



National Assembly of Belize

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PRESS RELEASE

MoU on the Preservation of Belize's Instrument of Independence and Parliamentary Records Management

-Tuesday 15th August 2023— The Presiding Officers of the National Assembly of Belize signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the National Assembly of Belize and the Belize Archives and Records Service (BARS). The official signing was held in the foyer of the National Assembly Building, Belmopan, on Monday, 14th August 2023. The Memorandum of Understanding establishes arrangements for the permanent storage and preservation of Belize's Instrument of Independence and provides for a modern and proper records management system for identifying, classifying, indexing, digitizing, and preserving the parliamentary records of Belize.

The Deputy Clerk, Mrs. Clarita Pech, noted in her overview that the Instrument of Independence, the Belize Act 1981 of the UK Parliament, was officially received by the Rt. Honourable George Price on the 21st September 1981. The historical document has been kept and stored in a metal safe in the Clerk's Office at the National Assembly.

The signatures to the Memorandum of Understanding were the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Valerie Woods, President of the Senate, Hon. Carolyn Trench-Sandiford, and Director of the Belize Archives and Records Service, Mr. Kevin Montero, and the two witnesses were Mr. Eddie Webster, Clerk to the National Assembly, and Mrs. Clarita Pech, Deputy Clerk to the National Assembly.

The President of the Senate, Hon. Carolyn Trench-Sandiford, provided welcome remarks and highlighted the importance and significance of ensuring the official legal instrument on record is properly preserved with a digitized copy for viewing and accessibility by the public in keeping with the principles of open parliament.

Mr. Kevin Montero, Director, Belize Archives and Records Service, gave a brief synopsis of the preservation process and record management collaboration noting that the Belize's Instrument of Independence will be transported to the Belize Archives and Records Services where it will be stored in a fireproof safe in a storeroom for its safe-guarding, accessibility, and for its permanent preservation. As part of the September Celebrations, the BARS will include the original Instrument of Independence into its travelling exhibition entitled "Let Belize Live: Speeches of the Premier". The travelling exhibition will be mounted at the Museum of Belize, in Belize City, for the entire month of September.

The collaboration between the National Assembly and the BARS on the modernization of the parliamentary records management system will see the creation of a records classification system of all parliamentary records making it more accessible to the public and readily available upon request and online.

Speaker Valerie Woods in her closing remarks acknowledged the annual initiatives of the Legislative Branch in marking the anniversary of Belize's Independence. A short video documentary on the Instrument of Independence and the preservation process will be completed in time for this year's September celebrations and will be made available on the website of the National Assembly of Belize.

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