



## DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION PRESS RELEASE

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### Infrastructure Improvements to commence at archaeological sites

Visitors to archaeological sites will benefit from infrastructure improvements under the EU supported project "**Making Tourism Benefit Communities Adjacent to Archaeological Sites**". The works will commence at Altun Ha, Belize District and a ground breaking ceremony was held earlier today (Wednesday, February 12) to mark the occasion.

The project which started in March 2013 is funded under the Belize Rural Development Programme (BRDP) with an EU grant of BZ\$2.75million, with counterpart funding from the government through the Ministry of Tourism and is being implemented by the Belize Tourism Board and the National Institute of Culture and History.

The infrastructure improvements will include new bathroom facilities, walking trails and seating areas, enhancing the health, safety and attraction of the site. These works will be in addition to other initiatives which have already begun under the project including an upgraded Visitor's Centre in Altun Ha which has been outfitted with audio-visual equipment to enhance the tourist experience. A visitor's satisfaction survey has also been developed and launched. The same or similar activities will be implemented in eight other archaeological sites of the country: Xunantunich, Nohoch Che'en (Caves' Branch), Nim Li Punit, Barton Creek, Lubaantun, Actun Tunichil Muknal, Lamanai and Blue Creek.

Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Belize, Ambassador Paola Amadei told the gathering that projects of this nature were crucial in enhancing the country's tourism product but also critical to the preservation of our history. *"This project touches every facet of development in the communities near these sites. Not only does it improve the products and services offered at the sites but it focuses on bottom-up development and community-driven efforts to ensure that local and descendant communities benefit from their cultural heritage through economic opportunities and training. It is also the EU contribution to make better known the incredible cultural patrimony of Belize which is rightly famous for its beautiful coral reefs and luxurious landscapes but which has more to offer."*

This morning's ceremony was also symbolic of the works and activities to be implemented at the other archaeological sites across the country.

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