



DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

PRESS RELEASE

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Maya House of Cacao Officially Opened

On Saturday, May 16, the Maya House of Cacao was officially opened in the Toledo District in the south of Belize. Through a grant of €400,000 from the European Union, together with the resources of the Toledo Cacao Growers Association, allowed the construction of the Maya House of Cacao and several other activities under the project. This initiative is part of the European Union's Belize Rural Development Project, in which the community has benefitted from job creation, skills gained as well as general improvement in the lives of the community as a whole.

Besides developing the Maya House of Cacao, the project has helped in making the cacao plant more resistant to the Monelia fungus that had badly affected the crops in the area. This was important not just because of the money made from the plants, but also because the cacao plant is part of the deep Mayan culture history of the community. Many training exercises have taken place to make sure that those involved make the most of their skills and that these skills can be passed on to future generations.

During the opening ceremony, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Belize, Ambassador Paola Amadei talked about the growth possible from these kinds of projects: *"It is our belief that these kinds of projects have a lot of substance to them - the deep Mayan history and tradition that makes it all the more special. There is a lot of potential here with some of the best cacao in the world, not just in more agricultural production, but also in the possibilities in tourism as well. Through our joint efforts, this community and Belize itself stands to benefit hugely."*

As the European Union also celebrated Europe Day this month, the ceremony took place at an ideal time as all could share in the message of cooperation and neighbourliness. As such, the partnership with the people of Belize has continued to be an important part of this message, as more initiatives assist the development of communities and the country as a whole.

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