



---

**For Immediate Release**

**Press Release**

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT AND THE BELIZE TAX SERVICE DEPARTMENT

**Belize City, Belize, October 16, 2020 –**

The present COVID-19 pandemic has inflicted severe damage to the domestic economy and highlighted the need to strengthen national cooperation at all levels to allow full recovery. A prominent aspect of such recovery includes the coordination of the resources of law enforcement and other competent authorities to identify the vulnerability of national tax systems to fraud and other risks, and to immediately minimize those risks. The tax revenue source of the Government has never been more valuable than in these exigent times and are obviously necessary to support food distribution, public health, law enforcement and other national security efforts.

The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) is mandated to, among other things, ensure coordination and cooperation among law enforcement agencies, government departments, regulatory authorities, private institutions and members of relevant professions in evolving methods and policies to prevent and suppress financial crimes.

The Belize Tax Service Department (BTSD) is committed to providing the best possible service to the Government and people of Belize. Its core values are represented in the acronym **PRIDE**, which stands for **P**rofessionalism, **R**espect, **I**ntegrity, **D**rive, and **E**xcellence. The Management of BTSD and the Ministry of Finance have invested significantly in upgrading the Department's corporate culture to promote these values and working with taxpayers to resolve tax matters professionally and expeditiously. The anticipation is that this will give greater assurance to all persons doing business in Belize, including employers, employees, governmental entities, and civil society.

The two agencies have recently launched a strategic analysis to identify major risks to revenue administration and collection. The initial phase of this strategic analysis involved gathering input from within the BTSD on challenges to effective revenue collection, on eliminating opportunities for tax evasion, and on ways in which the operational procedures of the department may be enhanced. This information is now being analysed in order to make policy recommendations regarding the strengthening of institutional measures to prevent tax fraud and corruption and promote a culture of compliance.

In the interim, the FIU and the BTSD take this opportunity to advise taxpayers that there has never been nor is there any obligation to pay or reward any tax officer directly or indirectly for the provision of tax services. We remind the public that the recently introduced Tax Administration and Procedure Act, 2019 (TAPA) provides for appeals to the Director General (BTSD), the Board of Tax Appeals, and the Court system. Furthermore, taxpayers can obtain clarity and certainty by requesting opinions in the forms of Public Rulings and Advance Rulings from the Director General.

Taxpayers are also urged to employ the following good tax practices to ensure compliance with their tax obligations:

- Timely registration for requisite taxes;
- Create a timeline of due dates for tax-related obligations and adhere to it; and
- Ensure that reporting is complete and accurate.

Accordingly, in further exercise of the Memorandum of Understanding between the two institutions, the BTSD and the FIU hereby advise the general public that complaints regarding harassment, inducement to commit fraud, extortion or other criminal activity by tax officers, or persons posing as tax officers, are considered serious and can be reported to either institution for investigation. The public is advised of a recently created secure web form on the FIU's website that allows for the anonymous reporting of information and will assist the FIU and BTSD in its efforts to curb tax fraud and financial crimes. The form is available at <http://fiubelize.org/voluntary-disclosure-form/>.

The FIU and BTSD are committed to enhancing the national tax administration system through increased collaboration. Taxpayers are assured of a fair and just tax system, capable of effectively addressing the disparity of positions that might arise from tax disputes. This public statement is of heightened importance considering the global economic instability caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the necessity of proactively providing every resource available to governments to ensure the full recovery of global business sectors.

— ### —

**Financial Intelligence Unit  
4998 Coney Drive  
Belize City  
(501)223-2729**

**Belize Tax Service Department  
Charles Bartlett Hyde Building  
Mahogany Street Extension, Belize City  
(501) 222-4776**