



National Land Use Policy of Belize

Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Multi-country Soil Management Initiative for Integrated Landscape Restoration and Sustainable Food Systems Project
Phase 1 (CSIDS-SOILCARE Phase 1)

Updated National Land Use Policy 2025 - 2035

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ACRONYMS

BSOP	Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan
CZMAI	Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute
CZMP	Coastal Zone Management Plan
DOE	Department of Environment
EEZ	Economic Exclusive Zone
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GOB	Government of Belize
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
LDP	Local Development Plan
LUA	Land Utilization Authority
MNRPM	Ministry of Natural Resources, Petroleum and Mining
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
NEPS	National Environmental Policy and Strategy
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NPASP	National Protected Areas System Plan
NbS	Nature Based Solutions
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NLUP	National Land Use Plan
NSDI	National Spatial Data Infrastructure
PS	Policy Statement
RDP	Regional Development Plan
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDP	Special Development Plan
SLM	Sustainable Land Management

GLOSSARY

TERM	MEANING	SOURCE
BLUE-GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE	The 'green' and 'blue' features of our towns and cities that can provide environmental benefits and contribute to our quality of life. These include woodlands, street trees, play spaces, allotments, community growing spaces, playing fields, road verges, swales, green walls and living roofs, rivers, canals, streams, wetlands, sustainable drainage, active travel and recreational routes, and much more.	Europe and Scotland, European Regional Development Fund Investing in a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Future
BUILT ENVIRONMENT	The built environment constitutes the human-made, physical spaces in which human activity takes place. This can include buildings, streets, public spaces like parks and plazas, transportation systems, and land use patterns. The built environment is a system that can influence physical and mental health, public safety, commerce, and traffic patterns (Frank et al., 2003; Handy et al., 2002).	World Bank 2020 Handbook for Gender Inclusive Design and Urban Planning
DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN	A strategic and participatory process to integrate economic, spatial, social, infrastructural, housing, institutional, fiscal, land reform, transport, environmental, water and other strategies or sectoral plans with a view to the optimal allocation of scarce resources to the various sectors and geographic areas and to supporting the whole of the population in a manner which promotes sustainable growth and equity, with the emphasis on capacity-building in poor and marginalised communities. The output of the development planning process is the development plan.	Provincial Development Council Law Amendment Act 2004, Western Cape, Republic of South Africa
DISABILITY	Persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability
EQUALITY AND EQUITY	Equality is a human rights principle meaning 'the same', while equity is a concept of justice, which means 'fair'.	UN-Habitat Programmatic Guidance Note for Staff, on the Human Rights Based Approach
GENDER	Refers to social, behavioural, and cultural attributes, expectations, and norms associated with being male or female	World Bank 2020 Handbook for Gender Inclusive Design and Urban Planning
LAND COVER AND LAND USE	Land cover is defined as the observed physical cover on the earth's surface, including vegetation (natural or planted) and human constructions. Land use is characterised by the arrangements, activities and inputs people undertake in a certain land cover type to produce, change, or maintain it.	Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
LAND DEGRADATION	The reduction or loss, in arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid areas, of the biological or economic productivity and complexity of rainfed cropland, irrigated cropland or range, pasture, forest and woodlands resulting from land uses or from a process or combination of processes, including	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Land (1993)

<p>LAND USE PLANNING</p>	<p>processes arising from human activities and habitation patterns such as: soil erosion caused by wind and/or water; deterioration of the physical, chemical and biological or economic properties of soil; and long-term loss of natural vegetation.</p> <p>A public policy exercise that designates the use of land in order to improve a community's physical, economic, and social efficiencies and well-being and which concerns itself with determining the preferred land use with outcomes being designating of land for specific purposes regulation of the intensity of land use and formulation of legal and administrative instruments which support land use plans.</p>	<p>Polar, Perry. (2016). Strengthening the Land Use Planning Framework in the Caribbean: A case study on the Caribbean Network for Urban and Land Management.</p>
<p>MULTIFUNCTIONAL LANDSCAPE</p>	<p>Landscapes which serve different functions and combine a variety of qualities (i.e., different material, mental, and social processes in nature and society occur simultaneously in any given landscape and interact accordingly); ecological, economic, cultural, historical, and aesthetic functions co-exist in a multi-functional landscape.</p>	<p>Metternicht, Graciela (2017) Global Land Outlook Working Paper. UNCCD</p>
<p>SETTLEMENT</p>	<p>A group of persons in a specified place. A national system of settlements includes metropolitan areas, towns, villages, plantation estates, mining camps and recreation areas. The structural areas of human settlements include industries, transport facilities, storage, housing, community facilities, parks and recreation.</p>	<p>UN-Habitat (1992) Multilingual Glossary of Human Settlements Terms, Nairobi, UN-Habitat</p>
<p>SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT</p>	<p>The adoption of land use systems that, through appropriate management practices, enable land users to maximize the economic and social benefits of land, while maintaining or enhancing the ecological support functions of its resources (soil, water, vegetation and animal resources). SLM combines technologies, policies, and activities aimed at integrating socio-economic principles with environmental concerns, so as to simultaneously maintain or enhance production, protect the potential of natural resources and prevent (or halt) soil, vegetation and water degradation, while being economically viable and socially acceptable.</p>	<p>Metternicht, Graciela (2017) Global Land Outlook Working Paper. UNCCD</p>
<p>VULNERABLE PEOPLE OR POPULATION</p>	<p>Individuals who share one or several characteristics that are the basis of discrimination or adverse social, economic, cultural, political or health circumstances and that cause them to lack the means to achieve their rights or otherwise enjoy equal opportunities. These are people who are more vulnerable to disasters due to characteristics such as age, gender and sexual identities, race, culture, religion, disability, socio-economic status, geographical location, or migration status</p>	<p>WHO guidance on research methods for health emergency and disaster risk management, revised 2022. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2022.</p>

INTRODUCTION

1. The National Land Use Policy hereafter referred to as the “**policy**”, sets out the Government of Belize’s policies, strategic and specific objectives and intended actions regarding the sustainable use, management and development of all and any land in Belize.
2. For the avoidance of doubt, all and any land means the territory of Belize as defined in Schedule 1 of the Belize Constitution Act¹ and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as defined in the Section 6 of the Maritime Areas Act of Belize.²
3. For the avoidance of doubt, all and any land includes the seabed, land of any tenure, whether or not held apart from the surface, and whether or not it is state or non-state land.
4. The policy recognizes that a plan-led approach is the most effective way to secure the sustainable use, management and development of land in Belize, and therefore it provides for a land use planning system within which:
 - a. A **National Land Use Plan** is to be prepared, implemented, modified, amended, revoked and replaced to:
 - (i) give effect to the technical and spatial requirements of **Plan Belize, Medium-Term Development Strategy 2022-2026** and to the sectoral policies that give expression to Plan Belize, and to Belize’s global commitments; and to
 - (ii) serve as the highest tier of spatial planning in Belize to support **Plan Belize**, and as such, will focus on solutions to issues and challenges of the use, management and development of land at a national scale.
 - b. **Regional, Special or Local Development Plans** are to be prepared, implemented, modified, amended, enforced, replaced and or revoked to:
 - (i) give effect to the policy and the National Land Use Plan at either a regional or local level; and as such
 - (ii) will focus on solutions to issues and challenges of the use, management and development of land at the regional and or local level.
 - c. **Policy Directives** and **Technical Guidance Notes** are to be issued from time to time from the Minister and the Ministry with responsibility for sustainable land management.

¹ Chapter 4 of the Laws of Belize RE 2020

² Chapter 11 of the Laws of Belize RE 2020

- d. The promulgation of a **Planning and Development Act** to give effect to the legal requirements of a., b. and c. preceding.
5. The policy also recognises that land use planning is one component of sustainable land management, which encompasses the ecological, economic, socio-cultural and governance dimensions of sustainable development. It is within this context, that it positions land use planning.
6. The policy is structured as follows:
 - a. Acronyms
 - b. Glossary
 - c. Guiding Principles
 - d. Vision
 - e. Mission
 - f. Goal
 - g. Strategic Objectives
 - h. Policy statements, specific objectives and actions on the following thematic areas:
 - 1) Land Cover and Land Use Classification
 - 2) Ecosystem for Sustainable Land Management
 - 3) National Estate Management
 - 4) Human Settlements, Urbanisation and Spatial Organisation
 - 5) Land Degradation and Sustainable Soil Management
 - 6) Agriculture and Land Productivity
 - 7) Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Marine Spatial Planning
 - 8) Network of Connected Ecosystems, Blue-Green Infrastructure and Natural Assets
 - 9) Knowledge Building and Sharing, Public Outreach and Engagement

10) Governance for Land Use Planning and Sustainable Land Management

7. This policy shall come into effect on the date it is approved by the Cabinet.
8. This policy shall have effect for the tenure stated within its contents.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

9. The guiding principles of the policy are set out below. These are interlinked and expected to drive and guide its implementation.
 - a. **Shared Responsibility** – All persons and organisations owning, occupying and developing land in Belize have a duty to use that land with due regard for the wider interests of both present and future society as a whole, and those managing and stewarding land have a duty to share data, knowledge and skills to enable better land use decision-making.
 - b. **Multifunctionality** – Land has multiple benefits-it supports economic growth and livelihoods, while also providing for socio-cultural and environmental benefits reflective of traditional knowledge, heritage and way of life.
 - c. **Gender Equality, Equity and Inclusivity** – The use, management and development of land is to respond to the particular needs of men and women, girls and boys, gender diverse individuals and vulnerable populations, according to their geographic location and respective lived experiences.
 - d. **Strategic and Granular** – Implementation of the policy at multiple scales and levels, from the national landscape level of infrastructure systems and social and ecosystem services to allow for strategic decision-making at the national level while ensuring their applicability at smaller scales at the settlement, community and land ownership level, where global and national goals are realized.
 - e. **Subsidiarity** – The best placement for decision-making authority is where the responsibility for outcomes will occur, in the closest appropriate proximity to where the actions will be taken that will produce the outcomes;ⁱ and where the impact can be monitored and reported on.
 - f. **Flexibility and Agility** – Decision-making to cope with unforeseen events, to provide room for quick and seamless response and for learning and thought leadership.
 - g. **Sustainable Development** – Decision-making to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. This takes into consideration the long-term economic, social and environmental wellbeing of

people and communities by promoting social and environmental justice; equality of opportunity; and protection of the natural and cultural environment.

- h. **Climate Resilience**ⁱⁱ – Decision-making to reduce risk to disasters and climatic events, to advance low carbon development pathways and to promote nature-based solutions (NbS) that leverages nature and the power of healthy ecosystems to protect people, to optimise infrastructure and to safeguard a stable and biodiverse future, while ensuring that action in one area does not have adverse effects elsewhere, and whereby opportunities are harnessed to accelerate progress towards a safer and fairer society.
- i. **Accountability and Transparency** – Decision-making to provide for certainty, integrity and legitimacy to land use decision-making, enabling the reduction of conflict between public and private interests; and traditional users of land and the state.
- j. **Innovation and Technology** – Decision-making to integrate state-of-the-art data science, technology and innovation to support sustainable land management practice to leapfrog operations to increase efficiency, effectiveness and productivity, and to build knowledge and awareness to foster informed citizen participation at all levels of land use governance.

VISION

10. The vision of the policy is as follows:

A prosperous Belize in harmony with our natural resources

MISSION

11. The mission of the policy is as follows.

Fostering national development and improving the quality of life for all Belizeans through responsible management of our natural resources

GOAL

12. The overarching goal of the policy is as follows:

To enable the sustainable use, management and development of all and any land in Belize

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

13. The Strategic Objectives of the policy are to:

- (1) Foster awareness of a shared responsibility between the public and private sectors, civil society and the citizens of Belize, in the sustainable use, management and development of all land in Belize;
- (2) Establish the guiding principles for the sustainable use, management and development of land in Belize in furtherance of national development priorities, goals and objectives, while meeting global commitments; and the needs and aspirations of the people of Belize at the local level;
- (3) Establish the administrative, technical and operational planning instruments and the competencies of the institutions in charge of their formulation, approval and application;
- (4) Establish the criteria for the definition of the different land cover and land use modalities and classes, according to the potential and limitations of land in Belize;
- (5) Improve the quality of the social, economic, physical, digital, and natural environments as a whole within which patterns of human settlement are situated and resettlement activities are carried out in Belize, with specific attention to the needs of vulnerable populations;
- (6) Enable the orderly, efficient and equitable planning, allocation and development of the natural resources of Belize;
- (7) Provide for the orderly subdivision of land for residential as well as non-residential purposes in order to facilitate timely and efficient provision of social, economic, physical and digital infrastructure for the delivery of public goods and services.
- (8) Protect, conserve and enhance the biodiversity and cultural heritage assets of the country as they find expression in the natural and the built environment;
- (9) Secure the health, safety, welfare and convenience of all persons in or about communities and buildings and of others who may be affected by the spatial layout of communities and buildings or matters connected with communities and buildings; and
- (10) Provide for planning processes that are fair, open, accessible, timely, participatory, and efficient, and for accountability by public authorities whose function it is to regulate the use and development of land in Belize in the interest of safeguarding the rights of both public and private sectors.

POLICY STATEMENTS, SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

General

14. The policy statements contained in this policy should be taken into account as material consideration in decision-making at all levels of government. While they are set out as discrete elements, they are interlinked and inter-dependent.
15. The specific objectives and actions for each policy statement contained in this policy should inform decision-making at all levels of government.

Policy Statement Thematic Area 1 – Land Cover and Land Use Classification

16. Policy Statement 1

The Government of Belize commits to a harmonized and standardised; yet agile land cover and land use classification system to bring about a more efficient and effective sustainable land management (SLM) regime, to regulate the use and development of land and to support coordinating and reporting mechanisms of the SLM regime.

17. Rationale for Policy Statement 1

Land cover and land use information is the foundation for SLM practice. The assignment of land cover and land use categories in Belize is either fixed, varying and residing in multiple legislation, or fixed by global reporting requirements and differing from legislative requirements, or is flexible and in-situ, depending on the operational protocols of a government or a non-government organization. Consequently, land cover and land use categories vary across ministries and departments of central government, of local government and of non-state organizations engaged in land management activities.

This results in a diverse and often irreconcilable land cover and land use landscape which presents challenges for the aggregation of land use activities to inform decision-making processes for regulating the use and development of land and for describing, monitoring, predicting and reporting on land cover and land use changes. This is further complicated by contemporary and emerging types of land use activities which must be accounted for. This has implications for the efficiency and effectiveness of a SLM regime, and consequently for land use planning and for regulating the use and development of land in Belize.

18. Linkages of Policy Statement 1 to Article 13-Strategic Objectives

This policy statement links directly to Article 13 (2), (4), (5), (6), (7) (8) and (9)

19. Specific Objective 1.1 and Action

Objective:

to strengthen decision-making processes in land use planning at multiple scales, at different levels, and in different sectors through the harmonization and standardisation of land use modalities, land use classes and land use activities.

Action 1.1:

Establish a multi-tiered land cover and land use classification system that:

- a. Classifies at the first tier (level 1) the modality of land to reflect the geographic space of the land cover and land use activity within the configuration of the built and natural environment. This classification is aggregated and more general and representative of broad land use modalities, and is comprised of:
 - 1) **Urban:** -ⁱⁱⁱ cities and towns having this classification and other settlements declared as urban by the Minister responsible for land use planning, for having characteristics displaying diverse productive, residential, recreational and service activities within a space that presents a continuous network of blocks and roads, with water, energy and waste and rainwater drainage infrastructures, or which may have them through connection with pre-existing facilities in the urban fabric;
 - 2) **Peri-urban:** -^{iv} a transition or interaction zone where urban and rural activities are juxtaposed, and landscape features are subject to rapid modifications, induced by anthropogenic activity;
 - 3) **Rural:** - all areas which are neither classified as urban or peri-urban;
 - 4) **Urban coastal-marine:** -^v urban land located in the geographic area 3 kilometres (1.86 miles) from the mean high-water mark on its landward side and by the outer limit of the territorial sea on its seaward side, and in the area defined as the Exclusive Economic Zone;
 - 5) **Peri-urban coastal-marine:** -peri-urban land located in the geographic area 3 kilometres (1.86 miles) from the mean high-water mark on its landward side and by the outer limit of the territorial sea on its seaward side and in the area defined as the Exclusive Economic Zone; ^{vi}
 - 6) **Rural coastal-marine:** -rural land located in the geographic area including the 3 kilometres (1.86 miles) from the mean high-water mark on its landward side and by the outer limit of the territorial sea on its seaward side and in the area defined as the Exclusive Economic Zone.
- b. At the second tier (level 2), disaggregates the Level 1 modality into land use classes that are more detailed and occurring within these modalities:

- 1) **Residential**-When the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is for individual or collective housing;
- 2) **Commercial**-When the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is related to the purchase and sale of goods and services;
- 3) **Institutional and Community**-when the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is related to education, health, culture, faith, government, and justice;
- 4) **Recreation and Leisure**-when the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is dedicated to the use and enjoyment of natural and cultural attractions or engaging in sports activities
- 5) **Industrial**-when the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land corresponds to the production or transformation of goods or raw material that does not alter the quality of life of individuals or the ecological functions of the area, including agro-industrial activity;
- 6) **Agricultural**-when the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is agriculture or livestock;
- 7) **Forestry**-when the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is forestry development, alone or associated with agroforestry or for protection or conservation purposes;
- 8) **Fisheries and Aquaculture**-when the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is for fisheries and aquaculture development, alone or associated for protection or conservation purposes;
- 9) **Mining**-when the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is the extraction or obtaining of metallic or non-metallic mineral raw materials, both at ground and subsoil level;
- 10) **Petroleum Operations**-when the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is for the exploration, development, extraction, production, field separation, storage or disposal of petroleum;
- 11) **National Significance**-when the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is the production of services of national and international coverage of communications, seaports and airports, infrastructure, dams and reservoirs, sanitary landfills, energy production from renewable or non-renewable resources, not including petroleum, or for the conservation of key ecosystems including but not limited to watersheds or wetlands, seagrass meadows or some other use as may be determined;
- 12) **Protected Areas**-when a piece of land has been declared as a natural unit that has very precise and specialized objectives, characteristics, and type of management, and for which the scope and regulation of have been statutorily or non-statutorily established;
- 13) **Mixed**-when two or more of the previously mentioned types of land use activities take place on a piece of land; and
- 14) **Non-developable**-when land, due to specific conditions, be it environmental, cultural, technological or of purely collective interest is causing injury and damage or may present serious risk of injury to property or is likely to

constitute a danger to human life, health or safety or is causing substantial degradation of the land or surrounding areas or may present a serious risk of substantial degradation of the land or surrounding areas

- c. At the third tier (level 3) and subsequent tiers, further disaggregate the types of land use classes defined in b. (Level 2) into land use activities as is necessary and relevant to tailor the activities to the existing and potential land use and development capability of the respective geographic space or configuration.

20. Specific Objective 1.2 and Actions

Objective:

To increase efficiency, effectiveness and productivity of organisations and individuals in SLM practice through:

- Integration of data science, technology and innovation to support SLM practice; and
- leapfrogging operations of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Petroleum and Mining (MNRPM), responding to what matters to policy and decision makers of SLM and the people of Belize at multiple scales and at different levels.

Action 1.2.1:

Develop the National Spatial Data Infrastructure at the MNRPM to become a shared spatial data platform to perform spatially explicit modelling and comparison of land cover and land use inventory over time at multiple scales and different levels, and in different sectors, to inform decision-making at different levels and sectors of government, and in the non-government sector having regard to:

- a. the existing NSDI inventory (hardware, software);
- b. a set of defined objectives and priorities;
- c. a governance system for geospatial data standards and quality assurance, data-sharing agreements and data reporting procedures across multiple institutions operating at different levels and scales;
- d. the stocktaking, harvesting and integration of data sets from both government and non-government sources and the defining of a national foundational dataset.

Action 1.2.2:

Formulate and implement a resource mobilization strategy and action plan to develop and sustain the capacity of the NSDI for optimal functionality having regard to the NSDI requirements of the specific objectives and actions of all policy statements in this policy and to options for, but not limited to:

- a. non-governmental source of funding
- b. partnerships for sustained data harvesting, use, analysis and reporting
- c. monetising data and
- d. copyrighting data

Policy Statement Thematic Area 2 – Ecosystem for Sustainable Land Management

21. Policy Statement on an Ecosystem for Sustainable Land Management

The Government of Belize commits to a Sustainable Land Management (SLM) ecosystem whereby:

- the development plan is the basis of the planning system and sets the context in which development is to take place;
- the development plan is underpinned by a land use plan to guide the use and development of land in Belize at multiple scales and at different levels, and which acts as a necessary tool to coordinate current and future societal land needs, while striking a balance between the often-conflicting interests of diverse land users and stewards; and
- barriers to the optimal functionality of the SLM ecosystem as a whole; within which interdependent factors other than LUP operate will be addressed. Those factors being land tenure, land tax and land rent, the role of fiscal instruments in driving land use changes and the quantity and quality of professionals in SLM practice.

22. Rationale for Policy Statement 2

Belize is at a critical juncture in addressing land management issues. Competition for land is intensifying as a consequence of increasing demand for land to enhance food security and to expand agriculture for export markets, to provide for renewable energy and emerging carbon markets and biofuels, while at the same time, accommodating urbanization, resource extraction and ecosystem services.

This is further exacerbated by:

- Belize's status as a small developing state and its vulnerability to increasingly frequent disasters brought on by climate variability and change;
- A weak, centralised and archaic governance system with constrained capacity and inadequate tools to proactively navigate and manage contemporary, emerging, and often complex land development issues;
- An aged, complex, siloed and fragmented policy and legal framework plagued with conflicts and duplication of authority or the absence of authority for SLM and for regulating the use and development of land;
- Inadequate information on land parcels and land occupation, complex and occasionally uncoordinated managerial processes, outdated and missing cadastral information;
- Insecure land tenure and archaic land valuation processes that do not effectively represent the market value of the land, nor considers the dynamic nature of development, nor recognises the value of ecosystem services;
- Unregulated real estate industry which opens opportunities for land fraud, money laundering and unethical practices, which compromises investor confidence and consumer investment; and
- a paucity of professionals (planners, surveyors, environmental and planning law specialism to name a few) trained in disciplines to support SLM.

This has manifested in:

- Uncoordinated, haphazard and unplanned or poorly planned urban and rural development defined by inefficient urban sprawl, the rise of secondary settlements, incontiguous infrastructure and inefficient coordination in the provision of physical, social and digital infrastructure;
- Development without physical and social infrastructure constraining investment, compromising social interaction and accessibility to livelihood opportunities;
- Development characterized by incompatible and conflicting land uses compromising the quality of life of the citizenry;
- Development on slopes (<20 per cent) and floodplains increasing soil erosion and disaster risk to critical infrastructure, lives, livelihoods and assets;

- Degradation of sensitive environments and loss of biodiversity by both mega and small-scale public and private sector development projects, compromising ecosystem services;
- Conversion of high-grade agricultural land to other uses;
- Under-utilisation and/or abandonment of land, especially in the agricultural sector, due to insecure tenure, inappropriate siting (unsuitable soils), and inaccessibility;
- Under-utilisation and/or abandonment of land in urban areas due to land tenure conflicts despite having accessibility to physical, social and digital infrastructure and public goods and services;
- Inconsistent methods in property valuation for private property and the rental of national estate for urban and rural areas, land tax for rural areas and property tax for cities and towns, contributing to land speculation and land tenure and land use conflicts;
- Lack of trust in public authorities with responsibility for SLM; and
- Limited public participation and engagement in land use planning decisions;

Failure to manage this process may erode progress made towards meeting sustainable development targets such as reducing poverty, eradicating hunger, enhancing health and well-being; and making cities and human settlements safe, sustainable, resilient and inclusive.^{vii}

This demands a response and an approach that involves strengthening the ecosystem for SLM as a whole to enable both public and private land users to maximise the economic and socio-cultural and environmental benefits of land and the contemporary and emerging innovations and digital technologies, while maintaining or enhancing the ecological support functions of its resources, namely, soil, water and animals.

23. Linkages of Policy Statement 2 to Article 13-Strategic Objectives

This policy statement links directly to Article 13 (1), (2), (3), (5), (6), (7), (8), (9) and (10)

24. Specific Objective 2.1 and Actions-Land Use Planning and Sustainable Land Management

Objective:

to provide the technical and spatial framework for the optimal use of land in Belize while delivering on national development goals and priorities and global commitments.

Action 2.1.1

Prepare development and land use plans at all levels of decision-making for application at multiple scales through multi-sectoral coordination and effective stakeholder engagement and participation.

These plans shall be the legal instruments for use by the state for defining, adopting, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating policies, goals, objectives, priorities, and processes for enabling the sustainable use and management of land, and for regulating the use and development of land for the whole or parts of the country.

The legal instruments are the National Land Use Plan and the Local Development Plan.

(1) National Development Plan- Plan Belize and the National Land Use Plan (NLUP)

The NLUP gives expression to the technical and spatial requirements of Plan Belize. It shall be the primary legal instrument that sets out the goals, objectives, and priority actions of the Government of Belize for the sustainable use, management, and development of land in Belize and which provides for vertical and horizontal integration and coherence of sector policies and local development plans.

The NLUP shall:

- (i) be consistent with the National Land Use Policy and other national and sectoral development policies, strategies, and plans of the government;
- (ii) comprehensively draw together and link the spatial and technical requirements and functions of sectoral policies, strategies and plans adopted by individual ministries and statutory agencies of government;
- (iii) provide the policy within which regional and local level development planning can be undertaken;
- (iv) have regard to challenges and opportunities created by demographic changes and movement and land development activities;
- (v) facilitate the continuity and connectivity of blue-green infrastructure between urban, peri-urban, rural and coastal marine areas of the natural, diverse and distinct characterisation of the landforms and landscapes of Belize, and of ecological corridors that connect different habitats of the biophysical environment
- (vi) provide for the sustainability of biodiversity and of watersheds and the use of water for domestic, productive and ecosystem services;

- (vii) provide for the efficient and effective delivery of public goods and services between districts and settlements and within districts and within settlements in Belize, and for continuity and connectivity to international services;
- (viii) provide for the rational allocation of land for competing uses and interest and the multiple benefits of land to support economic growth and livelihoods, while also providing social, cultural and environmental benefits;
- (ix) contribute to building the resilience of people, communities and livelihoods in the face of altered climate;
- (x) enable a low carbon emissions development pathway for Belize;
- (xi) take into consideration the aptitudes and attributes of Belize for new development opportunities;
- (xii) integrate the levels of disaster risk reduction to natural and human-induced hazards affecting the population and the built and natural environment;
- (xiii) address risks of human settlements within areas with high exposure to coastal hazards and climate change impacts, and the need for both re-location as a response mechanism and prohibiting development in highly vulnerable areas to avert risk
- (xiv) maintain the integrity of the cultural landscape, significant historical and archaeological monuments and sites, and the form and character of urban and rural settlements that identifies the Belizean way of life;
- (xv) provide for the differentiated needs of vulnerable populations having regard to their geographic location and lived experiences;
- (xvi) integrate people's participation in the planning processes; and
- (xvii) have regard to the governance system and the multiple scales and levels of decision making, administrative authority and where the actions for sustainable land management and regulating the use and development of land will occur.
- (xviii) Include the following contents in two parts:

Part I shall include—

- (a) the problems the NLUP is to solve;

- (b) goals and objectives of the NLUP and their linkages to Plan Belize;
- (c) information on existing and projected population and economic growth policies, trends and patterns that is indicative of where there will be growth in employment and housing opportunities and investment in physical and communications and digital infrastructure;
- (d) land suitability analysis for varying types of development;
- (e) climate resilient and disaster risk reduction analysis and strategies;
- (f) a transportation system and hierarchy that prioritises decarbonisation, the reduction of travel time and supports a modern and efficient public transportation system and that provides for a network of roads based on their existing and future functions and capacities for national and international connectivity;
- (a) a hierarchy and network of urban and rural settlements to provide the focus for the provision, consolidation and growth of housing, economic opportunities and social interaction based on existing and projected population size, functionality of settlements and role in national development (*See PS4 Urbanisation, Human Settlements and Spatial Organisation*); and
- (g) the required measures to resource the plan and to build governance capacity to give effect to the NLUP.

Part II shall include —

a land use and zoning plan consisting of such provisions as are necessary for designating the use of land for Belize as a whole and generally for carrying out any of the objects for which the plan is made, and in particular shall define:

- (b) the sites to accommodate the national road network hierarchy, public transportation and facilities, communications and digital technologies infrastructure, water transmission and distribution, energy generation, transmission and distribution and the performance standards which should apply to any development to be carried out;
- (c) the sites to identify the hierarchy network of urban and rural settlements and the performance standards which should apply to any designation within the hierarchy; (*See PS4-Urbanisation, Human Settlements and Spatial Organisation*)

- (d) the assignment of land use modality according to PS1-Land Cover and Land Use Classification System-Level 1 and the associated development performance standards for:
 - i. Urban land modality
 - ii. Rural land modality
 - iii. Peri-urban land modality
 - iv. Urban-coastal marine land modality
 - v. Peri-urban-coastal marine land modality
 - vi. Rural-coastal marine land modality
- (e) The assignment of any land use class according to PS1-Land Cover and Land Use Classification System-Level 2 and the associated development performance standards as may be necessary to give effect to the objects of the plan.
- (f) The general rule of decision-making which will set the threshold for what developments are to be made, referred to or notified to the Minister responsible for the planning system and which are to be dealt with at the local level.

(2) Local Development Plan

The Local Development Plan (LDP) shall be the primary legal instrument for guiding and regulating the use and development of land in urban areas (cities, towns and any area designated to be an urban area for the purpose of preparing the LDP) and for an area or areas or parts of areas of a district or districts declared for the purpose of preparing a LDP or a regional development plan (RDP) or a Special Development Plan (SDP), which may include a part or parts of a village, town or city, or the whole village, town or city, due to special circumstances or critical concern or necessity or in the interest of and in furtherance of national or regional policy.

The LDP, RDP or SDP shall:

- (i) be consistent with the provisions of the NLUP and other national and sectoral development policies, strategies, and plans of the government;
- (ii) comprehensively draw together and link the spatial and technical requirements and

functions of sectoral policies, strategies and plans adopted by individual ministries and statutory agencies of government at the regional or local level;

- (iii) have regard to challenges and opportunities created by demographic changes and movement and land development activities at the regional or local level;
- (iv) facilitate the continuity and connectivity of physical, digital infrastructure for communications and the efficient and effective delivery of public goods and services at the regional or local level for continuity and connectivity into national road hierarchy and network;
- (v) facilitate the continuity and connectivity of blue-green infrastructure and of the natural, diverse and distinct characterisation of the landforms and landscapes at the regional or local level to the rest of Belize;
- (vi) provide for ecological corridors that connect different habitats of the biophysical environment, the sustainability of biodiversity and of watersheds and the use of water for domestic, productive and ecosystem services that are occurring at the regional or local level;
- (vii) provide for the rational allocation of land for competing uses and interest and the multiple benefits of land to support economic growth and livelihoods, while also providing social and environmental benefits;
- (viii) contribute to building the resilience of people, communities and livelihoods in the face of altered climate;
- (ix) contribute to a low carbon emissions development pathway for Belize;
- (x) take into consideration the aptitudes and attributes of the area for new development opportunities;
- (xi) integrate the levels of disaster risk reduction to natural and human-induced hazards affecting the population and the built and natural environment;
- (xii) maintain the integrity of the cultural landscape, significant historical and archaeological monuments and sites, and the form and character of the area that identifies the Belizean heritage and way of life;
- (xiii) provide for the differentiated needs of vulnerable populations having regard to their geographic localities and lived experiences;
- (xiv) integrate people's participation in the planning processes; and

(xv) have regard to the governance system and the multiple scales and levels of decision making and administrative authority; and

(xvi) Include the following contents in two parts:

Part I shall consist of :-

(a) a written statement of the principal aims and objectives of the LDP, RDP or SDP with respect to the sustainable use, management and development of land in the planning area;

(b) a situational analysis and gap assessment report on:—

- i. the principal purposes for which land is used and the patterns and trends in land cover and land use change;
- ii. disaggregated housing and population data, characteristics of informal settlements, population emigration and immigration patterns and trends, and the demand for land over time;
- iii. the infrastructure for communications and digital technologies, the road network and stormwater drainage, roadside facilities, transport system and movement of all types of traffic, water and wastewater, sewerage systems, solid waste and energy of the area so far as they may be expected to affect that area, of any neighbouring areas;
- iv. baseline greenhouse gas emission analysis and projection;
- v. the differentiated needs of vulnerable populations based on their geographic location and lived experiences;
- vi. climate resilience and disaster risk reduction strategies and plans;
- vii. the provision of public services and social infrastructure and utilities in the area and the demand for land for these needs over time; and
- viii. any other matters which may affect the development and other use of land in the area or which the Minister may direct.

(c) a written statement with reasoned justification of the policies, proposals and programmes for the future use and development of land in the area having regard to:-

- i. the situational and gap assessment report of the area under subsection (b) preceding;
- ii. the likely social, economic, environmental and technological considerations of the policies and proposals;
- iii. the NLUP;
- iv. the relationship between the policies and proposals in the LDP and other previously approved development plans which may affect the area;
- v. the financial and other resources which are likely to be available or which must be mobilised for carrying out the proposals of the LDP or RDP;
- vi. the timetable for public consultation and adoption of the LDP, RDP or SDP;
- vii. such maps, plans, drawings, diagrams, illustrations or other graphic representations or descriptive or explanatory matter in respect of the general policies of the LDP, RDP or SDP;
- viii. recommendations for the sequencing or phasing of development within the area covered by the LDP, RDP or SDP;
- ix. matters which may pertain to particular conditions to be addressed with a greater degree of detail;
- x. the quantity and forms of housing required and estimated to be required in the future by various socio-economic groups, or by that part of the population living or expected to live in the area described in the LDP, RDP or SDP;
- xi. a transport hierarchy and transportation and traffic assessment and management strategy and plan that prioritises walking and cycling, public transport, low-emission vehicles, differentiated needs of vulnerable populations, and which reduces travel time within the area of the LDP, RDP or SDP;
- xii. a utilities management strategy for the efficient and effective collaboration in the delivery of utility services; and
- xiii. an environmental impact statement incorporating a systematic environmental appraisal of policies and proposals having

environmental implications as an appendix to the LDP, RDP or SDP.

Part II of a LDP, RDP or SDP shall consist of —

a land use and zoning plan consisting of such provisions as are necessary for regulating the use and development of land in the area to which the plan applies and generally for carrying out any of the objects for which the plan is made, and in particular shall define or designate:—

- (a) the sites and planning guidelines of proposed roads, drainage, parking and municipal/urban facilities to accommodate traffic and transportation, differentiated needs of vulnerable populations, the delivery of water, communications and digital technologies, sewerage systems, solid waste management and energy transmission and distribution and the performance standards which should apply to any development to be carried out;
- (b) the sites and planning guidelines for the provision of blue-green and social services infrastructure and for public and community facilities and services having regard to design principles that provide for inclusivity and accessibility, community safety, environmental sustainability, movement and site and context analysis.
- (c) the assignment of land use classes according to PS1-Land Cover and Land Use Classification System-Level 2 and subsequent levels as may be required and the associated development performance standards for:
 - i. Residential land use class
 - ii. Commercial land use class
 - iii. Institutional land use class
 - iv. Recreation and Leisure
 - v. Industrial and manufacturing land use class
 - vi. Agricultural land use class
 - vii. Forestry land use class
 - viii. Fisheries and Aquaculture land use class
 - ix. Mining land use class

- x. Petroleum Operations land use class
- xi. National significance land use class
- xii. Protected areas land use class
- xiii. Mixed use land use class
- xiv. Non-developable land use class

(d) special planning guidelines for:

- i. advertisements
- ii. subdivision of land
- iii. preservation of buildings and sites of historic and architectural interest
- iv. construction of piers, jetties, wharves and kraals
- v. preservation of trees, plants and sites of amenity
- vi. for engineering operations

Action 2.1.2:

Develop a set of planning procedures and processes that are applicable at multiple scales and different levels to formulate, adopt, implement, modify, amend, enforce, revoke and or replace a NLUP, RDP or SDP to guide the sustainable management of land and to regulate the use and development of land, and for an appeal process for those aggrieved by the decisions of the processes. (See PS10-Governance for Land Use Planning)

25. Specific Objective 2.2 and Actions – Land Tenure System and Sustainable Land Management

Objective:

to reduce land tenure conflicts, the timeline for issuance of land documents and the liability to the Government of Belize, while enhancing trust and confidence in the sanctity of the land tenure system.

Action 2.2.1

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan for:

- a. incentivizing the voluntary re-registration (first title) of lands that currently fall outside a compulsory land registration area;
- b. requiring the declaration for compulsory registration of new state and non-state subdivisions exceeding 50 parcels;
- c. phasing to completion, the compulsory registration of all lands in Belize;
- d. strengthening the systematisation of the processes of registering conditions, encumbrances and restrictive covenants resulting from the subdivision permitting procedures of the Land Utilisation Act; and
- e. set performance standards for the processing of documents generated at the Land Registry Department

Action 2.2.2

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to modernize the practice of surveying in Belize as is necessary to:

- a. to improve the accuracy of surveys; and
- b. to leapfrog fit-for-purpose administration of the cadastre and the compulsory registration of land.

Action 2.2.3

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to integrate data sets from the Land Registry Department of the MNRPM into the NSDI to facilitate:

- a. modelling, predicting and reporting on land tenure interests and property transactions;
- b. a shared platform for state and non-state stakeholders on SLM to access and update information on land tenure.

26. Specific Objective 2.3 and Actions – Land Valuation for Sustainable Land Management

Objective:

to strengthen the land valuation processes and applications to reduce land speculation and to enhance the integrity of land valuation processes and real estate transaction while increasing the collection of revenue at national and local levels.

Action 2.3.1:

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to establish the criteria and processes for the valuation of land to improve and inform the assessment of property tax, land tax and the rental of national estate. This strategy shall have regard to:

In rural and coastal rural areas:

- a. environmental and ecosystem services including considerations for green and blue infrastructure within a carbon market regime;
- b. geographic location according to Level 1-Land Use Modality of PS1-Land Use Cover and Land Use Classification;
- c. land use category assignment according to Level 2 of PS1-Land Use Cover and Classification System;
- d. historical sale price of land in surrounding areas;
- e. natural and scenic features which may enhance the value of land; and
- f. nearby features which may be major highways, infrastructure, settlements, airports, riverine and coastal waterfronts which tend to demand higher values than those further away.

In urban, peri-urban, coastal-urban and coastal peri-urban areas:

- a. the historical sales price which looks at the different values the property was sold for over a number of years to observe trends to define a reasonable starting point to a valuation;
- b. the quality of the neighbourhood which may include zoning provisions, low crime rates, the quality of delivery of public goods and services and green and leisure spaces to name a few;

- c. the housing market which is influenced by supply and demand, as housing is an investment and an economic asset, and the state of the economy, unemployment and interest rates and availability which may play a role in the property value;
- d. the nearby features which may be major highways, waterfronts and commercial centers for shopping, historical districts etc. which tend to demand higher values than those further away;
- e. the size and appeal when considering the price per square foot, the layout of the house and yard, upgrades and other amenities as garage, pools etc.; and
- f. the age and condition of buildings which may determine the need for upgrades or maintenance.

Action 2.3.2.

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to strengthen the collaboration between national and local governments to harmonize and make consistent the terminologies, land cover and land use classification, and the processes and applications in the valuation of land.

Action 2.3.3

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to integrate data sets from the land valuation unit of the MNRPM and local government into the NSDI to facilitate:

- a. modelling, predicting and reporting on property values and arrears of property and land tax and rent of national estate;
- b. a shared platform for national and local government to access and update information on property values; and
- c. a shared platform for non-government stakeholders to access reports on property valuation processes, applications, patterns and trends.

27. Specific Objective 2.4 and Actions – Fiscal Instruments in Land Use Planning

Objective:

to incentivize and steer the use of land toward the goals and objectives of the policy and the NLUP.

Action 2.4.1

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to strengthen collaboration between sectors and levels of government to increase the use of non-spatial fiscal instruments to incentivize the use of land to steer it in a manner that aligns with the goals and objectives of the policy, the NLUP and the LDP, RDP or SPDs. These non-spatial instruments should include but are not limited to:

- insurance facilities
- custom duties and tariffs
- fiscal incentives

28. Specific Objective 2.5 and Actions – Professionals in Development Practice

Objective:

to increase the number of professionals engaged in SLM and to assure professional standards and ethics in the practice of it.

Action 2.5.1

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to improve technical capacity for SLM by increasing the number of specialists (planners, surveyors, land valuers and geographic information analysts, environmental and planning law specialism) and technicians required to leapfrog its operations at all levels of government and in non-state sectors.

Action 2.5.2

Strengthen existing legislation regulating professions engaged in SLM as may be necessary (surveyors) and pass new legislation to institute mechanisms to assure professional standard and ethics in professional practice in others (real estate, planners, geographic information analysts).

Action 2.5.3

Partner with educational institutions and professional associations to develop professional and technical programmes to train and certify SLM practitioners in the academic requisites for professional practice, to provide for continued professional development to maintain certification, and to develop training manuals and toolkits to strengthen institutional capacity for SLM and to provide actionable and practical SLM guidance for a more resilient and sustainable Belize in the face of climate change.

Policy Statement Thematic Area 3: National Estate Management

29. Policy Statement 3

The Government of Belize commits to improving the mechanisms for managing national estate to address the inherent challenges surrounding the sustainable use and management of land in Belize.

30. Rationale for Policy Statement 3

National estate are all lands owned by the state. These include lands of varying types:

- Leased lands for a term of years for which a person as a lessee holds a leasehold interest in land which translates into a legal interest in state land;
- Land for which a person has a license to occupy and is considered a licensee and having no legal interest in the land;
- Land which comprises the 66 feet reserve measured from high water mark along all water frontages reserved for the Government or public purposes;
- Land under or in water;
- Lands designated for public or community use which are within private subdivisions;
- Lands designated for public or community use which are within public subdivisions;
- Public road reserves including buffers, easements and any other public right of way;
- Lands declared as reserves under the National Lands Act;
- Lands declared as reserves under the Forest Act yet excluded from the meaning of National Lands within the definition of land in the National Lands Act;
- Land declared as the whole or parts of protected areas under National Protected System Act;
- Land containing ancient monuments and antiquities and declared as archaeological reserve;
- Land which may be occupied by public sector organizations; and
- All other land not owned by any person or parts of land not already located or granted, and includes any land which has been, or may hereafter become, escheated to or otherwise acquired or reclaimed by the Government of Belize

There are several issues surrounding the management of national estate:

- National estate is not explicitly recognised as a business of government in the constitutional assignment of portfolios;
- Lack of knowledge of quantum, geographic location and land use of national estate;
- Poor monitoring and documenting new national estate formation or default acquisition, the former particularly in the coastal realm, and the latter, when persons die without no living person to inherit their estate;
- Questioning of necessity and/or processes for land acquisition for public purposes and the cost of acquisition;
- Squatting on national estate (informal settlements);
- The archaic approach to the valuation of national estate; *(See PS2-Specific Objective 2.3 and Action – Land and Property Tax and Land Rent System for SLM)*;
- The absence of a criteria for repeat applicants to lease or purchase land which can encourage land speculation or deny opportunities for first time applicants to lease national estate;
- The abandonment of leased lands and outdated or no information on the compliance with lease conditions;
- The high level of arrears of land rent and tax and the absence of a policy to arrest it;
- The use of national estate for farming and livestock rearing, construction of piers, jetties and wharves, disposal of waste materials, construction of buildings for the sale of goods, sand mining and other uses without permission;
- The survey of national estate unsuitable for settlement (flood plains, steep slopes etc.) and the distribution, leasing and sale of said lands;
- The designation of national estate for public and community purposes in public subdivisions with no structure for its management subsequent to the issuance of leases or sale of national estate in the subdivision; and

- The subdivision and alienation of national estate inconsistent with the provisions the Land Utilisation Act³, the National Lands Act⁴ (66 feet reserve) and the Environmental Protection Act.⁵

Other issues which the MNRPM ought to address:

- The abandonment of privately owned lands and/or the non-payment of land tax;
- The designation of lands in private subdivisions for public and community purposes with no structure for their management post the registration of the survey;
- Belize's commitments to global and international financial agreements, for example, the Paris Agreement and the Blue Bonds Agreements.

31. Linkages of Policy Statement 3 to Article 13 - Strategic Objectives

This policy statement links directly to strategic objectives 13 (1), (2), (3), (6), (7), (8), (9) and (10)

32. Specific Objective 3.1 and Actions

Objective:

to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of national estate

Action 3.1

Provide for the explicit assignment of the management of national estate within the sustainable land management portfolio of the Minister.

Conduct a stock take of national estate in urban, peri-urban, rural, coastal-marine urban, coastal marine peri-urban and coastal marine rural to establish a data base of the quantum, geographic location and key attributes of national estate.

Action 3.2 :

Conduct a comprehensive review of the current protocols and practices in the movement of an application for a license or to lease or to purchase national estate from start to completion of the process to identify gaps, deficiencies and barriers for the efficient and effective management of national estate having regard to:

³ Chapter 188 of the Laws of Belize RE 2020

⁴ Chapter 191 of the Laws of Belize RE 2020

⁵ Chapter 328 of the Laws of Belize RE 2020

- a. the required review and recommendations of the units/departments of the MNRPM critical to SLM; and
- b. ensuring compliance with SLM practices, the NLUP, LDPs and development orders for inclusion as a condition of the lease or sale prior to submission to the Minister for final approval, with such approval voidable if the application is in non-compliance of the protocol.

Action 3.3

Formulate and implement a national estate management policy, strategy and action plan that responds to and addresses:

- a. the absence of the constitutional assignment of national estate management as a business of government;
- b. gaps in data on the quantum, categories and types of uses of national estate;
- c. the gaps, deficiencies and barriers to integrating SLM in national estate management;
- d. the criteria and requirements to process lease applications having regard to the applicant being a lessee or previous lessee of national estate;
- e. the conditions of the lease inclusive of the requirements to develop land and what that entails and to comply with SLM practices, the NLUP and LDP and development orders;
- f. the management of leased lands (conditions lease is subject to and reporting mechanisms to track the application of occupation and compliance with the conditions of the lease and SLM practices);
- g. the review of leased lands with a view to converting to license or not to convert to title at the expiration of the lease where such leases are for lands that form part of or link important biodiversity corridors and nature/forest reserves, watersheds, sites of marine nurseries, etc.
- h. the valuation of national estate for maximum return to the state having regard to the use of subsidy only where the circumstances may require the same;
- i. the transfer of land allocated for public and community purposes in private subdivisions to national or local government, the latter in the case of cities, towns and villages;
- j. the management of land allocated for public and community purposes in public subdivisions by national or local government, the latter with the responsibility assigned to city, town and village councils;

- k. strategies to manage informal settlements on national estate;
- l. the transfer of abandoned private lands owing taxes or by default due to death of owner to national estate;
- m. the requirement for the acquisition of land for public purposes identified and recommended in the NLUP and LDPs;
- n. non-compliance by the MNRPM with the Environmental Protection Act, the National Lands Act and the Land Utilization Act;
- o. Belize's commitments contained in global and international financial agreements; and
- p. the barriers to a shared responsibility with local government, national government and non-state organisations to co-manage national estate within the jurisdiction of national government, local governments and non-state organisations sphere of management or influence.

Action 3.4

Develop an operation protocol to set out the steps and the prerequisites for each step that must be fulfilled for an application for the lease, license or sale of national estate to be submitted for approval to the Minister with responsibility for national estate, as well as the individuals and units/departments in charge of reviewing and making recommendations as to whether it ought to be approved with or without conditions or refused.

Action 3.5

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to integrate data sets on the attributes of national estate into the NSDI to facilitate:

- a. tracking, modelling, predicting and reporting on quantum, uses, gender of lessee or licensee, rate of conversion from lease to title and size of parcels, transfer of leases and compliance of conditions of leases of national estate; and
- b. a shared platform for national and local government and non-government stakeholders to access and update information on national estate

Policy Statement Thematic Area: Human Settlements, Urbanisation and Spatial Organisation

33. Policy Statement 4

The Government of Belize commits to developing strong, vibrant, safe, resilient and sustainable urban and rural settlements.

34. Rationale for Policy Statement 4

According to the Housing and Population Census 2022, the total population of Belize stood at 397,483 persons. This is an increase of 23 percent increase from 2010. Of this, 49.2 per cent are males and 50.8 per cent are females; 27.6 per cent are children falling below the age of 14, while the remaining 72.4 percent comprise the working age population (14 years and older). Of this, the 65 years and older represents 5.7 per cent of the population, an age group projected to grow to 18 per cent by 2050. In addition, recent research by the Ministry of Human Development, Family Support and Gender Affairs indicates 9 per cent of the population are persons with disabilities.^{viii}

Furthermore, 42.2 percent of households lives in urban areas and 57.8 percent in rural areas. This compares to 45.2 percent and 54.8 percent of households living in urban and rural areas respectively in 2010. This trend points to the ruralisation of Belize. Beyond traditional practice and an administrative designation via the use of a statutory instrument, which simply defines the legal boundaries within which a local government has jurisdiction, there is no criteria for distinguishing urban from rural settlements, or cities from towns and villages in Belize.^{ix}

Consequently, there is legislation providing for the Minister to declare a village to be a town for the purpose of the Act. As for [villages](#), the only criteria for a settlement to be declared a village is that at least two hundred persons who would be qualified to vote for village councils live in the area. Furthermore, only 5 or 2.4 per cent of the 212 villages and communities have legal boundaries.^x

A more in-depth examination of the populations of 212 settlements in 2022 classified as rural, revealed 4.2 per cent had populations that are in excess of 3499 persons⁶ with three (3) having populations that have surpassed that of towns. The challenges of this trajectory are:

- While there is recognition of continued urbanisation trend toward cities and towns there is no recognition of the concurrent urbanisation and rise of unplanned secondary and intermediate settlements (villages). This discount the implications of their populations exceeding that of towns, their functionality within national development planning and for meeting global commitments and targets;

⁶ SIB, 2010, p. 55 For census purposes in Belize, municipalities (cities and towns) are considered urban, and all other settlements are considered rural..

- Non-recognition of this trajectory also discounts the capacity required of local governments to manage this demographic shift; the demand for land and land use conflicts and changes, and the occurrences of decapitated urbanisation, which can manifest in increasing poverty, conflict, inequality, vulnerability to natural hazards and communicable diseases and increasing informality (squatter settlements, road side vendors etc.) in varying components of urban and rural life.
- Defining “urban”, “urban areas” and “urbanized” and “rural” unearths a challenge, as this has implications to measuring urbanisation, quantifying of urban populations, and consequently, the spatial reach of governance, and consequently, the planning for land needs for the delivery of public goods and services, as well as to monitoring demographic shifts trends and patterns and land cover land use changes, and for reporting on national and global development goals and targets.
- Defining “urbanized” in the delimitation of geographic boundaries of either cities and towns and aligning them with an administrative designation, may not always coincide with what is an urbanized area, as an urbanized area may also include areas outside that boundary or peri-urban areas, or the amalgamation of villages or land used for agriculture or in natural state.
- Energy efficiency and the cost implications to financing and maintaining critical social and physical infrastructure (roads and drainage, water and wastewater, health and education facilities etc.) in consideration of inefficient urban sprawl and urban informalism (squatter settlements and roadside vendors)
- The highly complex nature of urban environments which consists of a broad spectrum of infrastructure systems (water and energy supply, sanitation and drainage, transport and telecommunication), services (including health care and emergency services), the built environment, and ecosystem services, all interdependent and interacting temporally and spatially, with other social, economic, and environmental stressors, exacerbating climate and urban risks at the individual, household and community levels

35. Linkages of Policy Statement 4 to Article 13- Strategic Objectives

This policy statement links directly to 13 (1), (2), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8), (9) and (10)

36. Specific Objective 4.1 and Actions

Objective:

to plan for and manage urbanisation and demographic shifts in Belize, having regard to:

- the population growth trends and patterns and characteristics;

- functionality of settlements based on their position in a hierarchy (city, town, village and community); and
- the criteria for such a position based on their threshold population and sphere of influence in the delivery of public goods and services for realizing national and local development goals and meeting global targets;

Action 4.1.1:

Conduct a strategic assessment of settlements in Belize to inform the establishment of a hierarchy and network of settlements and the trigger for the amalgamation of settlements or the separation of settlements into more than one settlement based on a set of criteria to include but not limited to:

- a. Existing and projected population
- b. Geographic location and relationship with other centres and dormitory communities
- c. Level of connectivity of blocks and roads, with water, energy, waste and rainwater drainage and blue-green infrastructures
- d. Level of central government offices and service delivery
- e. Level of local government office and service delivery
- f. Level of integration into the national transportation network
- g. Level and types of economic activity and markets
- h. Level of public transportation within the settlement
- i. Proximity of major public and private sector projects
- j. Risk level to diseases, natural hazards and climatic events
- k. Availability of vacant or unproductive land for re-development and re-generation

Action: 4.1.2

Using the findings of the strategic assessment of settlements, formulate and adopt a national spatial strategy for Belize which shall have regard to:

- a. the ranking of settlements in a hierarchy according to their population size, functionality and role in national development as either a city, town or village (large, intermediate and small);
- b. the definition of either an urban or a rural settlement;
- c. the criteria to trigger the amalgamation of settlements or the separation of one settlement into two or more settlements;
- d. the criteria for the transition of settlements along the hierarchy (small to intermediate to large village to town and to city);
- e. measures to contain urban growth to minimise amalgamation of settlements;
- f. promoting the expansion or re-generation of existing settlements away from the coasts and flood plains to reduce exposure to natural hazards and climatic events;
- g. discouraging the development of new settlements, and encouraging the same only:
 - (i) as an alternative where such development would offer significant environmental, social, cultural and economic advantages over the further expansion or regeneration of existing settlements;
 - (ii) where such development would be self-contained and not dormitory towns for overspill from larger urban area; and
 - (iii) where such is away from the coast or flood plains.
- h. the criteria for the spatial delineation of villages for legal jurisdiction for development planning, operational management and to regulate the use and development of land;
- i. purposefully directing major public and private sector projects to settlements away from the coast and flood plains to reduce exposure to natural hazards and climatic events;
- j. the planning guidelines for the delivery of public goods and services according to the position in the hierarchy having regard to:
 - (i) the provision and location of burial, community, recreation and leisure and sporting facilities;
 - (ii) the provision and location of education and health facilities;
 - (iii) the provision and location of commercial and retail centres and hubs;
 - (iv) the provision and location of faith-based institutions;

- (v) the provision and location of emergency response facilities;
- (vi) the provision and location of government and social facilities;
- (vii) the provision and location of physical and digital and communications infrastructure;
and
- (viii) the interdependency of infrastructure systems, services, the built environment,
and ecosystem services.

37. Specific Objective 4.2 and Action

Objective:

to enable the sustainable growth and development of urban and rural settlements

Action: 4.2.1

Place a legislative duty on local government to prepare or cause to prepare a local development plan to guide the growth and development of cities, towns and villages according to the provisions of the NLUP and development orders. (See *PS2-Ecosystem for SLM, 2.1-Land use planning*)

Action: 4.2.2

Provide a legislative power to a local authority (See definition of local authority) to adopt the LDP or RDP and for it to be the legal instrument and justification for:

- a. the granting of permission to develop land with or without conditions and planning obligations or to refuse an application;
- b. to develop land by itself or in collaboration with non-governmental organizations and the private sector to deliver on the goals, objectives, and priorities of the RDP or LDP; and
- c. for powers to prescribe all matters relating to the preparation, adoption, enforcement, modification, replacement, revocation or repeal of the RDP or LDP.

38. Specific Objective 4.3 and Actions

Objective:

to build the capacity of local governments to engage in SLM practices

Action: 4.3.1

Conduct capacity assessments of local authorities (city, town and village councils based on position in hierarchy and any organisation appointed for such purpose) to engage in sustainable urban land management. The assessment^{xi} should have regard to:

- a. Urban Governance and the processes and structures that allow for participating in the decision-making process and for influencing public policies and strategies for improved urban planning, management, and development. This element of the assessment should focus on the relationship between citizens and the local government, and speak to adequate and efficient legal, policies, administrative and operational frameworks.
- b. Urban Planning and Environment which includes all aspects related to planning and design of the urban space, the quality of the natural environment (air, water, soil), public/green spaces and the quality of the natural environment (air, water, soil), public/green spaces and climate change.
- c. Resilient Infrastructure and Basic Services which entails ensuring equal access to infrastructure and basic services that is crucial to meeting the vital needs of the population and to allowing a city, town, or village to function and develop properly. This includes, among others: streets and roads, bridges, drainage, water and electricity supply, sanitation and solid waste management, hospitals, schools, digital and communications infrastructure.
- d. Urban Economy and Society, which refers to the processes, mechanisms and activities that allow a city, town, and village to becoming drivers of socio-economic development in a country or region, by creating jobs, increasing households' income, generating investments, reducing social tensions and crime, increasing equality and inclusion, promoting social mix, and enhancing security and safety, among other aspects.
- e. Urban Disaster Risk Management which refers to the ability of the local government and communities, in terms of capacity, knowledge, processes and systems in place, to prevent, anticipate, respond to, and recover rapidly from the impacts of natural or human induced threats.

Action: 4.3.2

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to build the capacity of the local authority for SLM based on the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the capacity assessment.

Action: 4.3.3

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to integrate data sets from local government into the NSDI to facilitate:

- a. tracking, modelling, predicting and reporting on urban and regional land management issues; and
- b. a shared platform for national and local government and non-government stakeholders to access and update information on urban land management issues

Policy Statement Thematic Area 5: Land Degradation and Sustainable Soil Management

39. Policy Statement 5

The Government of Belize commits to reducing soil degradation and to achieving Belize's land degradation neutrality (LDN) target of "No net loss for all territorial lands in all land cover classes, compared to the 2000-2015 baseline by 2030 through sustainable land management practices and techniques.

40. Rationale for Policy Statement 5

Land degradation in Belize leads to the decline in:

- the productive capacity of the soil as a result of soil erosion and changes in the hydrological, biological, chemical and physical properties of the soil;
- the quantity and/or quality of the natural biomass and decrease in the vegetative ground cover;
- the quantity and/or quality of both surface and ground water resources which can lead to drought conditions; and
- the changing of the natural discharge patterns of waterways.

Land degradation can also lead to variations in climate conditions which can increase crop failure. A number of factors directly drive land degradation in Belize. These include but are not limited to:

- Improper management of soil and of the annual, perennial, (shrubs) and tree crops;
- Deforestation and removal of natural vegetation;
- Urban expansion and infrastructure development to provide land for housing and other population land needs;
- Overgrazing of land by livestock farming ;

- Disturbance of the water cycle, that is, over-abstraction of the water;
- Natural hazards, climate change and extreme events like forest fires;
- Industrial activities including illegal and unsustainable quarrying activities and mining in rivers;
- Diseases such as pine bark beetle causing conversion from forest to grassland;
- Conversion of forests and wetlands to aquaculture, also resulting in water degradation because of fresh and saltwater abstraction; and
- Use of chemicals and pesticides in the clearing of land or treatment of diseases leading to soil and water contamination.

This is compounded by first, a weak policy' legislative and institutional collaboration for SLM and the lack of policies for mining and mineral exploration and exploitation, rehabilitation and other extractive activities; and second, the failure to appoint the National Integrated Water Resource Authority, which has a legislative mandate to ensure the orderly and coordinated development and use of Belize's water resources, to conserve and protect such resources for the benefit of present and future generations of Belizeans, and to provide the Belizean public with a safe, adequate and reliable supply of water.

Data on three indicators (land cover, land productivity and soil organic carbon) for measuring land degradation suggest that a total of 4,788 km² or 21.66 per cent of land in Belize are degraded. The most significantly degraded areas include portions of the Cayo, Belize, Orange Walk and Corozal Districts, the latter two primarily as a result of the expansion of agricultural activities.

41. Linkages of Policy Statement 5 to Article 13-Strategic Objectives

This policy statement directly links to 13 (2), (6) and (8)

42. Specific Objective 5.1 and Actions

Objective:

to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality in Belize with a focus on the Belize River watershed region and Orange Walk and Corozal Districts

Action 5.1.1:

Formulate a strategy and action plan to strengthen inter-ministerial and sectoral and collaboration within the MNRPM and with key ministries and agencies having responsibility for matters with

implications to land degradation and soil management to provide technical guidance and to monitor and report on progress towards achieving LDN targets, having regard to:

- a. Departments within the MNRPM with responsibility for hydrological services and integrated water resource management, land use planning and national estate management for:
 - (i) the identification and designation of areas to apply strategies to avoid, reduce or reverse land degradation practices; and
 - (ii) for the integration of SLM practices into agreements for sale, leases and licenses of national estate, the approval of sub-divisions and the preparation of the NLUP and the preparation and enforcement of LDPs.
- b. Ministry with responsibility for Agriculture for implementing sustainable agricultural practices to help to preserve soil fertility, improve water filtration, minimise erosion, and maintain ecosystem balance.
- c. Ministry with responsibility for Biodiversity, Forestry and Protected areas for implementing management strategies for key wetlands and watershed areas, for reforestation and landscape restoration and for increasing forest cover to prevent soil erosion, enhance water retention and quality, and promote biodiversity.
- d. Ministry with responsibility for Climate Change and Sustainable Development for integration of SLM in the Nationally Determined Contributions and other related policies, strategies and plans.
- e. Ministry with responsibility for Coastal Zone for strengthening the integration of SLM in the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan
- f. Ministry with responsibility for Local Government and city, town and village councils for the integration of SLM practices into LDPs.

Action 5.1.2:

Appoint the National Integrated Water Resource Authority to institute legality of the current practice of the issuance of licenses and permits by the National Hydrological Service, the adoption of the National Water Resources Master Plan, the declaration of water control areas, the protection of ground water and gathering grounds and responding to transboundary watershed management.

43. Specific Objective 5.2 and Actions

Objective:

to minimise land degradation in the management of mineral exploration, extraction and exploitation

Action:

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan for the exploration, extraction and exploitation of minerals having regard to:

- a. the identification and designation of mining reserves and zones for incorporation in the NLUP and LDPs, RDPs and SDPs; and
- b. the restoration and rehabilitation of mined areas for productive use.
- c. The formulation of a Marine Dredging Policy

44. Specific Objective 5.3 and Actions

Objective:

to strengthen the capacity for monitoring, predicting and reporting on land degradation indicators having regard to multiple stakeholders and scales, and different levels of data uptake and SLM applications

Action 5.3.1:

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to strengthen institutional and individual capacity to engage in monitoring, predicting and reporting on land degradation activities

Action 5.3.2

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to integrate data sets from state and non-state stakeholders into the NSDI to facilitate:

- a. tracking, modelling, predicting and reporting on land degradation issues and indicators; and
- b. a shared platform for national and local government and non-government stakeholders to access and update information on land degradation issues

Policy Statement Thematic Area 6: Agriculture and Land Productivity

45. Policy Statement

The Government of Belize commits to balancing the competing interest between the demand for food production and security and for trade and other land uses and the compromising of land viability, the encroachment and conversion of productive lands. and the sustainability imperatives such as climate action and biodiversity protection.

46. Rationale for Policy Statement 6

Agriculture is a vital component of the national economy directly contributing [13.06 % to the GDP of Belize](#) and is critically important to attain food security and sovereignty. A substantial percentage of Belize's population live in rural areas, producing valuable harvests and drawing their livelihoods from agriculture. Notwithstanding, there are key land use challenges in the agricultural sector. These include:

- Security of tenure, particularly for the small farmer;
- Subdivision of high-grade agricultural land for urban expansion and other non-agricultural uses;
- Unsustainable agricultural practices contributing to declining land productivity, soil erosion and disruption of ecosystem services;
- Uncontrolled expansion of agriculture activity contributing to forest cover and biodiversity loss and the destruction and disruption of ecosystems services;
- Use of unsuitable land vulnerable land for agricultural purposes increasing exposure to disaster risk;
- Illegal occupation of land for agricultural activities by both by Belizeans and illegal immigrants;
- Lack of updated soil capability data to assess and classify land according to their level of productivity value;
- Limited quantum of women and youth in agriculture;
- The market value of land is set by its potential developmental value. Land use policies are not market based, thus constraining the state to arrest the conversion of agricultural land into other more profitable uses; and
- The appetite for applying more smart and efficient agricultural practice to reduce the need for more land.

47. Linkages of Policy Statement 6 to Article 13-Strategic Objectives

This policy statement links directly to 13 (2), (4) and (6)

48. Specific Objective 6.1 and Actions

Objective

Strengthen the protection and retention of valuable agriculture land for agricultural purposes.

Action: 6.1.1

Conduct periodic updating and production of soil capability maps to identify and classify land according to level of productivity value (grade).

Action: 6.1.2

Formulate an agriculture land zoning classification with planning guidelines for inclusion in the NLUP and LDPs having regard to SLM practices and PS1-Land Cover and Land Use Classification System.

Action 6.1.3

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan which aims at reducing the conversion of good agricultural land to other uses.

49. Specific Objective 6.2 and Actions

Objective:

to reduce land degradation and improve land productivity

Action 6.2.1

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to update the agricultural policy with the aim of enabling sustainable agricultural practices having regard to:

- a. enhancing land and water management systems for agricultural production systems;
- b. implementing soil and water conservation measures for agricultural production systems;
- c. advancing climate smart agricultural best practices to increase productivity and to enhance resilience while reducing GHG emissions; and

- d. the role of women and youth in advancing sustainable agricultural best practices

Action 6.2.2

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to improve coordination within the MNRPM and between the MNRPM and the Ministry of Agriculture to:

- a. address barriers to accessing land documentation for farmers;
- b. periodically update the tenure interest and attributes of land in agriculture;
- c. zero tolerance of the illegal occupation and use of national estate for agricultural purposes;
- d. support measures for increased women and youth participation in agriculture; and
- e. to mainstream zoning classification and planning guidelines for SLM into the subdivision, distribution and lease or sale of national estate for agriculture, into the NLUP and the LDPs.

Action 6.2.3

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to integrate data sets from state and non-state stakeholders into the NSDI to facilitate:

- a. tracking, modelling, predicting and reporting on agriculture development activities; and
- b. a shared platform for national and local government and non-government stakeholders to access and update information on agriculture development issues

Policy Statement Thematic Area 7: Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Marine Spatial Planning

50. Policy Statement 7

The Government of Belize commits to a governance framework to help secure present and future conditions for economic prosperity, functional ecosystems, and social and cultural benefits of the coastal and marine environment of Belize. The strengthened Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan (ICZMP); and the legally enforceable Marine Spatial Plan (known as the Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan-BSOP) are envisioned as the primary tools to sustainably manage and regulate the use and development of land, to monitor and track changes in land use/land cover and arrest unplanned and uncontrolled development in the coastal zone of Belize.

51. Rationale for Policy Statement 7

The coastal zone is a vital resource base for Belize that supports a broad range of activities that contribute significantly to the economic growth and environmental, social and cultural fabric of our country. Over 40% of the Belizean population live and work in the coastal zone. In addition, the coastal zone supports infrastructure and assets critical to national development including the airports, roads, ports and public buildings to name a few. The coastal zone is under increasing pressures from an intensified pace of development associated with tourism and recreation, population growth and expansion, utility supply, infrastructural development, dredging and mineral extraction, land clearance, pollution, waste disposal, fisheries and aquaculture.

These pressures are exacerbated by natural hazards and increasing frequency of extreme climatic events, global warming and rising sea levels, and the vulnerability of sensitive ecological systems to climate change. Key considerations for this space are:

- CZMAI is the Government of Belize's lead agency for the delivery of a legally enforceable Marine Spatial Plan (Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan), a commitment under the Belize Blue Bond for Ocean Conservation Agreement. At the core of the Agreement, Belize commits to the expansion and protection of up to 30 per cent of Belize's total ocean space as Biodiversity Protection Zones, and the designation of permissible blue economy activities that may be lawfully carried on in any part of Belize's ocean. The geographic scope of the BSOP ocean space includes the internal waters, territorial boundaries, and the Exclusive Economic Zone of Belize;
- New and emerging types of development activities associated with this sector; and
- Approximately 75-80 percent ^{xii} of all coastal land in [Belize](#) has been purchased by foreigners for the development of tourism related activities, posing a serious threat to mangroves, coastal wetlands, and other coastal ecosystems, which are already threatened by the expansion of coastal settlements and aquaculture activities.

The Coastal Zone Management Act mandates the preparation and implementation of a National Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP). The Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute (CZMAI) has a power and a duty to develop the plan, and to oversee its implementation and revision. The Act also mandates the CZMAI to support the allocation, sustainable use and planned development of Belize's coastal resources through increased knowledge and building alliances for the benefit of all Belizeans and the global community. However, the plan has several deficiencies which compromises its capacity to deliver on its mandate. These include but are not limited to:

- The law states what the plan is to include and the processes for its adoption but provides no power to the CZMAI to enforce the multi-sectoral actions contained in the plan. Rather the CZMA relies on the authority of other ministries and statutory agencies to lead the

implementation of the majority provisions of the plan as it relates to their respective legal mandate.

- The implementation of the ICZMP is to be monitored by the CZMA and the governmental and non-governmental agencies consulted during plan preparation, but the process for accomplishing this is unclear, considering the CZMA lacks the authority (legislatively or by agreement with government and non-government organizations) to ensure compliance with the plan.
- The CZMA has also developed coastal zone management guidelines for nine (9) coastal planning regions as a component of the National ICZMP to provide support for planned development and resource management along the coastline and offshore areas of the entire country. However, the CZMA has no power to enforce the guidelines.
- There is an informal relationship for ad-hoc consultation between CZMA and government agencies regulating development activities, however there is uncertainty as to the extent of the acceptance and application of the advice.

52. Linkages of Policy Statement 7 to Article 13-Strategic Objectives

This policy statement directly links to Article 13 (2), (3), (4), (6), (7) and (10)

53. Specific Objective 7.1 and Actions

Objective:

To strengthen the multi-sectoral partnership with the aim of implementing the ICZMP, with a strong emphasis on the role of local government in decision making processes.

Action 7.1.1

Formulate and implement a cabinet endorsed memorandum of agreement (MOA) which:

- a. identifies and assigns roles to implementing partners of the CZMP for actions relating to implementation and compliance with the plan and for legislative reforms to give effect to this;
- b. identifies and sets out a plan of action for resource mobilization and capacity to fully implement the plan; and
- c. provides for monitoring and evaluation of the MOA and periodic reports to the cabinet and people of Belize on progress towards delivering on the goals and objectives of the plan, bottlenecks encountered and recommendations to address same.

Action 7.1.2

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to integrate data sets from state and non-state stakeholders into the NSDI to facilitate:

- d. tracking, modelling, predicting and reporting on coastal zone management issues and targets contained in the CZMP; and
- e. a shared platform for national and local government and non-government stakeholders to access and update information on coastal zone management issues

54. Specific Objective 7.2 and Actions

Objective:

To strengthen the legal capacity of the CZMA to implement and enforce the provisions of the ICZMP and guidelines and the Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan

Action:

Declare the CZMA to be a local authority under the proposed planning legislation with powers to prescribe all matters relating to the preparation, adoption, enforcement, modification, replacement, revocation or repeal of the ICZMP and/or BSOP as a LDP or RDP for rural-coastal marine land use modality. This is subject to consultation and collaboration with and participation of local authorities and protected area managers within this spatial delimitation, and for the ICZMP and/or BSOP development guidelines to be a legal instrument for the granting of permission to develop land with or without conditions and planning obligations or to refuse an application;

Policy Statement Thematic Area 8: Network of Connected Ecosystems; Blue-Green Infrastructure Assets

55. Policy Statement 8

The Government of Belize recognizes Belize's networks of connected ecosystems and blue-green infrastructure assets as its natural wealth and commits to safeguarding its integrity and the ecosystem services and socio-cultural and economic benefits they provide for the people of Belize.

56. Rationale for Policy Statement 8

Together, Belize's networks of connected ecosystems and blue-green infrastructure assets are its natural wealth, comprising a variety of animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms working together in the rural, peri-urban, urban and coastal marine environments to provide valuable

goods and services to the Belizean population, with implications to the global population. These include ecosystem services inclusive of water supply and filtration, food and energy, provision of natural resources (fishery and timber and non-timber forest products) protection from tropical systems and floods, carbon sequestration and carbon markets, and habitat for wildlife to name a few.

It is of significant socio-cultural and economic value and plays a critical role in conserving and protecting land and sea resources with intrinsic qualities and value, archaeological sites, the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System, a world heritage site and the headwaters of fourteen watersheds — the majority of Belize's River systems, providing water security for people across 55% of the total land mass of Belize. [Belize](#) can account for a total of 118 globally threatened species (9 critically endangered, 32 endangered and 77 Vulnerable) and a further 62 near threatened / of least concern according to IUNC standards. To date, Belize has 60 per cent of its terrestrial territory under forest cover with 45 per cent protected and 25 per cent of its total ocean space protected. This has led to Belize being recognised for meeting the Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) to conserve 17% of its terrestrial and 10% of its marine areas. Under the Bonn Challenge, Belize has committed to restore 130,000 hectares of prioritized forest and agricultural landscapes by 2030, and is projected to meet the 30X30 target under the Montreal Kummings Agreement by protecting up to 30 per cent of its total ocean space by 2026 via the Blue Bond Agreement.

Notwithstanding, data indicates [Belize](#) has lost approximately 3,020 square kilometres (1,170 square miles) or a 17 percent of its forest cover between 2001 and 2023, with some of the most noticeable changes occurring in Belize River Valley watershed and Corozal and Orange Walk Districts primarily due to the expansion of farming and indiscriminate clearing of large parcels of forests. Data also point to how protected areas which cover 22.6 per cent of the country are effective at heading off deforestation.

Threats to the integrity and sustainability of the functions of Belize's networks of connected ecosystems and blue-green infrastructure assets are many and include but are not limited to:

- Rapid, unplanned and unregulated development in urban, peri-urban, rural and in coastal areas resulting in deforestation, forest fragmentation and mangrove clearance;
- The spread and introduction of invasive species, as well as the loss and fragmentation of habitat primarily associated with the expansion of the agricultural and tourism sectors;
- Rising marine and coastal pollution from land base sources, such as sedimentation, soil erosion, sewage and agro-chemicals, and that linked to ships with improper disposal methods for solid waste leading to the degradation of mangroves and coral reefs;
- Unsustainable extraction of non-timber forest products, with severity more along rivers;

- Increasing transboundary illegal incursions by immigrants into Belize forests and Protected Areas for farming, hunting, and harvesting non-timber forest products leading to loss of ecosystem services: the protection of water quality in adjacent watersheds, and reduction of nutrient flows that are damaging to the reefs;
- Unsustainable land use practices including but not limited to overfishing and illegal fishing, hunting, logging, and wildlife trade;
- Increasing fire and habitat loss and degradation from fire;
- Unsustainable tourism practices including but not limited to exceeding limits of guide to visitor ratios, and illegal wildlife interaction; and
- The adverse effects of climate change including increased flooding, warmer temperatures, sea-level rise, and more extreme weather events.

While there is a National Environmental Policy and Strategy (NEPS), a National Protected Areas System Plan (NPASP), a National Biodiversity Strategy and Plan (NBSAP), and other policies, strategies and plans, the latter articulating measures for conserving Belize's biodiversity, for the sustainable use of the components of it, and for the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of the genetic resources residing in it, there are several barriers to achieving the goals, objectives, and targets of these policies, strategies and plans. These include but are not limited to:

- Aged (> 5 years), siloed, duplicating, conflicting and fragmented policy and legislative landscape to regulate the use and development of land in Belize, a scenario also existing within the Ministry responsible for biodiversity;
- While the NPASP and the NBSAP contain a monitoring and evaluation component, the NEPS, as the overarching environmental policy for Belize, does not;
- Mobility of portfolio assignments for the business of government which fragments responsibility for biological diversity;
- Weak inter-sectoral coordination between central and local government and the Ministry and other ministries with portfolios having legal mandates with implications to delivering on the goals, objectives, and targets of the NEPS, NPASP, NBSAP and other related policies;
- Remote and centralised decision-making which limit addressing local environmental and biodiversity related challenges in a timely manner and optimising on opportunities for connecting and integrating ecosystems and blue-green infrastructure assets across land use modalities;

- The accuracy of spatial boundaries of protected areas which have implications to encroachment and ultimately de-reservation;
- Weak data management systems which compromise the collection, analysis and sharing of data and the use of evidenced based information for decision making;
- The inherent weakness in the current use of the EIA process as a defacto development permission granting tool, a function for which its architecture was not designed; and
- The discounting of urban biodiversity and blue-green infrastructure and assets as a critical component of the interconnectivity of biodiversity enhancement and conservation.

57. Linkages of Policy Statement 8 to Article 13-Strategic Objectives

This policy statement links directly to Article to 13 (1), (2) and (8)

58. Specific Objective 8.1 and Actions

Objective:

Strengthen the policy framework for efficient and effective environmental management

Action 8.1.1

Conduct an evaluation of the implementation of the NEPS having regard to:

- a. reporting on progress towards achieving its goal of a green, clean, resilient and strong Belize
- b. If off track, identifying the barriers to achieving its goal as contained in the action plan;
- c. the lessons learned and recommendations for change.

Action 8.1.2

Review and update the NEPS having regard to:

- a. the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation of the NEPS;
- b. a necessity to position the NEPS as the overarching policy of the Ministry with responsibility for environment, and integrating all other policies as subsets and

critical components of it for more enhanced collaboration within the Ministry and between Ministries and between central and local government;

- c. a necessity to harmonise and strengthen inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral policies, strategies and plans within the Ministry and between ministries;
- d. the emergence of new threats and opportunities to environmental management as a whole;
- e. recognition in case law of a gap in the laws of Belize that needs to be plugged to make clear that the approval of EIA is not planning permission to develop land;
- f. the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system; and
- g. resource requirements for implementing the policy.

Action 8.1.3

Declare the protected area managers to be a local authority under the proposed planning legislation powers to prescribe all matters relating to the preparation, adoption, enforcement, modification, replacement, revocation or repeal of the protected areas management plan as a RDP and for the management plans to be a legal instrument for the granting of permission to develop land with or without conditions and planning obligations or to refuse an application. This is subject to consultation and collaboration with and participation of local authorities within this spatial delimitation.

59. Specific Objective 8.2 and Actions

Objective:

To advance biodiversity enhancement and conservation, improve ecological resilience and increase blue-green infrastructure assets

Action: 8.2.1

- 1) Conduct an evaluation of the NBSAP having regard to the measures of success embedded in its framework;
- 2) Define and clearly delineate the boundaries of protected areas identified within the NPASP;
- 3) Conduct an evaluation of the implementation of the NPASP having regard to the key performance questions contained in its Monitoring and Evaluation System:

- a. Is the achievement of the Plan's purpose of establishing a protected areas system on track?
 - b. What are the challenges and obstacle to progress in executing strategic action and achieving stated objectives?
 - c. Has the enabling environment for the protected areas been improved?
 - d. Is the structure of the protected areas network more comprehensive and consolidated?
 - e. Has the management effectiveness of protected areas been improved?
 - f. What is the level of engagement of key stakeholders and partners in the implementation of the system plan?
- 4) Update and implement the NPASP and NBSAP having regard to the recommendations of the evaluations as approved and to the NEPS.

Action 8.2.2

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to strengthen collaboration with local government to expand the remit of biodiversity conservation, ecological corridors and blue-green infrastructure having regard to:

- a. the identification of new areas within urban environments that should be safeguarded and designated as ecological networks having significant importance for climate resilience and habitat protection
- b. the recognition of blue-green infrastructure assets such as public rights of way, road buffers, recreation and leisure spaces, all of which can all make a cumulative contribution towards wider national scale ecological connectivity.
- c. The use of integrative and innovative nature-based solutions to address the climate emergency as well as securing sustainable growth, ecological connectivity, social equality and well-being instead of the hard engineering solutions to protect coastal communities.

Action 8.2.3

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to integrate data sets from state and non-state stakeholders into the NSDI to facilitate:

- a. tracking, modelling, predicting and reporting on environmental management issues and indicators; and

- b. a shared platform for national and local government and non-government stakeholders to access and update information on environmental management issues

Policy Statement Thematic Area 9: Knowledge Building and Sharing, Public Engagement and Outreach

60. Policy Statement 9

The Government of Belize recognises that SLM will only be possible if all stakeholders develop awareness of the challenges confronting SLM practices, as well as be willing to generate, share and build knowledge together, and to put their knowledge into action. The Government of Belize therefor commits to facilitating an enabling environment for knowledge building, sharing, application and dissemination in SLM practice.

61. Rationale for Policy Statement

SLM is an integrative, multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral process involving many diverse stakeholders from public and private sector, academia, media and civil society operating as organisations, informal groups and as individuals, at varying levels and types of governance systems, with different interests in multiple spaces and platforms.

This is made even more complex considering new land use drivers like climate change, migration and demographic shifts, technology and innovation, and energy mixes, which if poorly managed, can not only invoke social and political conflicts, but can also accelerate land degradation, strain ecosystems and essential infrastructure services, increase the levels of air and water pollution and disproportionately impact lives and livelihoods of vulnerable and marginalized populations, all of which can compromise development gains.

This complexity is compounded by the interdependency of the broad spectrum of infrastructure systems, social and emergency services, the built and natural environment, and ecosystem services, all interacting temporally and spatially, with other social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities within spaces at varying resolutions and landforms.

SLM will only be possible if all stakeholders develop awareness of the challenges confronting SLM practices, and are willing to generate, share and build knowledge together and put their knowledge into action.

62. Linkages of Policy Statement 9 to Article 13-Strategic Objectives

This policy statement directly links to Article 13 (1), (9) and (10)

63. Specific Objective 9.1 and Actions

Objective:

to enhance knowledge and awareness of all stakeholders of the role of SLM in addressing quality of life issues for all Belizeans and of their role and participation in SLM.

Action 9.1.1

Compile a Stakeholder Register of SLM practitioners and decision makers with their attributes (area of expertise, geographic practice, level of decision making, state or non-state etc.)

Action 9.1.2

Formulate and implement a comprehensive public education, engagement and outreach strategy and plan to enhance stakeholder's awareness, engagement and buy-in to a SLM fraternity having regard to:

- a. the policies, laws and plans that guide and govern the operations of SLM practice;
- b. the interrelationship and interdependencies between and within departments and units of the MNRPM and between the MNRPM and other ministries of government and non-government stakeholders as it relates to SLM;
- c. the value, importance and relevance of SLM in meeting national and local development goals, needs and aspiration, global commitments and in addressing societal problems connected to land;
- d. the role of each stakeholder in SLM;
- e. encouraging the citizens' participation in the land use planning processes to ensure the process is robust and participatory and that it reflects their needs;
- f. land tenure and property rights as distinguished from SLM and land use, with a special focus on women, youth, and other vulnerable groups; and
- g. the requirement for scalable communications materials and models

64. Specific Objective 9.2 and Actions

Objective:

To enhance collaboration on SLM practice among SLM stakeholders

Action 9.2.1

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to strengthen interdisciplinary knowledge and exchange between stakeholders in SLM practice having regard to the diversity of stakeholders and best practices to support SLM.

Action 9.2.2

Create a knowledge exchange platform where resources, case studies and tools can be easily accessible by SLM practitioners and where the general public and SLM practitioners can interact.

65. Specific Objective 9.3 and Actions

Objective

Strengthen the capacity of SLM practitioners to support more informed SLM decision-making

Action 9.3.1

Formulate a strategy and action plan to equip SLM practitioners with knowledge and skills set for sustained SLM practice, having regard to:

- a. the latest research, trends, innovations, data and best practices in SLM;
- b. the diverse perspectives, skills set and expertise in and required for SLM practice;
- c. the need for continued professional learning and field interaction;
- d. peer review sessions and case study documentation in SLM practice;
- e. promoting the development and adoption of innovation and technology in SLM practice;
- f. the creation and dissemination of local research papers, reports and articles on SLM practice in Belize

Policy Statement Thematic Area 10: Governance for Land Use Planning within the Sustainable Land Management Ecosystem

66. Policy Statement 10

The Government of Belize commits to adopting a governance system for land use planning consisting of a set of policy and legal instruments for use by the state for facilitating the sustainable use and management of land and for regulating the use and development of land for the whole or parts of the country.

The policy and legal instruments shall consist of:

- a. The National Land Use Policy
- b. The National Land Use Plan
- c. Local Development Plan (or Regional or Special Development Plan)

67. Rationale for Policy Statement 10

There exists a plethora of policies and legislation for guiding and regulating land use and development activities in Belize across multiple institutions residing in different ministries. This has created a very complex, confusing, and onerous governance ecosystem for land use planning and regulating the use and development of land in Belize. In addition, there are several gaps that need to be addressed. These include at the:

National Level, the absence of:

- Explicit provision of land use planning as a component of the constitutional assignment land management as a business of government;
- Spatial strategy in Plan Belize to give effect to its spatial and technical requirements; and
- The role of human settlements in meeting global and national development targets.

Sector Level, policies that are:

- Aged, fragmented, duplicating, conflicting and siloed; notwithstanding, most policies are characterized by clear goals and objectives, provide for cross sectoral linkages and recognize the integration of a NLUP and climate resilience as integral to policy success (the most recent ones) and to facilitate sustainable land management (SLM);
- Ambiguous as to validity, that is whether adopted or if it is the policy of the current government;
- Characterised by weak cross sectoral collaboration (between and within ministries) and vertical integration (central to local government), compromising the application of SLM principles at the local level.
- absent for several key sectors which have implications to a NLUP;
- Limited or contain no consideration of gender and the differentiated needs and contributions of vulnerable populations in the policies; and

- Minimally monitored, evaluated or are progress towards objectives and targets reported on.

Legislative Level, there are:

- Significant duplication, overlapping and confusion of legislative authority, areas to which no authority applies, institutions functioning without authority or not exercising their authority, and the discounting of the cumulative impact of siloed and project specific and siloed decision-making;
- This is a consequence of decades of patching up and adding layers and extensions according to the whims of the actors of the system at a point in time, without any consideration of the planning system as a whole. This was recognised in case law where it was pointed out that there may be a gap in the laws of Belize that needs to be plugged so as to make it clear that an EIA is not planning permission or approval of a scheduled project in regulating the use and development of land.
- Lack of knowledge and awareness of the legislation governing land use and development activities within and between institutions at the national and local levels;
- Archaic and centralized, thus far removed from local impact, compromising a shared understanding of national, regional, and global development objectives and targets and the ability of regional and local decision makers to respond to development challenges at source point in a timely, appropriate, and solution-oriented manner;
- Various types of permits and licenses exist across multiple agencies to use and develop land, depending on the type of activity, development or project that is proposed;
- Multiple boards and authorities to administrate legislation governing land use and development activities are either not established, or if established, often operate in silos, compromising addressing the defect the legislation they are to administrate, is to cure, notwithstanding many have a commonality in their composition;
- Differing interpretation of words (land, building) and what defines a city, town, or village;
- Discretionary power and not a duty to prepare land use plans or variations thereof contained in different legislation; while in one case there is a duty to prepare a plan but no authority to enforce the plan;
- Weak provisions or the absence of provisions for the processes for plan preparation, adoption, and enforcement, with the exception for the most part of one legislation.

- Minimal considerations for data capture and analysis for gender and vulnerable people in application processes for preparing land use plans or variations thereof;
- More focused on restriction and control rather than facilitative of development; and
- there is a narrow meaning of development.

68. Linkages of Policy Statement 10 to Article 13-Strategic Objectives

Policy Statement 10 is directly linked to Article 13 (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8), (9) and (10)

69. Specific Objective 10.1 and Actions:

to strengthen the role of land use planning as an element of sustainable land management at all levels of governance

Action: 10.1.1

Ascribe constitutional authority to SLM and land use planning as an element of SLM within the assignment of business of government.

Action: 10.1.2

- a. Conduct a stock take of all policies < 5 years with direct or indirect implications to the policy and the NLUP; and
- b. Mainstream the policy and the NLUP vertically and horizontally into Plan Belize, sectoral policies and local development plans to give effect to their technical and spatial requirements.

70. Specific Objective 10.2 and Actions

Objective:

to assign responsibility for the administration of the policy to give effect to it and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Action: 10.2.1

Provide for the administration of the policy to be the constitutional responsibility of the Minister with responsibility for land management, who shall:

- a. Ensure that a National Use Policy and National Land Use Plan is formulated, adopted, implemented, modified, amended, enforced as far as is reasonably possible and is revoked and or replaced to give effect to the technical and spatial requirements of Plan Belize and associated sectoral policies and global commitments;
- b. Be responsible for the framing of comprehensive policies, policy statements and directives with respect to the sustainable use, management, and development of all land in Belize and for the implementation of such policies, policy statements and directives;
- c. Be responsible for providing strategic guidance on the sustainable use, management, and development of land in Belize to the lower-level governance and higher scale of development impact, which comprises (protected areas, coastal zones, commercial free zones etc.), and (cities, towns, and villages-depending on level of settlement hierarchy) and sectoral counterparts (ministries);
- d. Establish and sustain mechanisms for adequate oversight and scrutiny of the power and duty of sectoral and local decision-makers to set out strategic policies and to formulate, adopt, implement, modify, amend, enforce and or revoke and replace local and regional development plans in compliance with the policy and plan and required legislation enacted to give effect to its provisions; and
- e. Establish and sustain mechanisms for the participation of the private sector and civil society in the formulation, adoption, implementation, modification, amendment, revocation, replacement, evaluation and monitoring of legal instruments and processes at all levels of governance.

71. Specific Objective 10.3 and Actions

Objective:

- to modernize and harmonise planning legislation,
- to eliminate ambiguity and duplication of roles and functions of organization regulating the use and development of land, and
- to institute plan-led development and a presumption in favour of sustainable development

Action 10.3.1

Promulgate a National Planning and Development Act to give effect to the legal requirements of the policy and plan with regard to:

- a. The role and responsibilities of the Minister responsible for land use planning;
- b. The establishment, constitution and duties, powers and functions of a National Planning and Development Commission to administer the Act;
- c. The process for preparation and adoption of a NLUP and for the contents of a national land use plan (NLUP) (*See Article 20, Specific Objective 1-Land Use Planning*);
- d. The establishment of a National Planning and Development Agency, the post of a Head of the Agency and for his or her duties, functions, and powers to give effect to the provisions of the Act at the direction of the National Commission.
- e. A power for the National Commission to appoint local authorities as Local Planning and Development Commissions and to provide for their duties, functions, and powers to formulate, adopt, implement, modify, amend, enforce, revoke and or replace a local, regional, or special development plan, subject to the policy and plan and direction from the National Commission.
- f. The appointment of “local authority” to mean city, town, and village councils and in respect of any area in Belize not administered by a city, town, or village council, other the organization or entity the Minister may declare to be the local authority for the purpose of the Act ; These may include the CZMA for coastal zones, protected area managers for protected areas and commercial free zone managers to name some.
- g. The power of the National Commission to appoint of Special or Joint Planning Commissions for an area or areas or parts of areas of a district or districts, which may include a part or parts of a village, town or city, or the whole village, town or city, due to special circumstances or critical concern or necessity or in the interest of and in furtherance of national or regional policy or any other reason they deem fit, subject to the approval of the Minister;
- h. Notwithstanding g. preceding, the National Commission shall not constitute a special planning area or a joint planning area if such area or parts of an area if such area or parts of an area are within the boundaries of the jurisdiction of a local authority or by an adopted local development plan, whichever area is greater, until the local authority has been informed in writing of the intention and provided with the opportunity to object to the order;
- i. The contents of a local or special development plan. (*See Article 20, Specific Objective 2.1-Land Use Planning*)
- j. The process for preparation and adoption of a local or regional development plans;

- k. The power of the National and Local Commissions to appoint Committees and to co-opt professionals within and outside of the public service in the case of the former, and within and outside of municipal and village services in the case of the latter;
- l. Default powers of the National Commission to prepare or cause to be prepared LDPs In such cases where the local authority has made such a request or have not complied with the timeline for preparing or causing to prepare such plan.
- m. Planning permission to be required for the carrying out of any development of any and all land in Belize and any person intending to develop land must apply for planning permission from the material date of the LDPs or RDPs;
- n. The meaning of development as the backcloth for regulating the use and development of land, and therefore to provide for an expanded and progressive meaning of development and all of its parts, and to provide for what constitutes or does not constitute development, to deliver on the policy and NLUP;
- o. For “land” to have meaning as defined in Articles 2 and 3 of this policy;
- p. A reserve power to the National Commission and the Minister to grant planning permission by a development order and to request particular applications to be referred to them and to grant planning permission with or without conditions and planning obligations or to refuse planning permission.
- q. The duty of the National Commission or Local Commissions not to grant planning permission unless an application for a project listed in Schedule I or II of the Environmental Protection Act application is accompanied by a statement from the Department of Environment stating whether environmental clearance was granted, and if so granted, the terms and conditions of such clearance if any applies or if it does not require environmental assessment.
- r. The duty of the National or Local Commissions, as the case may be, to use the determination of the Department of Environment assessment of the project or activity as a material consideration in determining the planning application, and the weighting of such consideration to be determined solely by the Local Commission or National Commission, as the case may be.
- s. Consultation by the applicant before applying for planning permission and for approval in principle of a proposed development application with the caveat that the development application process is still required.
- t. Power of National and Local Commissions, as the case may be, to decline to determine applications under certain circumstances, for example, pre-mature development.
- u. The necessity for the coordination of referral agencies for utility works.

- v. A requirement for the transfer of designated public and community spaces before issuance of completion certificate to register subdivisions;
- w. Planning permission to be given for development already carried out if such development complies with a LDP or RDP as the case may be and for the requirement of paying the application fees with interest.
- x. Power of National or Local Commissions, as the case may be, to revoke or modify planning permission under certain circumstances and to provide compensation as may be required;
- y. Power of the National or Local Commissions, as the case may be, to issue enforcement notice and stop orders for development in breach of planning permission;
- z. Penalties for contravention of stop orders and enforcement notices and for injunctions restraining breaches of planning permission.
- aa. Repayment of expenses incurred by the National or Local Commissions, as the case may be, for restoring land to the condition it was before a breach of planning permission.
- bb. Right of appeal against a planning decision of the Minister or National or Local Commissions as the case may be.
- cc. The requirement of Central Government and Local Government to be subject to the act once they are the promoters of a development project that falls within the meaning of development for the purposes of the Act.
- dd. Rights of entry for agents of the National or Local Commissions, as the case may be, to serve orders, notices and to gather information. This is already embedded in the Constitution of Belize.
- ee. The power of the Minister to make regulations for special controls including the display of advertisement, the subdivision of land, the preservation of buildings and plants, the construction of piers, wharves and jetties, engineering operations and mining and mineral development and or exploration and or exploitation.
- ff. Power of the National or Local Commissions, as the case may be, to conduct inquiries into the adoption, objection to and amendments of LDP, RDP or SDP.
- gg. The NLUP and LDP or RDP or SDP to be revised every five years or such earlier or later times as determined by the Minister in the case of the former, or the local authorities in the case of the latter;

Strategic Action 10.3.2 – Repeal and Amendment of Relevant Legislation

Conduct a stock take and review of all legislation which are either to be repealed or for which amendments are required to give effect to the vision, mission, goals and objectives of this policy and to promulgate for such.

REFERENCES AND ANNEXES

- ⁱ Source: Abstract of an article by P.J. Wolf (2001) Authority : Delegation: in International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioural Science accessed 12-14-2024 from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/principle-of-subsidiarity>
- ⁱⁱ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report, Final Update, June 16, 2023 on defining climate resilient development
- ⁱⁱⁱ Statistical Institute of Belize categorises cities and towns as urban and all other settlements as rural.
- ^{iv} Adapted from <https://urbanforestrysouth.org/faqs/define-peri-urban> accessed 12-15-2024
- ^v Adapted from the combined meaning of coastal zone and zone of influence in Belize Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan 2016, p.xii , Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute, Belize
- ^{vi} The Marine Spatial Plan is to encompass all of Belize's maritime areas inclusive of its internal waters, territorial seas, and Exclusive Economic Zone. As per the current CZM Act, outer limit of the geographical area that the ICZM Plan covers is the territorial sea. The new Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan would extend out to the EEZ and will only include zoning for biodiversity protection zones and permissible blue economy activities in the ocean space, which may have implications for the use of the seabed.
- ^{vii} Resolution 42/187 of the United Nations General Assembly
- ^{viii} Source: Source: Marshall Nunez, Disability Desk Coordinator, Ministry of Human Development and Family, Government of Belize
- ^{ix} Statistical Institute of Belize (2010) Belize Housing and Population Census 2010 Country Report, pg. 55 notes that internationally, and in addition to the size of the population and the relatively rapid rate of population growth occurring in an area, other criteria considered in distinguishing urban from rural areas include, but are not limited to, access to utilities and the level of participation in agriculture (both fishing and farming).
- ^x This is based on conversation with Clifford King, Local Government Officer, Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government. These are Western Paradise, Mahogany Heights, San Jose Palmar, Caye Caulker and St. Georges Caye, the latter two by virtue of surveyed description as islands.
- ^{xi} The assessment draws from the CityRAP Tool was developed by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), in partnership with the Sub-Regional Technical Centre for Disaster Risk Management, Sustainability, and Urban Resilience (DiMSUR). The tool specifically targets local governments of small to intermediate sized cities that have limited experience in urban risk reduction and resilience action planning.
- ^{xii} Young, C. (2008) Belize's Ecosystems: Threats and Challenges to Conservation. Belize. Tropical Conservation Science 1(1):18-33. Available online: tropicalconservationscience.org

Annex 1 – Terms of Reference for the National Land Use Policy Task Force

Background

A Draft Updated National Land Use Policy was developed in August 2018, with support of two key baseline documents: an Institutional Assessment of the Ministry of Natural Resources and a Baseline Assessment in Support of the Updated Land Use Policy and Planning Framework. The draft policy was subjected to a series of sector-specific focus groups discussions, and stakeholder institutions also provided written comments, observations, and recommendations on the draft, all of which are considered in the development of the final policy. Furthermore, it is highlighted that in the process of developing the framework, careful consideration was given to factors that may maximize success, such as easy integration into the recently restructured Ministry of Natural Resources, facilitation of relevant land use coordination functions with other agencies, political acceptance and expediency, regulatory reform under existing legislation (as opposed to amending or creating new legislation), and a gradual implementation approach to be distributed over a 10-year implementation time frame, thus allowing for the building of relevant capacity as the land administration and management needs evolve.

The outputs of the updating process were finalized in March of 2019 and included a series of documents and a web mapping tool namely:

- Final Land Use Policy Framework
- Final Implementation Roadmap and Action plan
- Final NLUP Communications Strategy and Plan 2019-2021
- Final Resource Mobilization Strategy NLUP
- Land-Suitability-Map---Web Mapping Tool link: Land Suitability Mapping
- Land-Suitability-Map---Training-Report
- Land-Suitability-Map---User Guide

This 2019 updated National Land Use Policy was not taken to Cabinet for endorsement. Since 2019, there have been important developments that warrants that the existing draft Land Use Policy undergo a review and updating process to ensure adequate alignment with current national development priorities, strategies, and frameworks and to capture and reflect contemporary and emerging land use issues such as the customary land use and rights of indigenous peoples, gender equity, climate resilience and disaster risk reduction, among others.

Purpose

i. Type of Committee

The Land Use Policy Task Force is an ad-hoc committee that is being established and will remain active for the duration of the process of updating and finalizing the National Land Use Policy of Belize.

ii. Objective

The Land Use Policy Task Force will drive, guide, monitor and champion the process of updating the National Land Use Policy.

Membership

The membership of the Land Use Policy Task Force is comprised mostly of persons internal to Ministry of Natural Resources, Petroleum and Mining, particularly the Lands and Surveys Department. However, it includes one member from the Department of the Environment, Ministry of Sustainable Development and Climate Change and one from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise to reflect the Cabinet Sub-committee with responsibility for the National Land Use Policy. As well as one member from the Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government which is a key government stakeholder in the process.

- i. Chair: Director, Policy, Coordination and Planning, MNRPM
- ii. Co-Chair: Inspector of Mines, Mining Unit – MNRPM, UNCCD National Focal Point
- iii. Member, Commissioner, Lands and Surveys Department
- iv. Member, Deputy Commissioner, Lands and Surveys Department
- v. Member: Principal Planner, Lands and Surveys Department
- vi. Member: Principal Land Information Officer, Lands and Surveys Department
- vii. Member: Principal Surveyor, Lands and Surveys Department
- viii. Member: Principal Hydrologist, National Hydrological Service – MNRPM, UNCCD Scientific and Technical Focal Point
- ix. Member: Legal Counsel, MNRPM
- x. Member: Chief Environmental Officer, Department of the Environment (DOE), Ministry of Sustainable Development and Climate Change
- xi. Member: Chief Agricultural Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise
- xii. Member: Director of Local Government, Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government

Roles and Responsibilities

i. General Responsibilities of the Land Use Policy Task Force

- Work closely with the consultant in the updating of the National Land Use Policy by meeting and taking part in working sessions to discuss, analyze and formulate key aspects of the policy.
- Support the consultant in identifying key public, private and civil society stakeholders and where possible, assist in facilitating engagement with these stakeholders.
- Review and comment on deliverables submitted by the Consultant and provide 'Payment Recommendation' to the SoilCARE project.
- Provide support and technical advice to the Land Use Policy Review Committee during their review of the Draft and Finalized Updated National Land Use Policy.
- Organize and engage in the public consultation process for the draft Updated National Land Use Policy by attending consultation meetings, workshops, and other events to garner public input on the draft policy.

ii. Chair

Responsibilities include:

- Liaising with the consultant and secretariat to plan, organize and publicize all Task Force meetings and working sessions.
- Creating the agenda of the meetings in collaboration with the consultant and secretariat.
- Convening and conducting all Task Force meetings, including public consultation meetings.

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- Representing the Task Force at consultations, meetings, workshops, and public awareness events, or delegating such responsibilities to other committee members, as necessary.
 - Ensuring that minutes of the meetings and deliverables to be reviewed are shared with members in a timely manner.
 - Support the Chair of the Land Use Policy Review Committee Meetings in planning and organizing the meetings and review sessions.

iii.Co-Chair

Responsibilities include:

- Liaising with the SoilCare Project regarding all matters concerning deliverables and payment to the consultant.
- Reporting to the Land Use Policy Task Force any issues, challenges, or concerns from the SoilCare Project.
- Performing all duties of the Chair in his/her absence.
- Assisting the Chair in certain duties upon his/her request.

iv.Members

Responsibilities include:

- Liaising with the Chair, Co-chair, and Secretariat to confirm attendance or absence from a meeting or working session.
- Provide advice and suggestions to ensure the National Land Use Policy updating process is executed effectively and as efficiently as possible.
- Review deliverable and provide feedback and input based on technical expertise within five (5) working days; a non-response after five (5) working days constitutes a “no objection”.
- Attend workshops, public consultation sessions and other events during the updating process to provide technical support.
- Champion the updated National Land Use Policy to garner broad buy-in among key public, private and civil society stakeholders and the wider public.

v.Secretariat

Responsibilities include:

- Liaising with the Chair and Co-Chair in the planning, organizing, and publicizing of all Task Force meetings and working sessions.
- Ensure that all invitations and notifications for upcoming meetings and sessions are sent at least five (5) working days prior to the date of the meeting.
- Recording and distributing meeting minutes for review by the Task Force.
- Managing and storing all Task Force documents including updated contacts for all members and stakeholders.
- Assisting the Chair and Co-Chair in preparing and distributing deliverables and other information to the Task Force and ensuring that the Task Force has at least five (5) working days to review deliverables.
- Assisting the Chair and Co-Chair in preparing documents for submission and review to the National Land Use Policy Review Committee.
- Plan, organize and coordinate all stakeholder sessions, public consultations and events required by the National Land Use Policy updating process.

The Policy, Coordination and Planning Unit (PCPU) of the MNRPM will serve as the Secretariat of the Task Force.

Meetings & Quorum:

- Full engagement/commitment to the Task Force will be considered official after a unanimous acceptance of the Terms of Reference by each member during the first meeting.
- The frequency and duration of meetings, and other sessions will be determined according to the workplan of the consultant. The Chair may also convene special meetings or emergency meeting as deemed necessary.
- A minimum of six (6) members plus either the Chair or the Co-Chair must be present for the meeting to be recognized as an official meeting.
- Meeting minutes will be forwarded within five (5) working days to all committee members for review.
- Decisions are to be made by consensus and can be made via virtual (online) meeting or utilizing an email round-robin process.

i. Alternates & Replacements of members

- Members except for the Chair, Co-Chair, Commissioner-LSD and Deputy Commissioner-LSD is to designate in writing an alternate to attend meetings or sessions in their absence.
- If a member of the Task Force or the alternate on record misses (3) consecutive meetings, the Task Force will vote as to whether the member should be replaced, if agreed upon, a new member will be appointed.

Reporting

The Task Force through its Chair and Co-Chair reports directly to the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Petroleum and Mining

Annex II – Terms of Reference for the National Land Use Policy Review Committee

Background

A Draft Updated National Land Use Policy was developed in August 2018, with support of two key baseline documents: an Institutional Assessment of the Ministry of Natural Resources and a Baseline Assessment in Support of the Updated Land Use Policy and Planning Framework. The draft policy was subjected to a series of sector-specific focus groups discussions, and stakeholder institutions also provided written comments, observations, and recommendations on the draft, all of which are considered in the development of the final policy. Furthermore, it is highlighted that in the process of developing the framework, careful consideration was given to factors that may maximize success, such as easy integration into the recently restructured Ministry of Natural Resources, facilitation of relevant land use coordination functions with other agencies, political acceptance and expediency, regulatory reform under existing legislation (as opposed to amending or creating new legislation), and a gradual implementation approach to be distributed over a 10-year implementation time frame, thus allowing for the building of relevant capacity as the land administration and management needs evolve.

The outputs of the updating process were finalized in March of 2019 and included a series of documents and a web mapping tool namely:

- Final Land Use Policy Framework
- Final Implementation Roadmap and Action plan
- Final NLUP Communications Strategy and Plan 2019-2021
- Final Resource Mobilization Strategy NLUP
- Land-Suitability-Map---Web Mapping Tool link:Land Suitability Mapping
- Land-Suitability-Map---Training-Report
- Land-Suitability-Map---User Guide

This 2019 updated National Land Use Policy was not taken to Cabinet for endorsement. Since 2019, there have been important developments that warrants that the existing draft Land Use Policy undergo a review and updating process to ensure adequate alignment with current national development priorities, strategies, and frameworks and to capture and reflect contemporary and emerging land use issues such as the customary land use and rights of indigenous peoples, gender equity, climate resilience and disaster risk reduction, among others.

Purpose

- Type of committee: The Land Use Policy Review Committee is an ad-hoc committee that is established and will remain active for the duration of the process of updating the National Land Use Policy.
- Objective: The Land Use Policy Review Committee is expected to review the draft policy for clarity, coherence, robustness, and alignment with national development priorities and global commitments.

Membership

- i. Chair: Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Natural Resources, Petroleum & Mining
- ii. Co-Chair: Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management
- iii. Co-Chair: Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise
- iv. Member: Chief Executive Officer, Office of the Prime Minister or Representative
- v. Member: Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Economic Development or Representative
- vi. Member: Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government or Representative
- vii. Member: Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing or Representative
- viii. Member: Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations or Representative
- ix. Member: Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Transport, Youth and Sports or Representative
- x. Member: Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Human Development, Families and Indigenous People's Affairs or Representative
- xi. Member: Chief Executive Officer, Home Affairs and New Growth Industries or Representative
- xii. Member: Chief Executive Officer, Blue Economy and Civil Aviation or Representative
- xiii. Member: Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics and E-Governance or Representative
- xiv. Member: Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology
- xv. Member: Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Health and Wellness
- xvi. Member: Chief Climate Change Officer, National Climate Change Office
- xvii. Member: Chief Executive Officer, Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute
- xviii. Member: National Coordinator, National Emergency Management Organization
- xix. Member: Director, Blue Bonds Unit, Office of the Prime Minister

The Policy Coordination and Planning Unit will serve as the Secretariat of the Review Committee.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Review the draft National Land Use Policy presented by the Consultant and provide comments to better align the policy with national priorities, goals, and objectives.
- Provide support and buy-in by the respective Ministries for the draft National Land Use Policy and provide support for the public engagement process.
- Review the final National Land Use Policy as presented by the Consultant following the incorporation of comments from the public engagement process; and provide feedback and comments.
- Support and promote the adoption of the National Land Use Policy at the highest level of government.

Roles and Responsibilities

Chair

Responsibilities include:

- Convening and conducting all Land Use Policy Review Committee meetings;
- Representing the Land Use Policy Review Committee in meetings with the Cabinet Sub-Committee or the entire Cabinet to foster support and buy-in for the draft and finalized National Land Use Policy.
- Ensuring committee members satisfy the Terms of Reference.
- Lead discussions during the Land Use Policy Review Committee meetings.

Co-Chairs

Responsibilities include:

- Performing all duties of the Chair in their absence;
- Assisting the Chair in certain duties upon his/her request.

Members

Responsibilities include:

- Participate in review sessions and provide feedback or comments.
- Liaise with Head of Departments, Units and relevant technical persons within their respective Ministry to provide adequate and appropriate feedback and comments.

Secretariat

Responsibilities include:

- Liaising with the Chair in the planning, organizing, and publicizing of all Land Use Policy Review Committee sessions.
- Recording and submitting meeting minutes for approval; and distributing finalized meeting minutes to committee members.
- Managing and storing all Land Use Policy Review Committee documents including updated contacts for all members and stakeholders
- Assisting the Chair in preparing and distributing information to the committee members; and
- Assisting the Chair in preparing documents for submission and approval to the Cabinet Sub-Committee and Cabinet.

Meetings & Quorum:

- Full engagement/commitment to the Land Use Policy Review Committee will be considered official after a unanimous acceptance of the Terms of Reference by each member during the first meeting.
- The Review Committee will be convened twice during the process of updating the National Land Use Policy
 - a. Firstly, to review the draft National Land Use Policy after the document is submitted by the Consultant and undergoes initial review by the Land Use Policy Task Force.
 - b. Secondly, to review the finalized National Land Use Policy after the document is submitted by the Consultant and undergoes initial review by the Land Use Policy Task Force.
- At minimum, fifteen (15) members of the committee including the Chair and Co-Chairs should be present for the meeting/sessions to be recognized as official.

- Meeting/session minutes will be forwarded within five (5) days to all committee members for review.

Alternate Members

- Each member except the Chair and Co-Chairs can designate in writing an alternate to attend Land Use Policy Review Committee meetings in their absence.

Reporting

- Chair and Co-Chairs report directly to the Cabinet Sub-Committee for the National Land Use Policy, that is, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources, Petroleum and Mining, Minister of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management and Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise or Representative.