



# **National Assembly of Belize**

## **Office of the Clerk**

P.O. Box 139, Belmopan, Cayo District, Belize Central America  
Tel. 501-822-2141/2142 or 2144  
E-mails: [ClerkNA@bna.gov.bz](mailto:ClerkNA@bna.gov.bz) [CEO.NationalAssembly@bna.gov.bz](mailto:CEO.NationalAssembly@bna.gov.bz)  
[www.nationalassembly.gov.bz](http://www.nationalassembly.gov.bz)

---

REF: NA/16/21 (39)

### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **Commitment to Establish a Women Parliamentarians Caucus**

The women parliamentarians of the National Assembly convened a meeting earlier this week to discuss the establishment of the Belize Women Parliamentarians Caucus.

The idea received overwhelming support by the women parliamentarians of the House of Representatives and the Senate. They have committed to working towards establishing a formal structure of the caucus as well as engaging with the Commonwealth Parliamentarians Association and ParlAmericas organizations for technical assistance in its establishment.

A Women Parliamentarians Caucus is a format used in parliaments to create a space for women parliamentarians from different political parties to unite in solidarity in championing and promoting women empowerment, advocating for policy and legislative priorities for women, strengthening women's voices in parliaments, encouraging gender perspectives in the day-to-day operations of the parliament, and raising awareness of the importance of gender equality and inclusion in the parliament.

Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Valerie Woods stated, "Given the fact that this is the first time we have so many women in parliament, it is timely that Belize considers this establishment as has occurred in other parliaments in our region. There are common objectives, despite differences in political affiliations or views, that a multi-partisan, bicameral caucus can rally around and support. While the establishment of such caucuses is almost often led by women, it does not exclude the engagement of the men in parliament. On the contrary, the support by male colleagues in parliament is critical to address gender equality issues in parliament."

President of the Senate, Hon. Carolyn Trench-Sandiford added, "It is important that the gender perspective in development issues is considered, and a women's caucus is a tool that is used in parliaments to ensure that decision making considers this and amplifies the call for our women parliamentarians' voices to be heard."

This was the initial meeting of the women parliamentarians. Present at the first meeting were Hon. Valerie Woods, Hon. Carolyn Trench-Sandiford, Hon. Dolores Balderamos-Garcia, Hon. Elvia Vega-Samos, Hon. Isabel Bennett, Hon. Elena Smith, Hon. Sheena Pitts, and Hon. Erica Jang.

Currently, Belize has a total of four women elected to the House of Representatives, four women appointed as Senators, and two women serving as presiding officers. The total number of parliamentarians in the National Assembly (both chambers), including the presiding officers, is 46. Collectively, women parliamentarians account for 22% of the National Assembly. While this is the greatest number of women serving in parliament in the history of Belize, women are still a minority in parliament.

Moving forward, the women parliamentarians will be meeting with colleagues in the region who have established similar caucuses to share experiences and guidelines for the establishment, effective engagement, success, and sustainability of a women parliamentarians' caucus.

February 23, 2022



The seal is circular with the text "NATIONAL ASSEMBLY" at the top, "BELIZE" in the center, and "THE CLERK" at the bottom. A blue ink signature is written across the seal.