Where is it? How far are we? And I understand that there is going to be a meeting on December 14, where persons who have been invited to that meeting will be updated on the education campaign. That invitation was received, I believe, yesterday, and so that will be happening. So, if we are just going to be updating on the campaign, why are rushing? It begs the question.

There is also concern, Mr. President, as it relates to, as my colleague over there said, persons on the voters' list who will be eligible to vote in the referendum since thousands of Guatemalans are registered voters, and I don't need to elaborate on that. Every time there is an election cycle coming around, we hear of that and we see of that. We hear of persons who are not living in Belize, who come across on the day of election to come and vote. So that is a concern as well. Why don't we address that matter before we make this decision here today? And so with all of those red flags, Mr. President, all of these concerns that we have we have to wonder, how does any patriotic Belizean see this as something beneficial to our people and country?

So, given the aforementioned concerns, it would be suicidal of us to support this agreement at this time. We cannot be hasty in deciding the faith of this nation. And so I must then agree with my esteemed colleague on the other side that we must take this matter to that committee and see how best we can address it before this Senate makes a decision. I thank you.

SENATOR REV. A. ROCKE: Mr. President, knowing the sensitive nature of this paper that we've been asked to ratify today, because of time constraints, we were unable as a body to make a firm decision on yes or no in regards to this matter. We need a little bit more clarity and a little bit more time, and so we would prefer to abstain from a decision today in this regard.

SENATOR P. THOMPSON: Mr. President, according to the so called compromise or the Special Agreement between Belize and Guatemala signed by the then Foreign Ministers of both countries, the Organization of American States has recommended that the two countries submit Guatemala's unfounded claim to the International Court of Justice. According to the Special Agreement, the OAS recommendation has been formally accepted by both parties, "subject to the approval of their citizens in national referenda". Respectfully, Mr. President, that is a line that rings very hollow. I know that much has been said about that point that the people of Belize will ultimately decide on whether we go to the ICJ or not, but I beg to differ. A very careful reading of this so-called compromise says otherwise.

Firstly, Mr. President, I want to submit that the Government should have had an open discussion with the people of Belize about this journey to the ICJ long before they formally accepted the OAS recommendation. So that before the Minister of Foreign Affairs signed on our behalf on December 8, 2008, he would have had a preliminary opinion of the people of Belize. He would have known whether we were inclined to agree or we were not so inclined, and on the strength of that early opinion he would have known whether he should have signed such an agreement in the first place, and if it did on what terms.

But the Foreign Minister never had the benefit of the vibes of the people

of Belize, Mr. President. He never consulted with the people before he signed the Special Agreement. In fact, Mr. President, I believe what he has signed consigns us to a one-way road to the ICJ. This is not an argument about the merits and demerits of the ICJ. This is a submission to say that the Government needs to come clean with the Belizean people. They have been saying to us that the people of Belize will be the ones to decide on whether we go to the ICJ, but I believe that is really a farce. I believe this matter of the ICJ has been decided for us. Let me explain why.

Mr. President, in Article 1 of the Protocol to the Special Agreement between Belize and Guatemala, the two parties have committed to ensure that through active public information efforts our citizenry will be “fully informed of the differences between the two Parties in respect of Guatemala’s territorial, insular and maritime claim and of the need to resolve them finally and definitively in the International Court of Justice”. The first part to actively inform the people of our differences is quite alright, but the last part which calls for us to fully inform them “of the need to resolve the differences finally and definitively in the International Court of Justice” is most troubling, Mr. President.

Mr. President, our Government has committed to their international friends to convince us that the ICJ is the way to go. In that case, we can forget about a balance information campaign. And we can forget about any idea of equal airtime to the pros and cons of going to the ICJ. This will clearly be a one-sided campaign. The Government will use all the resources at their disposal to convince the people to go to the ICJ. This is what our beloved Government has committed to do internationally. When they were abroad, they promised to do all they can to convince our people of the need to go to the ICJ, but when they are at home they say that the choice is for the people of Belize. The two things are not supposed to be mutually exclusive. No one can argue against the beautiful democratic tradition of having people decide. That is an idea we all endorse. That is supposed to be the hallmark of the democracy we live in, but democracy is seriously undermined when one side will have all the resources even as those in power pay lip service to the democratic process.

Way back in February of 2009, at a public forum to discuss whether Belize should vote to take this unfounded Guatemala claim to the ICJ, former UDP Minister Hubert Elrington, in his characteristic form, and back when he was still probably a bit hopeful about the new UDP government, wittily responded to a concerned citizen, “At the end of this it is not going to be the Government that is going to decide. It is not going to be the National Assembly that is going to decide. So there is no need for you to be railing at the Government, at the National Assembly, at Guatemala, at Britain. It has come knocking at your door. It is going to measure your height. It is going to measure your strength. It is going to measure your capacity. It is going to measure everything that is good and maybe some of the things that are bad in it. But the decision is going to be yours.” Well, I am sorry to inform the erstwhile Minister that he too has been misled, he too has been hoodwinked, because the whole idea of the referendum on the ICJ, to me, is a sick joke. Our Government has already committed us to the ICJ, and if Hubert listens carefully to his brother, the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, he will probably agree that that is exactly what the Minister has been saying. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

SENATOR V. RETREAGE: Mr. President, with your leave, I will refer to my notes. Mr. President, I start by saying that I have listened to the historical context laid out by Senator Courtenay in relation to the behavior of Guatemala towards Belize. And I say historical because it did not start yesterday, it did not start in October 2016. The history of renegeing on agreements in relation to this

issue stems far back, and it is for that reason that I support the approval of the Special Agreement and its Protocol. How long will we allow Guatemala's behavior to determine how we act? How long will we sit and say, "We had agreed to this, but Guatemala has refused to present it to their parliament, to their congress?" How long will we accept that as a reason for us not to put this issue to the citizens of this country for them to decide how they want to resolve this issue?

It is important in this context that we appreciate what the Senate is being asked to approve today. The Senate is being asked to approve ratification of an agreement which calls on the citizens of this country, Belize, to decide whether Guatemala's claim over Belize should be submitted to the ICJ for final determination. The approval of this Special Agreement and its Protocol today does not mean that Guatemala's claim will be submitted to the ICJ. It means that we decide how that claim will be dealt with.

As I started, I said the historical context of this issue is of utmost importance. After all Guatemala's unfounded claim is rooted in annals of history books and premised almost entirely on some assumption that Britain was to participate in the construction of a cart road and that cart road was not built. During the years 2005 to 2007, both Governments of Belize and Guatemala were of the opinion that Guatemala's unfounded claim could have been settled through negotiations. After intense negotiations and failed attempts at presentation of proposals to the respective governments, on the 7th of September 2005, Belize and Guatemala signed an Agreement on a Framework for Negotiations on Confidence Building Measures between the two countries, or what we have largely come to know as the Confidence Building Measures. An important but not often discussed feature of this Agreement was that it empowered the Secretary General of the United Nations to recommend a juridical solution of the differendum should negotiations fail. And I specifically want to cite Article B5 of that Agreement which states, "While the Territorial Differendum is being negotiated with the assistance of the OAS, if the Secretary General determines that it is not possible to arrive at an agreement on some of the issues, he shall recommend that the Parties submit those to either the International Court of Justice or an International Court of Arbitration. The Parties agree to submit the recommendation of the Secretary General to their appropriate authorities of the respective countries for their consideration and decision." This was in 2005.

Fast forward to 2007, when at a meeting in Washington, DC, October of 2007, both the Belize and Guatemala delegations informed the OAS Secretary General that they were unable to reach agreement on any issue and indicated that they were willing to consider submitting the dispute to the ICJ. In accordance with Article B5, which I just read, the Secretary General in turn issued his recommendation to that effect on 19th November 2007. Immediately following the recommendation of the Secretary General, then Prime Minister of Belize, the Honourable Said Musa, in his New Year's address for the start of the New Year of 2008, referred to the recommendation of the Secretary General and stated, and I quote, "The only way to ever putting an end to the claim is by means of an independent international tribunal." Then Leader of the Opposition and now Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Dean Barrow, in response to Mr. Musa's New Year's message stated, "I don't have any difficulty with the notion as long as that idea is put to the people of Belize, properly explained to the people of Belize and as long as the people of Belize then, on the basis of right information, can endorse such an idea."

This history is important to highlight the following important facts. One, the claim of Guatemala is not solely a PUP issue. It is not solely a UDP issue, not solely a Chamber issue, not solely a union issue, not solely a church issue, but it is

a national issue, a Belizean issue. And more importantly, in keeping with the sentiments of the Prime Minister in 2008, once this agreement is approved by the Senate, the Government will be obligated to and will ensure that citizens are fully informed of the differences between the two parties before any referendum on this issue is held. Article 1 of the Protocol to the Special Agreement obliges the Government to do so. So here we find ourselves today making strides to ensure that we do our part in ensuring that the unfounded Guatemalan claim which has plague our grandparents, parents and us will not continue to plague the lives of our children and their children.

Some may question the timing of this agreement, but to those persons I say, "Why not now?" It has been, and I think Senator Courtenay highlighted the fact that it has been 8 years since the Special Agreement was signed. It has been 15 months since the Protocol was signed. Why wait longer for someone else to determine how we deal with this issue?

Some of the objections to the agreement have been focused on the precise nature of the Guatemalan claim. To this I say, "It matters not what they claim because any good attorney will tell you that what matters is what can be proved." It will be an indisputable fact before any tribunal that both Britain, as the colonizer, and Belize, as the independent nation, have physically occupied and exerted full control over the entire territory of Belize for upwards of 200 years. It will be an indisputable fact that Guatemala signed the 1859 Treaty recognizing the boundaries of then British Honduras. It will be an indisputable fact that in 1931 Guatemala recognized the location of the southern and western extremities of Belize. These are the facts which Guatemala will not be able to dispute. For these reasons, I support the approval of the Special Agreement and its Protocol. And I will go further to say that the issue of how this approval is granted and what discussion needs to be had prior to that approval will be properly discussed in the Committee of the whole Senate. Thank you.

SENATOR S. DUNCAN: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, this is a very taxing matter. It is a very difficult situation in terms of fully understanding and fully grasping what is happening and what we need to do as it relates to our country and this whole issue of Guatemala. I, for one, can say that I have been perplexed, and it was, I think, about 15 years ago or 12 years ago or so, my colleague as the then Minister with responsibility for Foreign Affairs was pressing the issue and leading the charge on behalf of the country as it relates to the this Guatemalan unfounded claim. I, as a Belizean, had an opportunity to listen to Senator Courtenay expounding on this matter. Interestingly enough it was then that I thought I had clarity, and I was, I guess the only way to say it is that I was impressed, no. I will repeat it for his benefit, Mr. President. I was impressed with what the Senator had to say, and for once I thought this is the way to go. It was a little unfortunate that in recent times, I think, I am once again perplex. I am not clear where my good friend stands on the matter, if he is still at the same point that he was 12 years ago or there has been a shift in position. I say that not to question any change he may or may not have but rather to say that a lot of people out there are confused. I sit in this Honourable Chamber, and I also believe that I have a fairly decent level of education, but yet there is some confusion, and if we are not careful we will be doing our public a disservice, if we are not careful how we handle this matter. And I am pleased that my colleague, Senator Retreage, was able to make some very important clarifications just a while ago.

I want to urge us, as leaders in this Honourable Chamber, and, in fact, all the leaders in the country, whether political, governmental or social, that we not only take this matter seriously but we recognize that the general public needs to

be guided by what we say. Twelve years ago I was guided by Senator Courtenay, when I was confused, and I thought I had it done packed after hearing my good friend maybe because we were friends, and I was gullible and I just listened to him at the time. But in recent times, as I hear it play out, I am saying that I would like ensure that we not mislead the public or not cause greater confusion, I should say, because it is a very complex matter. It is complex to me, and I suspect it is complex to a lot of people out there, and from that perspective I would really want to see the politics out of the way. And Senator Retreage's comment needs repeating or reiterating or reinforcing that it is not an issue for a political party. It is a national issue that we need to make sure we address responsibly and with a high degree of maturity and sensitivity to try to give our people the best understanding possible as we make our decision. Having said that, it is important that the decision is made by the people, and from all that I have heard it does not appear to me that there is any division on that matter. I sense an attempt at semantics, but the core of the matter and the core of the message is that it appears to me that all parties want the final decision to be made by the people. And on that front I say, as we move forward and people are listening and looking for answers, my hope is that we can get past the politics and let our people have the right information to help them make up their minds when that time comes. Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, I listened very carefully to all the presentations. There are people in this room, Senator Courtenay, myself, a little younger, I guess, Minister Retreage in the legal profession, Senator Duncan, and my colleagues, we all talk on this matter. It has been around a long time. But I want to register unequivocally that this side of this Honourable House is in no quarrel, not now and not ever going to be, as long as I am here leading this side, with the people of Belize, with that side, my esteemed colleagues, when it comes to Guatemala. There is no question about that. We will quarrel about all kinds of things but never about us or anybody looking out for Guatemala. I have some very strong views, the border and military stick, I won't express them at all, when it comes to my 8,867 and my capacity to defend it.

So, Senator Thompson, please, we want no one to leave with any impression that anybody in this government is attempting to hoodwink or in any way to dupe anybody when it comes to this matter. There is no intention to go to the ICJ without the full complete consent of the people of Belize if we ever go. And if the people of Belize say, "No", that is what it is going to be. And I reside not only on loose words. I reside that in the fact that the people of Belize have learnt long ago to stand up for matters that are important to them. No government, whether it is the Government of the People's United Party or the Government of the United Democratic Party, would be foolish enough to ever attempt to do anything as serious and sensitive as this against the will of the Belizean people. If this Government, the teachers demonstrated for whatever it was, thanks God there was no violence because that is how we do things, bring the convention and do everything people have said, when it comes to Guatemala, be assured that would be the death knell to determine that we would do that without the consent of the people. And I can tell you that I would not be able to shake hands with Senator Courtenay, and I want to shake his hand. That will not happen. We are going to the people of Belize if and when.

As I understand it, there is no rush to go to the referendum. I haven't heard yet in Cabinet any rush to go to any referendum. In fact, I am happy because when this was first signed I had my reservations as well. Why are we waltzing

together and dancing together? And why are we going to a referendum on the same day? I had those concerns. Senator Courtenay, Senator Lisa Shoman and Ambassador Assad Shoman, and many other luminaries in this matter, I spoke at UB all about it, and they knew my position. I don't want to hold your hand to go at all. My position on this was not a legal position because I leave it to the legal people. It is you claiming my land, and I do concur that in a civilized world things are settled by court. I haven't yet read any history or seen where the military has been able to successfully settle disputes. I look at the situation in Syria, in Iraq with Isis and wherever, and at the end of the day after people are killed, maimed, destroyed and wreak havoc on destruction they still have to sign an agreement. They still have to come to some agreement. Germany learnt that lesson very hard. I think the world has seen it. We don't have any desire to endanger the life of any Belizean on any battle ground, but I can assure you, if it ever comes to that, there are many of us who would be prepared to defend this land. But we hope we won't have to get to that, and we would hope that the neighbor would understand Belize's position. And, yes, I concur with Senator Courtenay, their behavior recently gives question to that, but at the same time I must say that my colleague, Senator Retreage, has amply laid out the situation.

We cannot also be guided and directed by them, their wishes, wills and behavior, and that is why I was very happy when we had an amendment to that to say that they will go in their time and we will go on our time. And you believe me, from where I sit, we aren't going before them because it is not us who want to go there, and it is not us who are trying to take a piece of their territory. They are the ones that have the problem with our side. It is interesting because I recently attended a forum at the Bliss Institute where people, I have high regard for the legal profession, were arguing both sides of this. And interestingly enough Senator Lisa Shoman was on the pro-going side and former Senator and colleague of mine, Dickie Bradley, was on the no-going side. It was interesting of how this would go because in the past I recall that, both Senator Shoman, who was a Foreign Minister and Minister Bradley, who was in the Government, this matter had been discussed in depth. But I don't know what you call it anymore. I have to ask Senator Barnett.

There was a judge by the name of Albert Staine. He is one of the first Chief Justice of Belize, I think. My mother was his godmother, and so I don't know what that makes him and me. I was a little boy when she did that. And one time in my mother trying to get him to convince me to do law because she thought that that was the only profession that mattered, and the luminaries were in the legal profession, and you can talk and you can argue and all that, and she thought her son would do so great. I was in banking, and she figured law would be a natural progression, not engineering and agriculture. So I moved down in her eyes. She tried to get him to convince me, and he said one time to me in brief words because he wasn't a man of many words, he said, "Man, you can do law, you know. Don't be so philosophical and stick to one point." It was because I was saying, "Well, I don't see how I can support those people or defend those people who did wrong. How will I do that? I don't know." He said, "Man, we are trained to defend and argue both sides of any issue. You take your choice at the time." I said, "Interesting." So we are going to go to the people of Belize with legitimate, legal, proper arguments. It is not going to be government resources trying to bamboozle anybody into agreeing to go to the ICJ or not. It is going to be ventilated as long as we on this side are here, and I am sure that all my colleagues are committed to that process. This is nothing to play around with.

So today, what are we doing 8 years later? I wonder how it didn't come long before. We are putting it to the Senate to say, "Okay, this is what we are going to do." There are some underlined issues that have never been expressed,

but I know that there has been an attempt to get support for the continuing OAS presence at the Adjacency Zone. That we know. That is public knowledge because we don't have the wherewithal to stop all this aggression that is happening. The OAS presence is important for us. It has to be funded, one way or the other. It has to be funded, and there is a group of friends, I understand, who is putting this funding. Everything Belize does that shows, okay, we don't have the problem but we have the problem, and that may sound like a contradiction. If it was up to us, there would be no problem because we know our territory is ours, and we have behaved well. We continue to do that. We continue to behave well in the eyes of the international community, not to appease them, not to show that we are good little boys, or good little girls, not to be licky-licky but to show that we are responsible, intelligent, law abiding people in this country who want nothing but peace and goodwill and working properly with dignity and respect from our neighbors. And I highlight respect because, I think, that is the one word that Senator Courtenay reiterated over and over without saying it that Guatemala is showing us no respect. We need also to show the international community that we are proper, respectful, dignified people. And, to echo the words of Senator Retreage and to echo the words of Senator Duncan, this goes to the Committee of Foreign Affairs, obviously. Thank you, Mr. President.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, that Motion is referred to the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee for examination, consideration and report.

5. **Resolution Authorizing the Accession by Belize to the Co-operation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean (ARCAL) Motion, 2016.**

6. **Resolution Authorizing the Ratification by Belize to the Agreement Between the Government of the French Republic and the Government of Belize on the Mutual Exemption of Diplomatic Passport Holders from Short-Stay Visa Requirements Motion, 2016.**

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, there are two resolutions; Resolution No.5 is a Resolution Authorizing the Accession by Belize to the Co-operation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean; and Resolution No. 6 is a Resolution for the Ratification by Belize to an Agreement Between the Governments of Belize and of the French Republic for Mutual Exemption of Diplomatic Passports. I request, with the concurrence of this side, that we defer those two Motions.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is that Motion No. 5 and Motion No. 6 be deferred.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think

the ayes have it.

7. **Appointment of Mrs. Marilyn Williams as Chairperson of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.**

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, I move that - **WHEREAS**, section 3(1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, Chapter 105 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2011 (hereinafter called “the Act”) provides for the establishment of a body to be known as the Integrity Commission which shall consist of a Chairperson, who shall be an attorney-at-law with not less than five years’ standing, and six other members who shall be persons of integrity and high national standing;

AND WHEREAS, section 3(2) of the Act provides that two members of the Integrity Commission shall be appointed by the Governor General, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given with the concurrence of the Leader of the Opposition, and the other members of the Integrity Commission including the Chairperson shall be appointed by the Governor-General, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition;

AND WHEREAS, section 3(2) of the Act further provides that in the process of consultation with the Leader of the Opposition for the appointment of the Chairperson, the Prime Minister shall use his best endeavours to secure the agreement of the Leader of the Opposition.

AND WHEREAS, after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, the Right Honourable Prime Minister intends to advise the Governor-General to appoint **Mrs. MARILYN WILLIAMS**, Attorney-at-Law, as the Chairperson of the Integrity Commission;

AND WHEREAS, **Mrs. MARILYN WILLIAMS** is a person of integrity and high national standing and is duly qualified to be appointed as the Chairperson of the Integrity Commission;

AND WHEREAS, section 61A(2)(c), read with section 61A(3), of the Constitution of Belize provides, in effect, that an appointment of a member of the Integrity Commission can only be validly made with the prior approval of the Senate;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Senate, having perused the curriculum vitae of **Mrs. MARILYN WILLIAMS**, and being satisfied that she is a fit and proper person to be appointed as the Chairperson of the Integrity Commission, hereby approve her appointment as such, for a period of two (2) years with effect from 1st December 2016.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, that Motion is referred to the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee for examination, consideration and report.

8. **Appointment of Ms. Armead C. Gabourel as a Member of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.**

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister

of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, I move that - **WHEREAS**, section 3(1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, Chapter 105 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2011 (hereinafter called “the Act”) provides for the establishment of a body to be known as the Integrity Commission, which shall consist of a Chairperson, who shall be an attorney-at-law with not less than five years’ standing, and six other members who shall be persons of integrity and high national standing;

AND WHEREAS, section 3(2) of the Act provides that two members of the Integrity Commission shall be appointed by the Governor General, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given with the concurrence of the Leader of the Opposition, and the other members of the Integrity Commission, including the Chairperson, shall be appointed by the Governor-General, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition;

AND WHEREAS, after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, the Right Honourable Prime Minister intends to advise the Governor-General to appoint **Ms. ARMEAD C. GABOUREL** as a member of the Integrity Commission;

AND WHEREAS, **Ms. ARMEAD C. GABOUREL** is a person of integrity and high national standing;

AND WHEREAS, section 61A(2)(c), read with section 61A(3), of the Constitution of Belize provides, in effect, that an appointment of a member of the Integrity Commission can only be validly made with the prior approval of the Senate;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Senate, having perused the curriculum vitae of **Ms. ARMEAD C. GABOUREL**, and being satisfied that she is a fit and proper person to be appointed as a member of the Integrity Commission, hereby approve her appointment, as such, for a period of two (2) years with effect from 1st December 2016.

SENATOR T. SANTOS: Thank you, Mr. President. I have some short comments on this. Given the next proceedings on what has been happening in Belize of recent, one may think that the word for this year would be corruption, but I don’t think so. I would say that the words for this year or the word for this year is optics, Mr. President.

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator Santos, excuse me, I mean, we are dealing with the appointment of Armead Gabourel. So we have to stick to that, right. Thank you.

SENATOR T. SANTOS: Yes. The appointment of Ms. Gabourel, as a member of this Integrity Commission, is not only bad optics, but it further serves to reinforce the belief that this Government is not serious about this Integrity Commission. It is just a lot more smoke and mirrors. It is a mockery. It is a joke. The Belizean people will recall the Belize Airport Authority scandal, about cheques issued by that authority to politically assist the then junior Minister in charge of that same authority, Honourable Edmond Castro, who, by the way, some three years later was promoted. Yes, Ms. Gabourel, it appears, may have even signed a cheque for the Ministers’ football team. During media interviews the Prime Minister would have us believe that Ms. Gabourel opposed the decision or the decisions of the Board of this authority to continue the political support to Mr.

Castro using public funds, my money and your money. But what good is your opposition to corrupt acts, if you continue to be a part of it, if you continue to be one of those that Mahatma Gandhi speaks of, “who watch evil without doing anything?” The right thing to do was to resign from that Board before you were forced to do so, not after the matter became a scandal and made the news. I know there are many competent Belizeans faced in different situations like that with board string who step down from the Board. It is people like that that we need to serve on this Integrity Commission, Mr. President, people who will boldly, bravely stand and act against corruption which is choking this country.

There is nothing wrong with showing support for your political party, but when party hacks are put in places and positions which require objectivity and independence in thought, what result do we really want? Should we truly expect fair and impartial investigations without fear and favor? It is no wonder we have so much endemic apathy towards change on corruption in this country. It is always more and more of the same. The status quo remains. Like Machiavelli we must not be interested in preserving the status quo. We must desire to overthrow the status quo. Mr. President, it is my view that, unless there is more independence with some of these appointments such as Ms. Gabourel, this Commission is but another farce.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, I have a quick comment. The Act is clear. The appointments, one cannot argue, will have political alignments because clearly that is what it says, “Leader of the Opposition and Prime Minister”, with concurrence and with consultation, and that is what is being done. I have listened, but I don’t know because the Motion is really to appoint Ms. Gabourel. I would not have wanted to interrupt the Honourable Senator, but I haven’t heard, and, indeed, I do not know of any clear cut, legal or otherwise situation, where the lady, Ms. Gabourel, was involved with or cited to be involved with or charged or brought before any court or tribunal or anything. And therefore we have to be careful. Yes, when the Integrity Commission meets, it meets as a body. And when it meets, as a body, there are going to be persons there who are going to be privy to the information of lots of people. Yes, I am concerned that those people do have high integrity, integrity not only in the action and behavior but in the integrity in their ability to call these things out, and we trust that that is what is going to happen.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, that Motion is referred to the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee for examination, consideration and report.

9. **Appointment of Ms. Lisbeth Delgado as a Member of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.**

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, I move that- **WHEREAS**, section 3(1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, Chapter 105 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2011 (hereinafter called “the Act”) provides for the establishment of a body to be known as the Integrity Commission which shall consist of a Chairperson, who shall be an attorney-at-law with not less than five years’ standing, and six other members who shall be persons of integrity and high national standing;

AND WHEREAS, section 3(2) of the Act provides that two members of the Integrity Commission shall be appointed by the Governor General, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given with the concurrence of the Leader of the Opposition, and the other members of the Integrity Commission including the Chairperson shall be appointed by the Governor-General, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition;

AND WHEREAS, after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, the Right Honourable Prime Minister intends to advise the Governor-General to appoint **Ms. LISBETH DELGADO** as a member of the Integrity Commission;

AND WHEREAS, **Ms. LISBETH DELGADO** is a person of integrity and high national standing;

AND WHEREAS, section 61A(2)(c), read with section 61A(3), of the Constitution of Belize provides, in effect, that an appointment of a member of the Integrity Commission can only be validly made with the prior approval of the Senate;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Senate, having perused the curriculum vitae of **Ms. LISBETH DELGADO**, and being satisfied that she is a fit and proper person to be appointed as a member of the Integrity Commission, hereby approve her appointment, as such, for a period of two (2) years with effect from 1st December 2016.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, that Motion is referred to the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee for examination, consideration and report.

10. Appointment of Mr. Wilmot Simmons as a Member of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, I move that- **WHEREAS**, section 3(1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, Chapter 105 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2011 (hereinafter called “the Act”) provides for the establishment of a body to be known as the Integrity Commission which shall consist of a Chairperson, who shall be an attorney-at-law with not less than five years’ standing, and six other members who shall be persons of integrity and high national standing;

AND WHEREAS, section 3(2) of the Act provides that two members of the Integrity Commission shall be appointed by the Governor General, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given with the concurrence of the Leader of the Opposition, and the other members of the Integrity Commission including the Chairperson, shall be appointed by the Governor-General, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition;

AND WHEREAS, after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, the Right Honourable Prime Minister intends to advise the Governor-General to appoint Mr. **WILMOT SIMMONS** as a member of the Integrity Commission;

AND WHEREAS, Mr. WILMOT SIMMONS is a person of integrity and high national standing;

AND WHEREAS, section 61A(2)(c), read with section 61A(3), of the Constitution of Belize provides, in effect, that an appointment of a member of the Integrity Commission can only be validly made with the prior approval of the Senate;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Senate, having perused the curriculum vitae of Mr. **WILMOT SIMMONS**, and being satisfied that he is a fit and proper person to be appointed as a member of the Integrity Commission, hereby approve his appointment, as such, for a period of **two (2) years** with effect from 1st December 2016.

SENATOR P. THOMPSON: Mr. President, we've just ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and now we have the appointees for the Integrity Commission from the Government and the Opposition before us to be approved. If we are to adhere to the guidelines of UNCAC, it requires that we promote independence, impartiality, and integrity in public life. The UNCAC and the Integrity Commission are married at the hip. The Integrity Commission is a body that is set up to prevent corruption in public life. That is a major pillar of the UNCAC. Both institutions should be autonomous bodies that are independent far removed from the influence of the people who they may have to someday investigate.

Now the Government's appointees to the Integrity Commission are persons that leave no doubt where they stand in terms of their political views. I will use one person from the government side, Mr. Wilmot Simmons, as an example. This is not to pick on Mr. Wilmot Simmons. I do not consider him to be a bad person or a member of the evil empire or anything like that. I have known him most of my life, but there can be no question where his political loyalty stands. He is a part of the UDP.

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator Duncan, what is your objection?

SENATOR S. DUNCAN: It is just a point of order. I am not clear, Mr. President, whether or not your political persuasion is an aspect or is something that needs to be considered for appointment to this Committee. I am not sure why that is being put forward. We are debating the fitness and willingness of the gentleman, but you are using his political affiliation as a rationale for that, but that is not one of the criteria for appointment. Come on!

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator Thompson, please continue.

SENATOR P. THOMPSON: I will explain. He, Mr. Simmons, can be described as a diehard UDP, and I am sure he would never deny this. There is no

doubt he is proud of his UDP credentials. He puts it on display on Wave Radio almost every other day. Now, Mr. President, I am not saying that it is wrong to be a rabid UDP supporter, but I believe that the persons appointed to this Commission should be persons that show independence and a level of impartiality that will leave no doubt in the minds of the people as to the integrity and the accuracy of their investigative work. Is it that we cannot find any such persons from among the 350,000 people living in Belize? Is it that everybody living in Belize are either diehard red or diehard blue? I don't believe that. I believe that there are many independent-thinking Belizeans who would do this country a great service by serving on this Commission.

Mr. President, the information that the people on this Commission will be privy to should be kept private and confidential. Can we guarantee that that information from Opposition Members or any Belizeans for that matter wouldn't be broadcasted on Wave Radio or spattered all over the pages of the Guardian? Mr. President, I don't consider the appointees, as I said earlier, to be evil people, but I am completely disappointed in the Prime Minister's election for this Commission. Putting these appointees on the Integrity Commission makes a complete, like my colleague said, mockery of this long-awaited Commission. Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR V. RETREAGE: Mr. President, I have just a brief reply. It is regrettable, in my view, that persons who are being proposed are being chastised and being treated as if though they are not capable of having independent thought because they have openly expressed allegiance to one political party or the other. The same can be said for at least one of the persons nominated by the Opposition, but that won't be said by this side because your political allegiance does not determine your capability of acting independently upon appointment. And I wanted to make that point because it is regrettable that that is the tact that has been taken.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, just in wrapping that one up. I don't want us to slink down into the kind of thing we saw in one of the most developed nation's recent electoral campaign when one of the candidates suggested that a judge could not make an impartial or a proper adjudication of his case because he had Mexican heritage. We don't want to go there. The truth of the matter is that, in this country, everybody, we are in a political society, thank God, not a military one, not a dictatorial one, a political democracy. And whether we express it loud or express it softly we have it because we vote, and I hope we all vote, and we vote for one side or another, with dignity, integrity and respect. All public officers should not openly participate, etc., but everybody knows that everybody has a political thing. I am very glad to hear Senator Thompson said that this is not to say anything bad about the man, or anything wrong about the man because that is what would have held up in terms of his denial to the position.

The truth of the matter is that Integrity Commission is going to look at the people's things you know, and I am going to be one who will try to get that piece of Act revised because I am telling you that I have some grave concerns with what

it says and how it is managed because in the past I have seen filings of people that I shake my head. I say, "Wow, it's that." So the whole idea of this Commission is to make sure that people who are considered to be people in public life, and I wish that is expanded to public officers and others. People in public life right now are only us here, House of Representatives, and Mayors, etc. And, indeed, in truth and in fact, we all know. Senator Courtenay was there. I have been there just like Senator Barnett and Senator Retreage. Yes, the possibility for Ministers and even worst Senators, Senators here, all of you, to get involved in any hanky-panky and so it is not impossible, but it is not as easy as Directors of Departments, Heads of certain places, etc., who have day-to-day access, and they are not required to come before the Commission at all. In fact, I remember a former Solicitor General went to court and was defended by an esteemed colleague of Senator Courtenay and Senator Retreage in the Bar and said that he does not come under the Integrity Commission, and that case was just dismissed. That was a long time ago, ancient history. I won't call names; I don't do that. Senator Courtenay is smiling because he knows the case. We need, if we are going to talk about this, to get beyond that so that everybody file.

The other thing that I will say, and I know this is not yet the point, but I will just mention it because you will have to file, Senator Thompson. I take a great objection to these subjective valuations of assets. Some great genius is going to determine the value of my property and the value of this and the value of that. I am very happy, and I have said it over and over, to list everything I owe and everything I own, and when you look at it I might be almost bankrupt, and they might take me out of here. So I have to be very careful that at least I wind-up with one dollar on the asset side. But that is what the Integrity Commission will look at, and it will look at how you acquired these things and how quickly you acquired them and clear how you got them. If when you came to government, even you, Senator Thompson, came to this Honourable Senate and you had \$100,000 worth of net assets, that is after your liabilities, and in one or two years time you have \$2 million, they have to ask you how you get that, man. It might very well be legit. We have to understand that too. I take great objection to people passing comments like, "Oh, I see he has that, and I see he has that as well." Look at the other side of the balance sheet. A good colleague of mine who sits right behind me in the business community will tell you that when you are in business and you have to make payroll and some other things on Fridays you are gnashing your teeth. Am I correct? And you worry about how you will pay, and so you ask your banker who will tell you that the cheque is at the edge of bouncing you know, but that they will allow it for right now. These are the things we go through, but people will say, "Oh, but I see he has a nice house, and I see he has this business, and I see he has that." That is what the Integrity Commission will look at. The Integrity Commission will look at the fact that, guess what happened, there was last year when the price of cattle was \$2.85 a pound and maybe by the next year somebody declares a vesicular stomatitis and it goes to 60 cents a pound, and the value of assets, if you had cattle, goes right down. That is how it is. I move the question.

MR. PRESIDENT: Senator Rocke, I am sorry, but Senator Hulse has already put the question on that Motion. You can talk on the other Motion; you can just put another name on it.

Honourable Members, that Motion is referred to the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee for examination, consideration and report.

11. **Appointment of Mr. Nestor Vasquez as a Member of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.**

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, I move that - **WHEREAS**, section 3(1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, Chapter 105 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2011 (hereinafter called “the Act”) provides for the establishment of a body to be known as the Integrity Commission which shall consist of a Chairperson, who shall be an attorney-at-law with not less than five years’ standing, and six other members who shall be persons of integrity and high national standing;

AND WHEREAS, section 3(2) of the Act provides that two members of the Integrity Commission shall be appointed by the Governor General, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given with the concurrence of the Leader of the Opposition, and the other members of the Integrity Commission including the Chairperson shall be appointed by the Governor-General, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition;

AND WHEREAS, section 3(3) of the Act provides that at least one member of the Integrity Commission shall be a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Belize;

AND WHEREAS, after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, the Right Honourable Prime Minister intends to advise the Governor General to appoint **Mr. NESTOR VASQUEZ**, a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Belize, as a member of the Integrity Commission;

AND WHEREAS, **Mr. NESTOR VASQUEZ** is a person of integrity and high national standing;

AND WHEREAS, section 61A(2)(c), read with section 61A(3), of the Constitution of Belize provides, in effect, that an appointment of a member of the Integrity Commission can only be validly made with the prior approval of the Senate;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Senate, having perused the curriculum vitae of **Mr. NESTOR VASQUEZ**, and being satisfied that he is a fit and proper person to be appointed as a member of the Integrity Commission, hereby approve his appointment, as such, for a period of two (2) years with effect from 1st December 2016.

SENATOR REV. A. ROCKE: Mr. President, I have no moving against the names of the persons selected. However, the very word integrity strikes me

that, as I look at the list, I would have thought that whoever was selecting these people, acting as a buffer for a Committee like that, would have selected somebody from the church. I think, while people may have their opinions of the people of the church, at the end of the day if you would talk to anybody they would tell you that they still listen to the advice of their pastor, they still listen to the words of their pastors. So that, as it relates to the whole matter of integrity, the Minister of God would be there to serve as such, that type of buffer that is needed, and that is the only objection I have that I haven't seen any persons from the .. as a representative on this Committee.

SENATOR E. COURTENAY: I listened this morning to Senator Godwin Hulse and to Senator Elena Smith, and I remembered Shakespeare, "Two truths are told, as happy prologues to the swelling act of the imperial theme", Macbeth. Senator Hulse, the first thing he said this morning, he told us about Article 2(a) of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and when Senator Smith spoke she told us about Article 6(2) of the United Nation Convention against Corruption, and we heard integrity, righteousness, sanctimoniousness and commitment to UNCAC from that side of the House. We are going to test it right now, Mr. President. Article 2(a)(ii), read by Senator Hulse, says, in its definition of a public official, "any other person who performs a public function, including for a public agency or public enterprise." And I wrote down what Senator Hulse said. He referred us to section 131 of the Constitution which defines a public officer, and he said that we will have to amend the law to ensure that the definition of public officer in the Prevention of Corruption Act complies with Article 2(a). There are a few well-known public enterprises in this country. The Belize Telemedia Limited is a public enterprise.

Senator Smith read Article 6(2). "Each State Party shall grant the body or bodies referred to in paragraph 1 of this article the necessary independence." And she underlined the need for independence of the Integrity Commission which is the body that UNCAC is going to look to in order to, and Senator Barnett is shaking her head. I am saying that, as the law stands right now, if you read Article 8 of this Convention, we are required to identify the entity that is going to deal with corruption. The law of this country establishes the Integrity Commission for that purpose. If we are committed to this Convention, then, if you are a director of a public enterprise, you are a public official as defined by Article 2(a). Senator Hulse has already told us that we are going to amend the law to cover public officials.

I look at Mr. Nestor Vasquez' CV, and he boasts that he is the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Belize Telemedia Limited from 2009 to present. From 2013 to present, he is a Director of the Board of Directors of Alba Petrocaribe Belize Energy Limited, which is 50% or 45% owned by the Government of Belize. It is a state enterprise, public enterprise. Now then how is it that you are going to amend the law to cover directors of state enterprises to be public officials who will be required to make public declarations to the Integrity Commission when sitting on the Integrity Commission is Mr. Nestor Vasquez who is a Director of two state enterprises? How can Mr. Vasquez make a declaration, then turn around and sit on the Commission that is going to review and revise his declaration? Mr. President, Members of this Senate, I said this morning that when we are starting down this road let us make sure we do it right. You come here seeking our approval to ratify the United Nations Convention against Corruption, central to which is the establishment of an independent body, and the first appointment before the ink is even dry contravenes the very Convention that we are coming here and praising and expressing our commitment to.

Mr. President, it gets worst. On the 13th of October, the Right Honourable

Prime Minister, in a press conference, informed the nation that, “Now we have learned that the Chamber of Commerce has been in touch with the Institute of Chartered Accountants. Remember the holdup with this is our inability to find a chartered accountant willing to serve. It is our understanding that the Institute is prepared to give me a list of five names of chartered accountants who would be prepared to serve”. He was referring to a letter written on the 12th of October by the Institute of Chartered Accountants to Mr. Nikita Usher, President of the Chamber. The long and short of this letter from the Institute to the Chamber is the following: “Thank you for your letter asking us to give assistance, to make suggestion for suitable candidates to be a member of the Integrity Commission. We appreciate the initiative of the Chamber of Commerce to engage our institute for suggestions. As of the current date, our Institute has not received a formal request for recommending/suggesting of an ICAB or institute member to be appointed. Notwithstanding this, we reiterate the fact that the Institute is an organization established with the objective to promote, protect, capacitate, and regulate the accounting profession in Belize and to advise and assist the Government of Belize on areas related to the profession. Because of the sensitive nature of the request and the need for the Institute to have a proper consultation with its membership, we are unable to make a nomination at this time. In fulfilling our objective to advise and assist the Government of Belize in establishing the Integrity Commission, the Institute will seek from its membership by vote suitable candidates for nomination and will submit such names to the Prime Minister for consideration. When this is completed, we will inform the Chamber of the decision made. In closing, I confirm that there are members who have expressed interest and readiness to serve on the Integrity Commission.” On the 12th of October, the Institute made it clear that they were willing to help. They were going to go through an exercise that required time, and they were going to inform, but they reiterated that they had members who were willing to serve.

On the 11th of November 2016, Mr. President of the Institute wrote to the Honourable Prime Minister, “On behalf of the Council, I am pleased to inform you that the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Belize duly nominates Mr. Warren Coye to be a member of the Integrity Commission. Mr. Warren Coye is a member in good standing of the Institute. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions on this nomination.” Well, he was contacted by the Prime Minister, and this is what the Prime Minister said on the 17th of November. “Thank you for your letter of the 11th November 2016. We had wanted for some time to hear from you, after we had been told you were prepared to make a nomination, but it took so long in coming that we went ahead on our own and found someone. Still thank you for your willingness to help.”

You don’t pick up the phone and call the President and say, “We need a name.” You don’t ask the Cabinet Secretary, “Please get in contact with the Institute and say what’s happening.” You don’t call Mr. Nikita Usher and say, “Where is the nomination from the institute?” No, we are not waiting on you. We are going ahead, and we will find someone. For eight years we couldn’t find anybody, but all of a sudden when an outside Institute is being asked by the Chamber to nominate someone and that person is going to be nominated, that person is coming forward, you know that the process is ongoing, and the Government all of sudden finds someone. And the person serves on state enterprises which violate the spirit and the letter of the Convention. And, Mr. President, the Leader of Government Business said this morning that they are going to change the law to cover public officials as defined in the Convention. Now, don’t take us to make *cunumunu*, and I don’t want to hear any semantics. I don’t want to hear any niceties. If we truly are committed to UNCAC, let’s do the right thing. I will wait and see. Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR E. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. President. I must agree with Senator Courtenay. I would like to add that at our last meeting that we had with the Prime Minister when we were going through all of our points he made it clear to us, when I asked the question. “When you get those names from that body, will you be selecting one of those persons or will you decide that you don’t want anybody from that list and you will go outside?” He was clear in his response. “No, ma’am, I will select a name from the list.” And it is clear that a name was given to the Prime Minister based on what Senator Courtenay just shared with us. Yet we went outside of that. And, as we are seeing, we have been waiting and no one was willing to be, as you say, a PEP. Nobody was willing. Nobody came forward. All of a sudden now we find this knight in shining armor coming forward to save the day, and we accept. So what are we to believe now? Are we serious with what we want to do? Or are we going to continue to play these games? A commitment was made. Yet you turn around, and you do what you want, but we are expected now to support what you have put forward before us today. How can we do that, Mr. President? How can we allow that when you make commitments to us you go and do your own thing anyway? I don’t think that is fair, for one, but two, Mr. Vasquez wears so many hats. He probably has a meeting with a different entity every day. I don’t know. I said probably, but yet he will be able to find time now to serve on this Commission and do a proper job. As the Senator said earlier, if these changes are going to be made, then disappointment cannot be made. Thank you.

SENATOR S. DUNCAN: Mr. President, thank you, I just have a couple of observations. I am not seized of the chronological information that Senator Courtenay provided us with, but I just want to point out that from what we are seeing here Mr. Vasquez is a proper member of the Institute as is required. It would also appear from the information provided to the Senate so far that rather than a list that was provided a name was provided. It would suggest that the Prime Minister did not have the opportunity to choose from amongst a list of names. But also, as it relates to the Integrity Commission itself, it would appear that that will be the highest body when it comes to the issue of corruption. And my recollection from my own limited experience with it is that the members of that Commission and of that body are required to file similarly to the legislature. I am saying that in the context that Mr. Vasquez or anybody else on the Commission would have to be monitoring themselves as a body in any event because they have to file. So I was required to file or I was informed that I would have to file similarly to any other member of the legislature when I was asked to serve on that body, and I don’t find that there is then any difference if he serves now and is required to file because everybody else would be required to file. Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, just one quick thing. Yes, I will push for an amendment in consort with the Convention to the Prevention of Corruption Act which would include all public officers. We have not done it yet. It hasn’t even been looked at it yet. It is just a suggestion that I made. At this time the Prevention of Corruption Act deals with persons in public life which is defined clearly who those are, and none of the people we are appointing are one of those persons. At that time, when and if that Bill is presented and passed into an Act, we will have to reconsider person or persons who may or may not be on that.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, that Motion is referred to the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee for examination, consideration and report.

12. **Appointment of Ms. Melissa Balderamos Mahler as a Member of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.**

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, I move that - **WHEREAS**, section 3(1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, Chapter 105 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2011 (hereinafter called “the Act”) provides for the establishment of a body to be known as the Integrity Commission which shall consist of a Chairperson, who shall be an attorney-at-law with not less than five years’ standing, and six other members who shall be persons of integrity and high national standing;

AND WHEREAS, section 3(2) of the Act provides that two members of the Integrity Commission shall be appointed by the Governor General, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given with the concurrence of the Leader of the Opposition, and the other members of the Integrity Commission including the Chairperson shall be appointed by the Governor-General, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition;

AND WHEREAS, with the **concurrence** of the Leader of the Opposition, the Right Honourable Prime Minister intends to advise the Governor General to appoint Ms. **MELISSA BALDERAMOS MAHLER** as a member of the Integrity Commission;

AND WHEREAS, Ms. **MELISSA BALDERAMOS MAHLER** is a person of integrity and high national standing;

AND WHEREAS, section 61A(2)(c), read with section 61A(3), of the Constitution of Belize provides, in effect, that an appointment of a member of the Integrity Commission can only be validly made with the prior approval of the Senate;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Senate, having perused the curriculum vitae of Ms. **MELISSA BALDERAMOS MAHLER**, and being satisfied that she is a fit and proper person to be appointed as a member of the Integrity Commission, hereby approve her appointment, as such, for a period of **two (2) years** with effect from 1st December 2016.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, that Motion is referred to the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee for examination, consideration and report.

13. **Appointment of Mrs. Claudet Grinage as a Member of the Integrity**

Commission Motion, 2016.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, I move that - **WHEREAS**, section 3(1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, Chapter 105 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2011 (hereinafter called “the Act”) provides for the establishment of a body to be known as the Integrity Commission which shall consist of a Chairman, who shall be an attorney-at-law with not less than five years’ standing, and six other members who shall be persons of integrity and high national standing;

AND WHEREAS, section 3(2) of the Act provides that two members of the Integrity Commission shall be appointed by the Governor General, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given with the concurrence of the Leader of the Opposition, and the other members of the Integrity Commission including the Chairperson shall be appointed by the Governor General, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition;

AND WHEREAS, with the **concurrence** of the Leader of the Opposition, the Right Honourable Prime Minister intends to advise the Governor-General to appoint Mrs. **CLAUDET GRINAGE** as a member of the Integrity Commission;

AND WHEREAS, Mrs. **CLAUDET GRINAGE** is a person of integrity and high national standing;

AND WHEREAS, section 61A(2)(c), read with section 61A(3), of the Constitution of Belize provides, in effect, that an appointment of a member of the Integrity Commission can only be validly made with the prior approval of the Senate;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Senate, having perused the curriculum vitae of Mrs. **CLAUDET GRINAGE**, and being satisfied that she is a fit and proper person to be appointed as a member of the Integrity Commission, hereby approves her appointment, as such, for a period of **two (2) years** with effect from 1st December 2016.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, that Motion is referred to the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee for examination, consideration and report.

II COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE SENATE ON MOTIONS

MR. PRESIDENT: Media, ladies and gentlemen in the gallery, can you please excuse us while we go into Committee. As soon as we are finished, you are welcome to come back.

Honourable Members, in accordance with Standing Order 68A, the Senate will now resolve itself into the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee, a Committee of the whole Senate, to consider the Motions referred to it.

Honourable Members, I will now take the Chair as the Chairman of the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee.

(In the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee)

MR. PRESIDENT in the Chair.

1. **Resolution Authorizing the Accession by Belize to the United Nations Convention against Corruption Motion, 2016.**

Motion in its entirety agreed to.

Motion to be reported back to the Senate for adoption without amendment.

2. **Resolution Authorizing the Ratification by Belize of the Framework Agreement between the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the Government of Belize for the Deepening of Bilateral Cooperation Motion, 2016.**

Motion in its entirety agreed to.

Motion to be reported back to the Senate for adoption without amendment.

3. **Resolution Authorizing Ratification by Belize to the Special Agreement between Belize and Guatemala to Submit Guatemala's Territorial, Insular and Maritime Claim to the International Court of Justice Motion, 2016.**

4. **Resolution Authorizing Ratification by Belize to the Protocol to the Special Agreement between Belize and Guatemala to Submit Guatemala's Territorial, Insular and Maritime Claim to the International Court of Justice Motion, 2016.**

Motions were held back in Committee for further consideration.

5. **Appointment of Mrs. Marilyn Williams as Chairperson of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.**

Motion in its entirety agreed to.

Motion to be reported back to the Senate for adoption without amendment.

6. **Appointment of Ms. Armead C. Gabourel as a Member of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.**

7. **Appointment of Ms. Lisbeth Delgado as a Member of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.**

8. **Appointment of Mr. Wilmot Simmons as a Member of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.**

9. Appointment of Mr. Nestor Vasquez as a Member of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.
10. Appointment of Ms. Melissa Balderamos Mahler as a Member of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.
11. Appointment of Mrs. Claudet Grinage as a Member of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.

Motions in their entirety agreed to.

Motions to be reported back to the Senate for adoption without amendment.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

A. GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

I MOTIONS

(Adoption of Motions)

1. Resolution Authorizing the Accession by Belize to the United Nations Convention against Corruption Motion, 2016.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee has met and considered the Resolution Authorizing the Accession by Belize to the United Nations Convention against Corruption Motion, 2016, and has agreed that it be returned back to the Senate for adoption.

I therefore move that the question be put.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is, **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Senate authorizes the Government of Belize to accede to the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

2. Resolution Authorizing the Ratification by Belize of the Framework Agreement between the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the Government of Belize for the Deepening of Bilateral Cooperation Motion, 2016.

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, the Constitution and Foreign Affairs Committee has met and considered the Resolution Authorizing the Ratification by Belize of the Framework Agreement between the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the Government of Belize for the Deepening of Bilateral Cooperation Motion, 2016, and has agreed that it be

returned back to the Senate for adoption.

I therefore move that the question be put.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is, **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Senate authorizes the Government of Belize to ratify the Agreement.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

3. **Appointment of Mrs. Marilyn Williams as Chairperson of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.**
4. **Appointment of Ms. Armead C. Gabourel as a Member of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.**
5. **Appointment of Ms. Lisbeth Delgado as a Member of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.**
6. **Appointment of Mr. Wilmot Simmons as a Member of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.**
7. **Appointment of Mr. Nestor Vasquez as a Member of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.**
8. **Appointment of Ms. Melissa Balderamos Mahler as a Member of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.**
9. **Appointment of Mrs. Claudet Grinage as a Member of the Integrity Commission Motion, 2016.**

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, I ask that all these Motions be considered all together.

I therefore move that the question be put.

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is, **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that this Honourable Senate, having perused the curriculum vitae of **Mrs. MARILYN WILLIAMS, Ms. ARMEAD C. GABOUREL, Ms. LISBETH DELGADO, Mr. WILMOT SIMMONS, Mr. NESTOR VASQUEZ, Ms. MELISSA BALDERAMOS MAHLER, and Mrs. CLAUDET GRINAGE**, and being satisfied that they are fit and proper persons to be appointed as Chairperson and members of the Integrity Commission, hereby approves their appointment, as such, for a period of **two (2) years** with effect from 1st December 2016.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

ADJOURNMENT

SENATOR G. HULSE (Leader of Government Business and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration): Mr. President, I move that the Senate do now adjourn.

SENATOR T. SANTOS: Thank you, Mr. President. I beg your indulgence for a couple minutes on what I think is a very important public matter. As you note, also, on this side, we are wearing orange or as close as orange as we can get in support of 16 days of activism against gender based violence. In the past few weeks, Belizean mothers and their families have been broken with grief and anguish at the loss of innocent young children caught in the cross fires of extreme violence. I get goosebumps even thinking about it. As one Belizean community, we all share in the grief of life senselessly and callously cut to short. As President of the United Women's Group, I extend heartfelt condolences to the mothers and parents of young Aaron Gabourel, Ian Sambula, Empress Hamilton, Tyler Savory, and all others who have lost their children to violence. The evil brought upon the most vulnerable and innocent of our societies are reflections of the loss of respect and value for human life pervading our communities.

We also stand in solidarity with other national and international organizations in efforts to end violence against our Belizean women and girls, and, in light of the recent spike of violence against our children, the call goes even further, to end all forms of violence overall. To eliminate any doubt, the United Nations declaration on the elimination of violence against women defines violence against women as any act of gender based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of acts such as coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life. It further details violence against women to encompass but not be limited to: (a) physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation; (b), physical sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and force prostitution; (c) physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the state wherever it occurs.

The social and economic cost of violence against women in Belize must be quantified. It includes time lost from work to medical cost for physical and emotional abuse. It is a contributing factor to the suppression of women's participation and involvement in meaningful employment, community and national development. We call then on every man, woman, father, mother, sister, brother, all public and religious leaders, Senators, everyone, do your part to end gender based violence and all forms of violence. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, the question is that the Senate do now adjourn.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

The Senate now stands adjourned.

The Senate adjourned at 3:15 P.M. to a date to be fixed by the President.

PRESIDENT
