

► Just Transition and NDCs in Belize

From an employer's perspective

Developed for the ITCILO/ILO course “Leading the Change: Workers, Employers, and Governments Driving Just Transition through Social Dialogue”

► Executive summary

This summary presents the Belize Just Transition case for the ITCILO/ILO course. Developed from an employers' perspective, it helps participants identify peer experiences, key challenges to address, opportunities to leverage, and practical roles to play—while reaffirming the central role of social dialogue.

Belize's context: Belize's main **economic activities** are tourism, agriculture, and financial services. Tourism remains the largest contributor, generating about one-fifth of GDP in 2023, while agriculture and the offshore financial sector provide essential exports and employment. At the same time, the country is highly dependent on imported energy—70.8% of total energy supply in 2023—leaving businesses vulnerable to price shocks and supply disruptions. Debt levels and high interest payments limit fiscal space, though innovation through Blue Bond debt-for-nature swaps has reduced these levels, showing how green finance can support national stability. After a post-pandemic rebound, growth has slowed and reverted to its long-term trend of about 2 per cent, reflecting capacity constraints and persistent infrastructure and productivity gaps.

Socially, Belize combines Central American geography with Caribbean integration, holding membership in both CARICOM and SICA. English is the official language, though Spanish and Creole are widely spoken. The country is ethnically diverse and youthful—almost half the population is under 25—but growth is slowing. Belize remains a net recipient of migrants while also losing skilled workers abroad. Although an upper-middle-income economy, inequality and poverty persist. In 2024, GDP per capita reached \$13,278 (PPP), below Caribbean and Latin American averages. Belize's 2023 Human Development Index ranking of 115 out of 193 underscores ongoing social gaps. Crime continues to constrain the business and social environments.

The **labour market** shows low unemployment (2.1% in April 2025), but participation remains below pre-pandemic levels. Women's participation is markedly lower—around 47% compared with 72% for men—largely due to unpaid care and household duties. Youth and Maya participate far less than the national average. Jobs are concentrated in retail, tourism, and services, with nine out of ten firms being MSMEs, and seven in ten of them being micro-enterprises. Informality affects 37.5% of employment, notably in self-employment, limiting access to finance and protection. Labour productivity has barely improved in a decade, eroding competitiveness. Educational enrolment declines steeply beyond primary school, reducing the pool of technically trained workers. **Social protection** remains partial: in 2021, only 32% of the population accessed at least one benefit, while just 37.5% of retirees received a pension.

Environmentally, Belize has a rich biodiversity and coastal geography, but it is exposed to intense climate risks. Losses from climate-related events are estimated to average 3–4% of GDP each year. Rising temperatures are already reducing working hours in agriculture and construction, among the highest heat-related projected losses in Latin America. Despite these vulnerabilities, Belize remains a net carbon sink: waste is the main emission source, followed by energy and transport. Its contribution to global emissions is minimal, but its exposure to their consequences is acute.

Lessons from NDC Iterations: Belize has steadily raised its climate ambition and improved the way plans are designed and delivered. **Rising mitigation ambition and clarity** by increasing emission-reduction targets to 2035 and reaffirming the 2050 net-zero goal, guided by its Long-Term Low-Emission Development Strategy—one of the few in the region. The NDC 3.0 adds clearer sectoral targets and integrates gender and inclusion across actions. They also included **broader engagement and partnerships** by making consultations more structured and inclusive, engaging over 150 stakeholders—including several EBMOs from key sectors. However, union representatives affirm they were not invited to participate in the NDC consultations. Belize's NDC iterations have demonstrated **stronger planning and implementation capacity** by linking targets to costs, responsibilities, and monitoring systems, improving coherence across policies and institutions, and showing readiness to turn ambition into action.

Policies and Frameworks Enabling the Just Transition: Belize is advancing multiple laws and policies that, though not always labelled “Just Transition”, enable it in practice. At the **legal level**, the Climate Change and Carbon Market Initiative Bill (2025) seeks to establish a Climate Change Council, a carbon-trading framework, and national monitoring systems—embedding climate governance and private-sector participation in law. The Fisheries Resources Act (2020) institutionalised the Managed Access Programme, balancing fishers’ livelihoods and conservation. The Coastal Zone Management Act guides sustainable use of coastal and marine assets, while the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) exemplifies a public-private model financing eco-tourism and conservation for nearly three decades.

Strategic **policies** complement these instruments. Plan Belize (2022–2026) defines national priorities across poverty reduction, economic transformation, and natural-resource protection, aligning with Just Transition principles. The Long-Term Low-Emissions Development Strategy (2021) maps sectoral mitigation pathways through 2050, linking emissions cuts with job creation. The National Landscape Restoration Strategy (2022–2030) promotes regenerative farming and incentives for producers adopting sustainable methods. The National Climate Finance Strategy (2021–2026) seeks to widen access to green finance and develop markets for carbon trading, blue and green bonds, and blended finance. The National Energy Policy (2023–2040) targets raising renewables from 35% to 75% of domestic electricity by 2030, cutting costs and emissions. The National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (2024) seeks to position the country as a leader in sustainable tourism. A dedicated Ministry for the Blue Economy underscores government recognition of ocean-based industries as central to sustainable growth.

Several **financial mechanisms** exist and are being strengthened: The Sustainable and Inclusive Belize Programme (2024) provides grants and technical assistance to MSMEs in agriculture and tourism. The Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future channels blue-bond savings to biodiversity, fisheries, and climate resilience projects. The Development Finance Corporation, now accredited by the Green Climate Fund, extends preferential loans for renewable energy, efficiency, and skills initiatives.

Roles and Actions of EBMOs: Belize stands out in the Caribbean for its active engagement of Employer and Business Membership Organisations (EBMOs) in climate planning. Several were formally consulted in the 2025 NDC, and their own initiatives illustrate how social partners can make transition goals practical. Some examples include: The Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) participates in national TVET policy discussions, supports renewable-energy training pilots, collaborates with the Development Finance Corporation (DFC) to improve MSME access to credit, and raises awareness through policy tracking and member sessions. The Belize Livestock Producers Association (BLPA) trains farmers in sustainable practices that enhance resilience and productivity, while the Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA) leads awareness campaigns and education projects on marine conservation.

Social Dialogue mechanisms: Private sector engagement and consultation in Belize occur through several channels. EBMOs participate in numerous sectoral committees—energy, tourism, transport, and coastal management. The Belize National Climate Change Committee (BNCCC) once served as the main climate coordination forum, and included business representation, but has been inactive; a planned revamp under the 2025 Climate Change Bill aims to formalise its role and broaden participation. Tripartite conversations on labour and climate issues are starting to take place in the Labour Advisory Board, the country’s main forum for labour relations, but not as an ongoing and explicit agenda item.

Challenges: Belize’s transition to a green economy faces interlinked economic and institutional constraints. Growth remains modest, fiscal resources are tight, and productivity gains are limited. Heavy dependence on imported fuel—also a key tax source—complicates the shift to renewables. A dedicated climate law is still pending. Many policy frameworks call for incentives, but implementation and financing remain inconsistent. Familiarity with the Just Transition and the NDCs is still limited among social partners, particularly unions and government staff. Women, youth, and indigenous groups face barriers to participation and training, and MSMEs often lack the skills and capital to invest in sustainable practices.

Opportunities: At the same time, Belize holds considerable opportunities. Institutional spaces for public-private cooperation already exist in areas of key climate action. The country's green and blue economy and sustainable-tourism focus open avenues for green job creation—estimated at up to 30,000 positions in the medium term—while renewable-energy and efficiency targets create new markets and cost-saving opportunities for local enterprise. Climate-finance strategies, such as the NDC Private Sector Investment Strategy (2025), aim to bridge funding gaps and integrate private actors into implementation. Ongoing programmes such as the Decent Work Country Programme also link employment, skills, and sustainability goals, offering a coherent framework for inclusive growth.

Practical Recommendations

- **Strengthen social dialogue and tripartite engagement.** Revitalise existing forums—the Economic Development Council, BNCCC, and Labour Advisory Board—and establish thematic working groups on the Just Transition. Seeking tripartite representation and embedding climate and labour issues across these spaces will ensure coherence and accountability.
- **Improve access to green finance.** Actions EBMOs can assist with are advocating for simplified procedures and expanding information awareness around the DFC, the Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future, and the Sustainable and Inclusive Belize Programme.
- **Advance enabling conditions for sustainable enterprises.** Accelerate regulatory and incentive reforms under the Climate Change Bill, National Energy Policy, Plan Belize, and others. For businesses, promote the adoption of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards and certification to improve market access.
- **Close skills and data gaps.** Map green-occupation needs, strengthen TVET alignment with priority sectors, and integrate gender and youth-responsive training. Develop labour-market data systems to monitor transition impacts.
- **Deepen NDC ownership by social partners.** Ensure that NDC 3.0 implementation explicitly reflects employment, a small-business lens, and Just Transition dimensions, with social partners contributing to monitoring and implementation. Seek direct company involvement in climate targets.

Table of Contents

► Executive summary	2
► Introduction	6
► Country and sectoral context.....	7
Economic context.....	7
Social and political context	8
Labour and human capital context	9
Environmental context	10
► Lessons from NDCs iterations	12
► Policies and frameworks in support of a Just Transition.....	16
► Role and actions of Employers’ Organisations	22
► Social dialogue mechanisms and the Employer’s organisation engagement on the Just Transition ...	25
► Current Just Transition Challenges and Opportunities in Belize.....	27
► Recommendations to support the Just Transition and NDC 3.0	33
► Conclusion	38
► References	39

► Introduction

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) underscores the urgency of advancing a Just Transition to promote social justice, decent work, poverty reduction, and effective climate action. In Belize, this imperative is both economic and environmental: the country's growth model—anchored in tourism and with potential for agri-industry and the blue economy—faces rising climate risks and competitiveness pressures, while also holding clear opportunities for cleaner production, skills upgrading, and enterprise resilience.

This **case study** is designed for the ITCILO training activity “Leading the Change: Workers, Employers, and Governments Driving Just Transition through Social Dialogue.” Its purpose is to enable peer learning among employer and worker representatives by sharing practical experiences, perspectives, and emerging good practices that can be adapted to national contexts. It is one of several country cases prepared to support this learning programme and is meant to stimulate structured dialogue and action planning among social partners.

Scope and approach. The case provides a concise situational analysis of the Just Transition in Belize. It briefly outlines the country's economic, labour, social, and environmental context; reviews lessons learned from successive NDC iterations (including NDC 3.0, 2025); and maps relevant policies, plans, and programmes that matter for enterprises and workers. It then identifies challenges and opportunities specific to Belize's production structure and climate exposure towards the Just Transition and NDC implementation.

The case also offers a deliberate **employers' perspective** as a way to organise an exchange of experiences and ideas. It showcases concrete initiatives that illustrate how EBMOs in Belize are informing policy debates, fostering capacity building (e.g., training and skills), facilitating access to finance, and piloting enterprise-level practices aligned with the transition—while also noting the limits and gaps that still constrain wider adoption. The case situates these efforts within existing and potential social dialogue spaces, enabling employers and workers to co-design pragmatic, sequenced pathways for change.

What this case offers.

- A **situational snapshot** of Belize's Just Transition context—economic and social structure, labour market, and climate risks.
- A **policy and instruments map** that highlights national strategies (e.g., climate, energy, tourism, blue economy) and connects them with enterprise realities such as compliance, investment incentives, skills development, and finance.
- **EBMOs' role** with actionable examples of services, partnerships, and advocacy that support businesses—especially MSMEs—in adopting sustainable and resilient practices.
- An **overview of existing and potential social dialogue and stakeholder engagement mechanisms** that can be leveraged to advance the Just Transition by the private sector.
- And a set of **practical recommendations**, strengthening social dialogue, specifying needed policies and support mechanisms, facilitating an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, providing specific observations on NDC 3.0, and guiding employers' organisations to expand services and operations to support the Just Transition and NDC implementation.

Ultimately, the aim is to help Belize's social partners turn high-level ambitions into doable steps—prioritising measures that raise productivity, strengthen resilience, and expand decent work while reducing emissions and environmental harm. The case is not exhaustive; rather, it is a starting point for social partners in the ITCILO course to compare experiences, identify quick wins, and chart common commitments that make the Just Transition real for enterprises and workers in Belize and the Caribbean.

► Country and sectoral context

The goal is a just transition toward a sustainable, green, low-carbon economy grounded in decent work. Advancing along this roadmap requires understanding each country's economic, social, labour, and environmental context. This section offers a concise, non-exhaustive overview of Belize's context.

Economic context

Belize is a small and open economy driven by the service sector. In 2023, the tertiary/services sector's contribution to GDP was 62.4%, followed by the secondary sector at 13.2% and the primary sector (mainly agriculture and livestock) at 9.1%. Tourism has long been a key driver of growth, contributing an estimated 21% of GDP in 2023.¹ Tourism expenditure surpassed pre-pandemic levels in 2023, while visitor numbers did by 2024.¹ Agriculture, representing 5.2% of GDP in 2023, remains critical, with sugar, bananas, and citrus concentrates as main exports.^{1,3} Financial and insurance services contributed 7.7% of GDP, reflecting the importance of offshore financial activities.^{1,2} Other sectors directly linked to a just transition include manufacturing (6.3% of GDP), construction (4.9%), electricity production (1.2%), and mining (1.0%). The public sector, including education and health, accounted for 13.2% of GDP in 2023.¹

Belize's economy is highly import-dependent, making it vulnerable to price and trade shocks. Belize is import-dependent, especially for fuel and manufactured goods, which increases its vulnerability to global price volatility and trade shocks.^{1,3} Energy imports represented 70.8% of total energy supply in 2023.⁵⁹ In terms of exports, service-oriented activities such as tourism and business process outsourcing represented the bulk of exports (~75%), with agricultural and marine products representing close to 18% of trade for 2023.³ Belize's main trade partners are the United States, the United Kingdom (especially for exports), China (largely for imports), CARICOM members, and Central American neighbours; many of these ties are covered by trade agreements such as CARICOM/CARIFORUM.^{1,3}

Belize's debt, though declining, remains high and continues to limit the fiscal space. Belize faces a moderate to high public debt burden, at 61% of GDP in 2024, with elevated interest payments on some external obligations that limit fiscal space for infrastructure, social programs, and climate adaptation.⁴ Nonetheless, debt levels have declined from a peak of 103.3% of GDP in 2020, and reducing the ratio to 50% by 2030 remains a recommended policy priority.⁴ The Belize debt conversion via a blue bond played a key role, with an estimated 12% of GDP reduction in the debt level.⁵⁷

Inflation has remained higher than pre-pandemic levels but shows signs of deceleration. In 2022, inflation reached 6.3% before falling to 3.3% in 2024, with projections for 2025 at 1.3%.^{1,4} Belize has maintained a fixed exchange rate of BZ\$2 per US\$1 since the 1970s. While this peg supports price stability, it also limits monetary policy autonomy, including the ability to set interest rates.¹

Belize experienced a strong recovery post-pandemic, but growth is decelerating and reverting to a low growth cycle. In 2024, the economy expanded by 8.1% in real terms, yet projections for 2025 and beyond point to growth of around 2%, reflecting capacity constraints—such as hotel and flight capacity in the tourism sector.⁴ Historically, Belize has grown more slowly than many peers, averaging just 2.1% annually between 2010 and 2019.⁴

Belize can leverage a Just Transition to overcome structural constraints and boost growth. The country has strong potential for green, low-carbon development, particularly in renewable energy (solar and

¹ For further information on these dynamics, refer to the IMF blog "Does the Exchange Rate Regime Matter for Inflation and Growth" <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/issues2/>.

biomass), sustainable agriculture and fisheries, and tourism that combines environmental stewardship with community benefits.^{6,7}

Social and political context

Belize is a small Central American state with strong Caribbean ties and the only country in the sub-region where English is the official language. It borders Mexico to the north, Guatemala to the west and south, and the Caribbean Sea to the east, participating in both CARICOM and the Central American Integration System (SICA). While English is the national official language, Spanish and Creole are also widely spoken by about half of the population.¹

Belize's population is diverse and young, but it is showing signs of slower growth. As of March 2025, it stood at about 441,000⁸ making it the least populous country in Central America but not in the Caribbean. The population is multi-ethnic, with Mestizos (51.7%), Creole (25.2%), Maya (9.8%), and Garifuna (4.0%) as the largest groups, it also has strong East Indian, Chinese, Western European, and Mennonite communities.¹ It is also relatively young: 26.5% are under 14 years old, 46.5% under 25, and only 5.4% are over 65.⁷ From 2011 to 2021, population growth averaged 2.0% annually, supported by a fertility rate of around 2.28 births per woman, though recent estimates place fertility below the replacement level of 2.1.¹ Settlement is concentrated in Belize District and Cayo, which together account for about 55% of the population.⁷

Belize has seen a decline in foreign-born residents, though migration patterns may shift. The 2022 Census shows that 87.8% of inhabitants were born in Belize, while 11.5% were foreign-born, mainly from neighbouring Central American countries and the United States.¹ This marks a drop from 15.5% in the 2010 Census.¹ As of 1 October 2025, Belize, together with Barbados, Dominica and St Vincent and the Grenadines, will be directly impacted by the full freedom of movement of nationals among these Caricom states.⁹ While Belize remains a net recipient of migrants, it also faces persistent emigration of highly skilled workers (the brain drain)—mostly to the United States—which remains an ongoing concern.

Belize is an upper-middle-income country, yet poverty and inequality remain notable. GDP per capita (2021 PPPⁱⁱ) reached \$13,278 in 2024 (\$8,430 in current USD), still below the Caribbean small states (\$33,843) and LAC (\$19,905) PPP averages but above Belize's pre-pandemic level of \$11,803 in 2019.¹⁰ Multidimensional poverty stood at 22.1% in 2024, down from 36.5% in 2021, while estimates using the national poverty line (\$7.35 BZD/day) are much higher, at 52.0% in 2018.¹ Poverty is more prevalent in rural areas and among the Maya population.¹ On the 2023 Human Development Index (HDI), Belize ranked 115 of 193 economies, reflecting gaps across health, education, and living standards.⁷²

The political landscape in Belize is dominated by the two major parties. The People's United Party (PUP; centre-left) and the United Democratic Party (UDP; centre-right) have been alternating in power through competitive elections for decades.

Civil liberties are broadly respected, but crime remains a pressing issue. The Heritage Foundation's 2025 Index of Economic Freedom classifies Belize as "moderately free" (64.2/100), with weak scores in property rights (35.1) and government integrity (44.4).¹¹ In 2023, Belize ranked in the 35.8th percentile for regulatory quality in the World Bank's governance indicators, and in 2024 it scored 3 out of 6 on the business regulatory environment.¹⁰ Violent crime levels continue to be a major concern.⁷

ⁱⁱ PPP: Purchasing Power Parity, an economic measure that adjusts GDP or income to reflect cost-of-living differences between countries.

Labour and human capital context

Belize's labour market exhibits low unemployment and underutilization, with participation rates lagging. In April 2025, unemployment was estimated at 2.1%, a sharp improvement from pre-pandemic double-digit levels. Labour force participation, however, declined from about 63–64% before the pandemic to 58–59% in 2024–2025, though it shows signs of an upward trend.¹ Labour underutilization—including unemployed, underemployed, and potential labour forceⁱⁱⁱ—also improved, falling from 13.6% in 2023 to 5.0% in April 2025.¹

There are notable demographic and spatial disparities in labour force participation. Women's outcomes are weaker, with a participation rate of 46.9% in April 2025 compared to 72.3% for men; domestic duties and family care are the most common reasons cited for not working.¹ Other indicators, such as unemployment and underemployment, also favour men, though the differences are less pronounced given the overall low levels. Youth (ages 14–24) remain a pressure point, with a participation rate of 42.1% and a NEET rate of 30.2% in 2021, equivalent to about 25,000 young people.^{1,7} Participation is also lower in rural than in urban areas and particularly low among the Maya (50.4% overall; 33.9% for Maya women in 2021).¹

Employment in Belize is highly clustered by occupation and sector. As of April 2025, nearly half of all jobs were in Services & Sales (27.6%) and Elementary Occupations (21.4%), which include domestic work, street vending, crop farming, and construction labour. By sector, employment was concentrated in Wholesale & Retail Trade (16.9%), Tourism (13.5%), Community, Social & Personal Services (13.3%), and Agriculture & Related Activities (10.8%). Most workers are employees (68.4%), followed by the self-employed (28.1%) and contributing family workers (3.4%).¹

Informality remains sizable and concentrated. As of April 2025, 37.5% of total employment was informal, with retail and agriculture together accounting for 37.6% of these jobs. Most informal workers are self-employed (58.5%), while 32.3% are employees.¹ On average, informal workers logged 32 hours per week and earned about BZ\$839 per month—roughly 60% of the mean earnings in the formal sector.⁷

Market dynamics play a larger role in wage setting than the minimum wage or collective bargaining. The national minimum wage is BZ\$5.00 (US\$2.50) per hour—about BZ\$800 (US\$400) monthly—with plans to raise it to BZ\$6.00 (US\$3.00). In 2022, an estimated 26,613 workers (≈13% of the labour force) earned the minimum wage or less.¹² Unionisation remains modest: the National Trade Union Congress of Belize (NTUCB) has 12 affiliates and represented just over 7,000 workers in 2023. Collective bargaining is largely at the enterprise level, concentrated in the public sector and a few regulated industries. Employers report that most wage settings are shaped by direct negotiations and market benchmarks, with the minimum wage playing a limited role and collective bargaining even less.¹³

Belize's firm composition is dominated by small companies. More than 90% of firms are MSMEs (about 70% micro), accounting for nearly half of national employment.⁷⁷ These firms are key actors, especially in tourism and agri-food. Men and women are equally represented in MSME ownership, but women represent the majority of micro-enterprise owners (55.2%).^{7,77}

Life-cycle social protection is present, but coverage gaps remain notable. Benefits such as maternity, sickness, pensions, and employment injury are provided through a mix of contributory and non-contributory schemes, with the Social Security Board (SSB) administering more than 95% of beneficiaries. Except for the National Health Insurance (NHI), SSB programs are financed by employer and employee contributions, which average around 10% of earnings, with the split varying by wage band. Self-employed workers contribute 3.2% of average insurable earnings.⁷ Despite this system, coverage remains limited: in 2021, only 32% of the population had access to at least one benefit; work-injury protection reached 57.7% of the labour

ⁱⁱⁱ Potential labour force: working-age people outside the labour force who still show attachment—either seeking work but not currently available, or available to work but not actively seeking. Time-related underemployment: employed persons working fewer hours than they want and available to increase their hours.

force; and just 37.5% of people above retirement age received a pension. Women's coverage was even lower, at 23.9%. Belize does not yet have unemployment insurance, though work on its design is underway.⁷

Labour productivity in Belize has barely improved over the past decade, leaving the country behind its peers. Growth has been mostly near zero or negative, with only modest gains in recent years, keeping overall levels close to those of ten years ago. By comparison, CARICOM and wider Caribbean averages are now slightly above their levels of a decade ago, while other upper-middle-income countries have seen steady increases—placing Belize among the region's weaker performers.⁷

Belize's education system includes K-12, junior college, university, vocational training, and continuing education. However, enrolment declines sharply with age: in the 2023/2024 academic year, enrolment was 91.7% in primary (ages 5–12), 67.8% in secondary (ages 13–16), and just 25.5% in tertiary (ages 17–21). Vocational and continuing education each enrol around 800 students per year.¹

Environmental context

Belize offers rich biodiversity shaped by its tropical climate, Caribbean coastline, and varied topography. The country has a rainy season (June–November) and a dry season (December–May), with rainfall heavier in the southern mountains than in the north, creating diverse hydrological and ecological systems. Despite its small size, Belize hosts exceptional biodiversity, including the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef (the world's second largest), extensive mangrove forests, tropical rainforests, wetlands, and upland ecosystems.^{7,8}

Belize is highly vulnerable to intensifying climate risks. These include sea-level rise, more erratic weather, stronger storms, flooding, droughts, extreme heat, wildfires, and marine stressors such as warmer seas, ocean acidification, and coral bleaching—all threatening ecosystems vital to tourism, agriculture, fisheries, and coastal protection.^{7,8,18} Weather-related losses are estimated at 3–4% of GDP annually.^{iv} Economic activity and population are heavily concentrated in low-lying coastal areas, further increasing exposure to hurricanes, storm surges, and flooding.^{7,18} These dynamics translate into several main and rising risks for the country:

- **Hurricanes:** Hurricane Lisa in November 2022 caused about US\$65.5 million in physical damage and US\$31.4 million in losses, adding up to roughly US\$96.9 million. Recovery needs were estimated at about US\$106.2 million. Around 172,000 people were affected, about 500 houses were destroyed, around 5,000 were damaged, and about 5,000 people had to use shelters. This shows how a single storm can strain services and households across the entire country.^{81,82}
- **Rising sea levels:** Coastal flooding is becoming more common as coral reefs lose their ability to protect the shoreline. Belize's low, muddy coastline, where most urban centres, the main port, and the airport are located, is among the most exposed in the Caribbean. As the fringing and barrier reefs continue to degrade, reducing their capacity to absorb up to about 97% of wave energy, stronger waves reach the shore, and flooding over high-value areas becomes more frequent and severe.^{81,83}
- **Sargassum:** Sargassum has become a regular and costly challenge for coastal communities. In August–September 2025, the Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future provided about US\$125,000 for emergency beach clean-ups. During heavy landings, the San Pedro local government reported spending around US\$22,500 per week on labour and equipment. This confirms that managing sargassum is now a recurring budget item for tourism businesses and local authorities.^{84,85}

Labour and social dimensions in Belize are increasingly affected by environmental change. Extreme heat poses growing occupational safety and health risks, especially in agriculture, construction, and outdoor tourism. The ILO estimates working-hour losses will rise from 1.63% in 1995 to 2.45% by 2030 in Belize—

^{iv} Germanwatch's 2017 Climate Risk Index estimates annual losses due to climate-related events at US\$57 million, equivalent to 2.87 per cent of GDP, for the period 1996 – 2015. Kreft, Sonke, David Eckstein, and Inga Melchior, *Global Climate Risk Index 2017*. The World Bank estimated average annual losses due to hydro-meteorological disasters of US\$71 million (approximately 4 per cent of GDP) for the period 1994 – 2013. Carneiro, Francisco, *Belize: Right Choices Bright Future: Systematic Country Diagnostic*, 2016.

among the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean.⁷ Climate and environmental shocks also have uneven social impacts: women, indigenous peoples, migrants, and persons with disabilities face greater exposure and fewer buffers against disruption. Hurricanes, heatwaves, floods, and droughts disproportionately affect their jobs and incomes, raising risks of economic instability and displacement.⁷ Indigenous communities are particularly vulnerable, as their livelihoods depend heavily on natural resources that are increasingly threatened by land degradation and shifting weather patterns.⁷

Belize remains a low emitter and a net carbon sink. In 2022, the main emitting sectors were Waste (55%), Energy (26%)^ν, Agriculture (12%), and Industrial Processes & Product Use (7%), excluding international bunkers.⁷⁴ The AFOLU sector, which includes mangrove forests, remains a net carbon sink, absorbing more emissions than it produces.^{8,74} Belize has 103 protected areas—national parks, wildlife and bird sanctuaries, and mangrove and marine reserves—covering 37.3% of its land area and 20.4% of its marine area.²⁰

^ν Transport is 18%, Energy Industries 2%, and Residential/others 6%.

► Lessons from NDCs iterations^{vi}

Belize has maintained a longstanding environmental ambition. It ratified the Paris Agreement in 2016 and is a member of the High Ambition Coalition, which advocates for the Agreement's most ambitious provisions and commits to global net-zero emissions. The country has also advanced a range of policies and plans to achieve its climate goals (described in the section on Policies and Frameworks).

Belize launched its intended **Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)** in 2015, followed by NDC 1.0 in 2016. NDCs are each country's climate action plan under the Paris Agreement, outlining commitments to cut emissions and to mitigate and adapt to climate impacts. They are expected to be updated every five years to reflect rising ambition, a timeline Belize has followed—releasing NDC 2.0 in 2021 and NDC 3.0 in 2025.

Belize submitted an updated NDC in June 2025, one of the first in the Caribbean and Central America. Other submissions from the subregion as of October 2025, in order of submission, include Saint Lucia, Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and the Bahamas.³³

Over a decade of NDC work, Belize's successive submissions have introduced several changes. This section highlights these shifts as lessons for social partners.

Mitigation ambition beyond its borders

For NDC 3.0, Belize **raised its target** for avoided cumulative greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from 5,647 kTonCO₂e under NDC 2.0 to 6,234 kTonCO₂e by 2035, over a comparable 10-year period.⁸ The updated target expanded ambition across the electricity, transport, waste, and AFOLU sectors.⁸ Similarly, NDC 2.0 had already increased ambition compared to NDC 1.0, though data improvements between iterations make direct comparisons difficult. One notable action from 1.0 to 2.0 was a 63% increase in projected GHG removals from the Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sector.²⁹

While Belize remains a **net carbon sink** (absorbing more emissions than it produces), it has sustained strong ambition in mitigation and reduction efforts. In 2019, it was among fifteen nations to first pledge **net-zero global emissions by 2050**.³⁰ By 2021, NDC 2.0 formally adopted the net-zero by 2050 goal, accompanied by the launch of the Low-Emission Development Strategy (LEDS), which sets the long-term pathway. Belize was the first nation in the Caribbean to launch a LEDS.⁵¹ Belize has since continued raising its GHG removal targets, underscoring its commitment to curbing global emissions.

In terms of **sector prioritisation**, Belize's NDCs have remained consistent and ambitious in scope. NDC 3.0 sets mitigation targets for Electricity, Transport, and Waste, and adaptation targets for Coastal Zones and Marine Environments, Fisheries, Aquaculture, Tourism, Biodiversity, Human Health, Human Settlements and Infrastructure, and Water Resources. The AFOLU sector is treated as cross-cutting, since it includes activities to be mitigated (e.g., agriculture, land use) while also serving as the country's net carbon sink. In total, NDC 3.0 covers 12 sectors.⁸ Compared to earlier iterations, the sectoral scope has not changed, though groupings and stand-alone status have varied—for example, AFOLU components sometimes appeared under Forestry and Biodiversity or as separate sectors such as Agriculture. A clear sign of increased ambition is the rise in the number of targets, from 16 in NDC 2.0 to 22 in NDC 3.0.^{vii}

A key addition in NDC 3.0 is a dedicated section emphasising **gender and vulnerable populations**. This section aligns closely with Just Transition principles and outlines cross-cutting, mitigation, and adaptation actions such as gender-disaggregated data, inclusive consultation and participation, targeted projects and capacity building, and policy alignment. NDC 2.0 included a more aspirational subsection titled "Promoting

^{vi} The lessons learned are based on consultation of the NDCs, interview with BCCI, and review of sources such as the NDC Partnership, the Biennial Update Report 2021, the 4th National Communication, Belize National Assessment, and other in-section cited sources.

^{vii} Based on authors' tally and can differ from other reports. Nevertheless, an increase among targets between NDCs is evident.

a Just Transition.” In contrast, NDC 3.0 integrates these principles more concretely, with clearer connections to Just Transition across its actions, even if the section's wording is no longer explicitly Just Transition.

Ample engagement and partnerships

Engagement and partnerships have strengthened as Belize has advanced through its NDCs. For NDC 3.0, the consultation process was more structured, with activities disclosed in the document itself. A total of 155 entities were engaged through structured dialogues, bilateral meetings, and thematic workshops held both in person and online. Stakeholders included government agencies, the private sector, civil society, academia, coastal communities, indigenous groups, and women’s organisations.⁸ From the private sector, companies in energy, AFOLU, and transport, as well as EBMOs representing AFOLU, tourism, and broader business interests, participated at various stages. Public-private bodies such as the Economic Development Council and the Tourism Board were also consulted.⁸ By contrast, NDC 2.0 noted local community engagement but did not disclose who was involved or how. Greater transparency and inclusivity are essential to identify gaps, such as the absence of trade unions among consulted partners in NDC 3.0, which underscores the need for stronger tripartite participation in Belize’s NDC process.

EBMO insights

- According to consulted EBMOs, the NDC process has become more organised and inclusive but still faces engagement challenges. They noted that the length of some workshops—lasting full days or multiple days—made participation difficult. In addition, the format of engagement often felt more unidirectional and informative than genuinely collaborative, particularly in online sessions.¹⁴

Belize has also worked to build partnerships that strengthen NDC technical and implementation capacity. Since joining the NDC Partnership^{viii} in 2018, it has received support in areas such as developing its Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) system, preparing an implementation plan for NDC 2.0, designing financing strategies, conducting vulnerability assessments for coastal communities and districts, and advancing Sectoral Adaptation Plans, policy frameworks, and assessments.³⁴

In 2025, Belize launched a dedicated NDC Private Sector Investment Strategy with support from UNEP and the NDC Partnership.³⁵ The strategy seeks to deepen domestic and international private sector involvement and reduce the NDC finance gap by 16%. Belizean institutions—including the Development Finance Corporation and the Protected Areas Conservation Trust—have also been accredited under the UNFCCC’s Adaptation Fund and Green Climate Fund.^{18,32} This accreditation enables them to apply directly for climate funds and perform fiduciary functions such as grant management.

Belize has also engaged with a wide range of partners—including the European Union, UNDP, IDB, FAO, World Bank, and international climate-focused NGOs such as WRI and WWF. These collaborations have provided funding and technical support to design policies, plans, and actions that directly advance its NDC targets for 2030 and 2035.

Furthermore, several of the policies and plans that support NDC implementation have been developed or consulted with private actors. This aspect is further developed in the Role and Actions of Employer’s Organisations section.

^{viii} The NDC Partnership (launched at COP22, 2016) helps countries implement their NDCs by coordinating technical and financial support across governments, international organisations, and other stakeholders.

Reinforcing actions via planning and implementation capacity

Belize's rising ambition depends on strong planning and implementation capacity, which it has reinforced through the partnerships noted above. Two aspects stand out:

- Clarity accompanying ambition: NDC 1.0 was largely aspirational, with few concrete targets or outcomes. Beginning with NDC 2.0, Belize significantly improved clarity by detailing planned actions, estimating costs and funding gaps, and publishing an [implementation plan](#) that lists NDC targets and actions along with their status and responsible parties.
- Policy coherence and coordination: Belize has established a wide range of policies and plans that support NDC implementation. Across its NDC iterations and changes in government, it has maintained coherence in key frameworks such as the Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy, the Medium-Term Development Strategy and Horizon 2030, the National Climate Change Policy 2015–2020 and 2021–2025, as well as multiple sectoral policies and plans (further detailed in the next section). While priorities shift to reflect political and policy objectives, efforts to align these frameworks with NDC goals have remained consistent. Furthermore, NDC 3.0 builds on the targets and commitments of NDC 2.0, while expanding ambition and clarity toward 2035.⁸ Since 2015, Belize has also operated a Climate Change Office to coordinate national and international responses to climate change.

Belize is also implementing a **Loss and Damage Framework**, a key instrument to estimate climate-related losses, identify priority sectors, and establish reparative and preventive measures such as insurance and risk management. NDC 3.0 already includes a section outlining preliminary interventions across multiple sectors.⁸ This perspective is essential for a Just Transition, as it acknowledges that even with strong mitigation and adaptation efforts, losses and damages will still occur.

Table 1 presents targets and actions from Belize's NDC 3.0 that can inspire and guide private sector engagement in their Just Transition journey.

► **Table 1. Relevant targets and actions from Belize NDC 3.0 towards a Just Transition**

Targets and actions	Just Transition relevance
Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)	Focus on vulnerable groups is central to a Just Transition. NDC 3.0 includes this lens in specific mitigation/adaptation measures and as a cross-cutting action. Business-relevant examples: support women-led innovation; expand GEDSI groups' access to climate finance; targeted incentives for renewables/EVs; at least 30% of capacity building in renewables/efficiency to include women, youth, and indigenous-owned businesses; identify job segregation in recycling; ensure GEDSI consultation in sectoral policies.
Loss and Damage	A Loss and Damage Framework helps identify, quantify, prevent, and provide reparations. Proposed measures include crop insurance, integrated early warning systems, community-based capacity building (e.g., fire response), coastal buffer zones, post-storm repair systems, sectoral disaster relief planning, retrofitting infrastructure, and tailored financial instruments.
Electricity	Targets include: renewable energy 75% by 2030 and 80% by 2035 of domestic electricity mix generation; distribution losses capped at 10% by 2030. These measures can expand business access to renewables and lower electricity costs. Other business-relevant actions: financial schemes and support for rooftop solar PV in public/commercial/ residential buildings and energy-efficiency; expand solar water heating; enforce energy efficiency standards by 2026; provide business capacity building.
Transport	Target include: cut emissions, boost energy-efficient transport, and raise EV sales to 5% of total vehicles by 2030 and 10% by 2035. Other business-relevant actions: create incentive schemes and expand public transport in tourism areas.
Waste	Relevant actions: raise recycling share by 5% by 2030 and 10% by 2035; expand waste management coverage; adopt a circular economy legal framework; assess waste-to-energy options; national awareness campaigns.

AFOLU	Relevant actions: boost climate-smart/sustainable agriculture (CSSA) penetration (e.g., irrigation, solar, water retention) by 25% by 2035; promote sustainable practices and nature-based solutions; reduce deforestation; conduct crop vulnerability assessments; expand sustainable forest management on private lands; skills/training in CSSA and agro-silvopastoral practices.
Coastal Zones and Marine Environments	Relevant actions: implement the revised Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan and the Sustainable Ocean Plan; develop plan for seagrass adaptation.
Fisheries	Relevant actions: Develop sustainable fisheries management plan; build fisheries sector capacities on sustainable practices; enable transition into sustainable non-fishing income streams; and increase enforcement.
Aquaculture	Relevant actions: develop Aquaculture and Mariculture Management Plan with investment priorities and sector capacity building; evaluate creation of economic recovery financial instruments
Tourism	Goals: strengthen sector resilience and adaptation. Actions: conduct vulnerability assessments in key tourism areas; integrate private sector participation in coastal management; establish remediation plans for environmental impacts; build capacity of tourism businesses; promote sustainable practices and standards; disaster preparedness for private sector.
Human Settlements and Infrastructure	Relevant actions: Develop a Land Use Policy; examine opportunities for grey, green and blue infrastructure constructions.

Sources: Based on authors' interpretation of NDC 3.0. Presented actions are not exhaustive.

► Policies and frameworks in support of a Just Transition

A just transition requires robust policies that transform economic models while ensuring inclusivity, decent work, and economic sustainability.

Belize has identified priority sectors for transformation in its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to meet mitigation and adaptation goals. It is advancing laws and policies that, while not explicitly referencing the Just Transition, embed necessary actions—linking climate targets with inclusive, decent, and economically sustainable changes in production and business practices. This section outlines the main legal and policy frameworks that can support the Just Transition.

Table 2, at the end of the section, shows examples of how specific laws, regulations, and policies are relevant to businesses and their just transition.

Note: The policies, regulations, and public initiatives cited here are not exhaustive; they are included for their close relevance to the Just Transition and the NDCs.

Laws and norms

The Belize Constitution of 1981 states that “the people of Belize require policies of state which... protect the environment.” However, it does not explicitly recognise the “right to a healthy environment,” a right enshrined in the constitutions of more than 110 countries.¹⁷ In 2022, a People’s Constitution Commission was established to conduct a constitutional review. During consultations, some NGOs and citizens proposed including this right.¹⁷ The Commission’s final report is still pending, but adopting such a provision would elevate environmental concerns to the constitutional level and create a stronger link with the Just Transition.

To achieve a just transition to a low-carbon economy and meet NDC goals, strong environmental protection laws are essential. These laws also directly shape how businesses operate and adopt transition practices. In Belize, the **Environmental Protection Act (EPA)** of 1992 is the core legal framework for environmental management. It has been amended several times to expand and update its scope, and has paved the way for specialised regulations. The EPA established the Department of the Environment (DOE) and empowered it to oversee natural resources and pollution, prevent and control contamination, require impact assessments for major projects, regulate waste discharges, promote research and standards, inform the public, and align government and NGO activities with sustainable development.

For businesses, the DOE issues permits, monitors compliance, and can impose conditions, suspensions, or sanctions for violations. Key regulations under the DOE with direct relevance for businesses include:

- **Effluent Limitation Regulations:** monitor, control, and license industrial and domestic effluent discharges to protect inland and marine waters.
- **Pollution Regulations:** monitor and control air, noise, water, and land pollution, with mechanisms for permits, cleanup and abatement, audits, and sanctions. The regulation also calls for a voluntary audit program and environmental incentives such as certifications and refund systems for certain materials.
- **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations:** guide and standardise the EIA process, including project screening and categorisation, minimum report contents, compliance plans, appeals, and fees.
- Belize has several **waste regulations:** The *Hazardous Waste Regulation* controls storage, transport, treatment, and prohibition of hazardous waste. The *Returnable Containers Act* mandates collection and payment for certain beverage containers, though without specifying treatment. The *Custom Regulation – Prohibited and Restricted Goods* allow the trade of certain materials, such as lead-acid batteries and

scrap metal. And the 2020 *Pollution from Plastics Regulation*, which restricts import, manufacture, sale, and possession of single-use plastics and Styrofoam.

Furthermore, Belize has several Acts protecting key sectors such as Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use (AFOLU) and the Marine/Coastal sectors, crucial for the green and blue economies. AFOLU is vital for maintaining Belize's status as a net carbon sink, while both sectors provide natural resources that underpin major economic activities, including tourism, agriculture, and fisheries. These Acts influence business access and operations while promoting sustainable practices. They also protect biodiversity and communities, supporting a Just Transition that includes all groups. Some of these acts are:

- The **Wildlife Protection Act**, which safeguards land and sea animals, preserving biodiversity.
- The **National Parks System Act** establishes and manages Belize's 103 protected areas,¹⁶ promoting their conservation and sustainable use. It directly affects activities such as eco-tourism. The Act also recognises Private Protected Areas (PPAs)—protected zones on private land where owners must follow public conservation guidelines. PPA owners could be made to qualify for tax allowances and other fiscal incentives, and can also face fines for non-compliance.
- The **Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) Act of 1996** created a pioneering mechanism to manage Belize's protected areas through a public-private governance model and sustainable financing (revenue streams, public and private funding). For nearly 30 years, PACT has provided grants and investments to strengthen community resilience and adaptation, build conservation capacity, and support sustainable tourism. It is also accredited as a national implementing entity to the UNFCCC Adaptation Fund and the Green Climate Fund, and has acted as fiduciary for other international agencies and funds.¹⁸
- The **Forest Act** regulates the use and management of Belize's forests, including logging, forest protection, and sustainable forestry. Complementary regulations cover mangrove protection and private forest conservation.
- The **Fisheries Resource Act** approved in 2020 provides legal safeguards and guidelines for marine protected areas and support for the Belize's *Managed Access Programme* for fishers. In 2016, Belize became a Central American pioneer with this programme, which replaced open-access fishing with designated managed areas assigned to licensed fishers.²¹
- The **Coastal Zone Management Act** established the Coastal Zone Management Authority & Institute (CZMAI) and mandated the creation of a national Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Plan to guide sustainable coastal use amid development pressures. The ICZM Plan, finalised and ratified in 2016, now directs coastal planning and is currently being updated.⁸

The **Climate Change and Carbon Market Initiative Bill**, introduced in 2025, marks Belize's first comprehensive legal framework to manage climate action and carbon trading. The Bill establishes the Belize National Climate Change Council and a dedicated Climate Change Department to coordinate efforts in mitigation, adaptation, and transparency in line with the Paris Agreement. Currently, a Climate Change Office exists, and the Climate Change Committee was active in the past. The law also aims to create a national carbon market to regulate the approval, registration, and trading of carbon credits. It also provides for a National MRV and Registry System to track greenhouse gas emissions and carbon projects. The Bill represents a major step toward embedding climate governance, accountability, and private-sector participation within the country's Just Transition framework. Specifically, private actors will be able to develop, register, and trade carbon reduction or removal projects, giving them access to international carbon markets.⁷⁵

Policies, plans and frameworks

In the past two decades, Belize has advanced a range of policies, plans, and frameworks to address climate risks and support its transition.

The **Medium-Term Development Strategy 2022-2026 (Plan Belize)** serves as the main roadmap for policy implementation, outlining six objectives and 271 actions/projects: 1) poverty reduction (31 actions), 2) economic transformation (102), 3) trade deficit reduction (35), 4) citizen security (20), 5) protection of the environment and natural resources (60), and 6) anti-corruption and good governance (23).²² The strategy envisions a more “inclusive and sustainable country.” Many of its objectives align with Just Transition priorities and can foster an enabling business environment through its actions that promote workforce development, digital transformation, support for vulnerable groups, rural transformation, reduced administrative burdens, development of new industries and the blue economy, natural conservation, and climate-tech adaptation.

This medium-term strategy is presented as a continuation of the **Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy 2016–2019**.⁸ This earlier strategy aimed to ensure a “better quality of life for all Belizeans, living now and in the future,” with a focus on linking policies and actions across the economic, social, and environmental spheres. It introduced the Belize Framework for Sustainable Development, built on four critical success factors: 1) optimal national income and investment, 2) social cohesion and resilience, 3) natural, environmental, historical, and cultural assets, and 4) governance and citizen security.

The **National Climate Change Policy, Strategy and Master Plan 2021–2025** updates the previous 2015–2020 framework and serves as Belize’s overarching guide for climate action. It prioritises adaptation and mitigation across 14 sectors aligned with the NDC—such as forestry, energy, water, agriculture, fisheries/aquaculture, tourism, and transportation—with the aim of strengthening national capacity to reduce GHG emissions and adapt inclusively to climate risks. Both the current and earlier policies emphasise updating sectoral frameworks to enhance adaptation and mitigation, and pursuing climate goals through defined strategies and actions. Unlike the broader development strategy, this plan focuses exclusively on climate change and serves as a direct roadmap to achieve NDC objectives. Belize also has a National Climate Change Office, established in 2015, tasked with communication and coordination among diverse stakeholders, including the private sector.²³

Horizon 2030 – National Development Framework for Belize (2010–2030) was the country’s first long-term development framework, built around two pillars and seven thematic areas, including lifelong learning, a resilient economy, focus on key sectors, and environmental protection. It was developed through extensive consultations with citizens and diverse stakeholders. In practice, however, it has been superseded by more recent development strategies.¹⁴

Belize Long-Term Low-Emissions Development Strategy (LT-LEDS), launched in 2021, outlines mitigation potential through 2050 across sectors and scenarios, with projected reductions of 45% to 86% from a business-as-usual path. It identifies which sectors are expected to cut emissions, how these reductions can be achieved, and where opportunities for job creation may arise. Belize was the first country in the Caribbean to submit an LT-LEDS.⁵¹

The **National Landscape Restoration Strategy for Belize (2022–2030)** directly supports the Just Transition and strengthens the AFOLU sector. Its nine strategic objectives include relevant actions: a) prioritising the livelihoods and well-being of communities, indigenous peoples, and organised producers; b) making sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices the norm across all districts; and c) engaging the private sector in restoration efforts. These actions align with transition goals while acknowledging the need to support livelihoods tied to current practices. The strategy also seeks to introduce rewards, incentives, and recognition mechanisms for farmers and industries that adopt restorative practices.

The **National Climate Finance Strategy of Belize (2021–2026)** sets out a framework built on 12 interlinked strategic directions. It is central both to ensuring a Just Transition and to achieving NDC goals. Key actions include creating an overarching inclusion framework, expanding partnerships and private sector involvement, launching a national portal for climate finance opportunities, strengthening proposal writing and financial management capacities, matching project ideas with funding sources, developing climate

investment markets (carbon trading, blended finance, blue/green bonds), and identifying and mitigating financial risks. Ensuring finance is accessible across groups and enterprises is a cornerstone for advancing the Just Transition.

In addition to these overarching policies and strategies, Belize counts with several **sectoral policies** and plans that are relevant to a Just Transition:

- **The Belize National Energy Policy 2023-2040** sets the country's long-term energy strategy with objectives to reduce energy costs, expand indigenous energy sources, diversify the supply mix, improve sector governance, increase access to energy information, and strengthen NDC contributions. If implemented, these measures can directly lower business energy costs and expand access to renewables. The policy specifically targets raising renewable energy penetration from about 35% today to 75% and reducing the energy bill by 15%.⁶⁰
- The **Comprehensive National Transportation Master Plan** launched in 2018 provides a roadmap to redesign the transport network for greater efficiency and lower climate impact, outlining policy objectives, infrastructure investments, and private sector collaboration. The NDC highlights the need to update the plan to address e-mobility, formalise incentive schemes, improve infrastructure planning, and define an implementation roadmap.⁸ With EU and UNDP support, the government has also launched an e-bus pilot in Belize City, now operating four electric buses.²⁸
- The **National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan**, first launched in 2011 and updated in 2024, sets strategies and measurable objectives for sustainable tourism in Belize. Its goals include positioning the country as a global leader in sustainable tourism and maximising socio-economic benefits.²⁵ As tourism is Belize's main industry, shifting to a sustainable model is essential for a just transition. The plan is detailed, with actions divided across six sub-national areas.
- The **National MSME Strategy and Roadmap for Belize** is a living strategy that seeks to improve the entrepreneurial and MSME ecosystem. It identifies challenges and opportunities, and lists priorities and actions to be undertaken in support of MSMEs.⁷⁷ The MSME Strategy is part of the **Belize Investment & Business Climate Action Plan (BIBCAP)**, which seeks to promote effective investment and business climate via an investment, MSME, and export-aligned policy.⁷⁸ Relevant actions to a low-carbon transition that are pursued by these instruments include: revise and develop fiscal incentives for green investment, stimulate and support green entrepreneurship (e.g., green certification framework, training on green production processes, identify products where MSMEs may have a competitive advantage), advance green economy initiatives (e.g., renewable penetration, circular economy strategy, and revising environmental impact requirements.⁷⁸ The Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) directly participates in the strategy and is an "action owner" of activities such as developing mentoring programs, providing training, and developing recognition awards.⁷⁸
- Belize has been active in developing **Sectoral National Adaptation Plans (NAP)**. NAPs are crucial to translate NDC objectives into sector-level action. Belize has developed NAPs for Water (2009) and Agriculture (2015), both of which are now in need of updates. Current efforts include a Coastal Zone & Integrated Fisheries NAP, an Integrated Water Resources Management NAP, and a multisectoral NAP covering land use, human settlements and infrastructure, tourism, human health, agriculture, and forestry.⁸
- Belize has a dedicated **Ministry for the Blue Economy**, underscoring the sector's national priority. Similar ministerial entities exist in a few other Caribbean countries, including Barbados and Antigua and Barbuda. In 2022, a first **Blue Economy Development Policy, Strategy, and Implementation Plan (2022-2027)** was launched with policy priorities in governance and institutional frameworks, economic incentives for blue growth, capacity building, education and research, and resource mobilisation and financing mechanisms.⁷⁹
- Other relevant policies and plans exist, such as the **National Agroforestry Policy**, the **Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan**, which is currently being updated, the **National Biodiversity**

Strategy and Action Plan, the **Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan**, or are being developed, such as the **National Seagrass Management Policy**, **Loss and Damage Framework**, and a **TVET Policy**, which has a green skills focus.^{8,14}

Support programs for businesses

Several Belizean laws and policies call for the development of incentives to advance their objectives (e.g., Pollution Regulations, National Landscape Restoration Strategy, Transport Master Plan), but these are not always implemented. Even so, there are initiatives and support programs available to help businesses advance their Just Transition.

- The **Sustainable and Inclusive Belize Program** launched in 2024 with IDB support. This program provides grants and technical assistance to agriculture and tourism MSMEs to enhance sustainability, resilience, and growth. It applies an inclusive lens for women, youth, and indigenous-led businesses. To drive co-ownership, it requires a 15–20% beneficiary contribution (cash or in-kind). Grants range from BZ\$14,000–30,000 for tourism and BZ\$4,000–150,000 for agriculture. Eligible projects include solar panels, waste management, agro-tourism, crop sustainability, agroforestry, drip irrigation, and soil conservation.²⁶
- The **Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future** is an initiative derived from the Belize Blue Bonds for Ocean Conservation, it finances projects in four areas—biodiversity protection, sustainable fisheries, climate resilience, and blue business innovation. Private businesses can apply, but are generally required to provide 1:1 co-financing, in cash and/or in-kind.
- The **Development Finance Corporation (DFC)** is a state-owned development bank with an MSME focus. It offers loans for projects in alternative energy, energy efficiency, agriculture, blue economy, recycling, and skills/education—often at reduced interest rates.^{31,14,32} In 2025, the DFC was accredited by the Green Climate Fund, expanding access to climate finance funds.³²
- The **Designated Processing Areas (DPA) Programme** targets export-oriented companies that commit to job creation, standards, and investment. Eligible sectors include agro-processing, manufacturing, data processing, and aquaculture. Benefits last up to 10 years and include import duty and tax exemptions, streamlined processes and licenses, and work-permit allowances.² While not directly tied to the Just Transition, the Act that created the program lists stimulation of sustainable economic development as an objective.

► **Table 2: Relevance of highlighted regulations for businesses in their Just Transition**

Law / Policies / Programs	Business relevance
Environmental Protection Act (EPA)	Established the Department of the Environment as an entity that businesses have to interact with for different licensing, permits, and compliance.
Pollution Regulations	Permits are required for pollution above prescribed standards and conditions. Businesses can face audits and penalties. Implementing stated incentive programs, such as certification schemes and refund systems, can support the transition.
Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (EIA)	A crucial regulation for the approval of large-scale development, including infrastructure, tourism, and industrial operations. It guides businesses to assess and mitigate environmental impact.
Waste regulations	This directly affects how businesses dispose of certain waste and the recovery of containers in the beverage industry. The single-use plastic ban effective in 2022 had a direct impact on businesses and citizens.
Acts to safeguard and sustainably develop the AFOLU and Marine (Blue Economy) sectors	Several of these regulations have direct incidence on how economic activities are conducted (e.g., logging, agriculture, fishing). Some have brought sustainable models such as the Managed Access Program for fishers and the PACT, which focus on sustainable eco-tourism.

Medium-Term Development Strategy 2022-2026	As the guiding roadmap for Belize's policy objectives, it provides a detailed view of proposed actions that can shape businesses' just transition journey. It also provides key opportunities for monitoring and accountability by social partners.
National Climate Change Policy, Strategy and Master Plan 2021-2025	Together with the National Climate Change Office, this guiding climate change policy opens opportunities for public-private collaboration and reveals policy objectives that can open opportunities and challenges for businesses.
National Landscape Restoration Strategy for Belize	Has the potential to serve as a supporting resource for farmers and the agri-industry to transform towards more sustainable practices. It aims to institute rewards, incentives, and recognition mechanisms.
National Climate Finance Strategy of Belize 2021-2026	The strategy seeks to open climate financing information for the private sector and to develop markets for climate investment, such as carbon markets, blended finance, and blue/green bonds.
Sectoral policies	The National Energy Policy can lead to reduction of businesses' energy bill and to greater access to renewable energy The Sustainable Tourism Master Plan directly supports Belize's main economic activity towards its transition The Blue Economy focus has opened access to funds for businesses and re-organized how fishers operate to be more sustainable.

Sources: Based on desk research of laws/policies, Belize NDC 3.0 policy section, Belize DOE legislations webpage <https://doe.gov.bz/legislation/>, and Law Gratis 2025 articles "[Environmental laws at Belize](#)".

► Role and actions of Employers' Organisations

The ILO Resolution concerning a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all identifies tripartite engagement as a principal mechanism. It states that employers' and workers' organisations should: a) effectively **engage in social dialogue** in all its forms to ensure the sharing of benefits and advance just transition and decent work at enterprise, sectoral, and national levels; b) **develop the capacity of their members** to analyse and respond to the impacts of environmental and climate change; c) design and **implement their own initiatives** in support for a just transition, including sector-specific initiatives, and contribute to balanced policymaking; d) contribute as key partners to training and reskilling activities; and e) develop and implement sustainable transition plans at the enterprise and sectoral levels through bipartite social dialogue.³⁶

This section outlines how Employer and Business Membership Organisations (EBMOs) in Belize are contributing to these efforts. It provides diverse, though not exhaustive, examples of EBMO activities that advance a Just Transition.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). The NDC is a key mechanism for achieving a Just Transition. Belize's NDC 3.0, as outlined in the Lessons from NDC Iterations section, includes actions that support businesses in this process. EBMOs report having been consulted in the development of both NDC 2.0 and 3.0.¹⁴ NDC 3.0 lists several consulted EBMOs, including the Association of Professional Architects of Belize, Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), Belize Citrus Growers Association, Belize Hotel Association, Belize Livestock Producers Association, and Toledo Cacao Growers Association.⁸ The depth of engagement, however, varied. For example, BCCI participated in three of the five consultation stages (scoping mission, NDC process launch, and pre-validation online), while most other EBMOs joined the launch and/or pre-validation consultations.

This EBMO engagement stands out, as few other Caribbean countries consulted for this report series exhibited a similar level of involvement.³⁷

The BCCI noted that the process provided opportunities to voice business policy priorities, such as adapting the workforce to new conditions and demands and developing reliable, cost-effective energy infrastructure.^{14,38} At the same time, it stressed that full-day or multi-day workshops limited participation, while online formats were easily disrupted and often felt one-way rather than collaborative.¹⁴

Policy consultation and partnership. EBMOs are consulted on policy and plan development, though not consistently. Engagement ranges from involvement in drafting, being informed after policies are set, or participating in monitoring committees. BCCI, for instance, sits on committees overseeing the Transportation and Tourism Master Plans and has played an active role in broader initiatives like Horizon 2030 and the National Energy Policy.¹⁴ Other EBMOs engage in more sector-specific activities. The Belize Tourism Industry Association holds the vice-chair seat on the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) board, which manages protected areas and funds sustainable eco-tourism.¹⁸ In the Blue Economy, the 2020 Fisheries Resources Act mandates a council with private sector representation, while the Managed Access Program for fishers establishes local committees involving the private sector. In agriculture, consultations with farmers, producers, and agri-industry are common. For example, the Climate Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture Project (CRESAP) included multiple consultations, and the National Agroforestry Policy was developed with support from the Belize Livestock Producers' Association and the Agro-Productive Sector.^{39,40}

Other instances of social dialogue, private consultation mechanisms, and policy partnerships exist and are further developed in the next section.

Own initiatives. Belize EBMOs have engaged members to raise awareness and support social dialogue on the Just Transition. Direct services remain limited, but the following actions and programs are highlighted.

Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI).¹⁴ Founded in 1920 and recognised as an ILO partner since 1997, pursues a philosophy to champion, capacitate, and connect.

Champion. BCCI has representation in more than 70 committees, including the Labour Advisory Board, the Belize National Climate Change Committee, the Business Climate Action Plan, the Coastal Management Authority, the Project Steering Committee for Implementing a Blue Economy MRV System, the National Environmental Appraisal, the Tourism Advisory Council, and others. This ample representation in key areas allows it to bring the employers' voice into key areas connected to Just Transition. BCCI also participates in the Decent Work Country Programme 2024-2029. BCCI also conducts several key activities to conduct robust advocacy (championing) work:

- **Research activities:** BCCI participates in research to support the Just Transition. In 2024/2025, it took part in an IDB-financed project developing an industry skills roadmap for eco-tourism⁴⁵ and has petitioned the ILO for a study on skill gaps in the blue and green economy.¹⁴ It has also conducted curricula mismatch skill studies in the [Agriculture and ICT sectors](#) (2017) and [Food Processing and Tourism sectors](#) (2019).
- **Policy tracking/communication:** BCCI operates a [Policy Tracker Platform](#) to inform members and the public on policy developments, including topics such as the [green transition](#) and [skill mismatch](#).
- **BCCI Business Policy Roadmap:** it's a key document outlining private sector policy priorities. The 2025 edition includes several Just Transition-related recommendations: expand civil society and private sector representation in public committees; add a skills mismatch module to the Labour Force Survey; launch a TVET strategy; implement a flexible migration policy to recruit workers in key areas; partner with the private sector on sustainable, reliable, and affordable energy; incentivize climate-resilient infrastructure investment; introduce a new digitalization policy; and involve BCCI in the Medium-Term Strategy.³⁸

Capacitate. For BCCI, a key activity is to capacitate its members and promote the readiness of the workforce for current and future needs. At the same time, BCCI **connects** members to key opportunities and spaces. Some activities include:

- **Vocational Training:** BCCI sits on the National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NCTVET), which has engaged in discussing future jobs and training needs. In 2024, a national policy and plan began to be drafted.^{14,41} BCCI also participates in the Skills to Access the Green Economy (SAGE) program, which builds climate resilience across six Caribbean countries by strengthening TVET institutions to deliver inclusive, gender-responsive, youth-focused, and demand-driven green skills training.⁸⁰ As a result, the University of Belize was able to develop several short green climate courses, and the Stann Creek TVET institute adopted agro-food processing courses. Students and teachers from both institutions participated in an exchange program in Canada (the program donor). Furthermore, pilot programs at the Belize City TVET Institute introduced renewable energy skills training (installation, operation, and maintenance).⁴²
- **Awareness raising:** BCCI has organised initiatives to expose members to innovative practices. One example is visits to Mennonite farmers, who—though a small share of Belize's population—play a major role in agriculture, applying modern farming techniques and powering their communities with solar energy.^{14,44} BCCI has sought training and inspiration from Mennonite expertise in farming and solar technology. Another example is engaging stakeholders with the implementation of Belize's Blue Economy Policy, Strategy, and Implementation Plan and the Blue Economy Fair done by the Ministry of Blue Economy.¹⁴

- **Mediation:** BCCI has acted as a mediator to advance Just Transition projects. In compliance with Belize's NDC targets, electric buses were introduced through a program involving the EU, UNDP, the Government of Belize, and the Belize City Council.²⁸ Four pilot buses, operated by private contractors, faced resistance from existing bus operators concerned about being displaced.¹⁴ The Belize Bus Owners Association (BBA) also objected to a 3-bus contract being awarded to a single operator.⁴³ BCCI engaged with the BBA (non-members) and, alongside the Tourism Board, helped keep the program moving while fostering dialogue toward a more inclusive transition to sustainable, reliable buses.¹⁴
- **Financial access:** BCCI collaborates with the Belize Development Finance Corporation (DFC) to expand financial access for women-owned businesses. BCCI supports formalisation, ensures proper financial statements exist, and helps submit loan applications. BCCI is also exploring how to integrate Just Transition practices into loan priorities and has previously provided members with financial literacy and access training. Another key engagement was in the launch of the "Readiness Support for Strengthening Belize Private Sector Access to Climate Finance Project 2021- 2023." The project was done in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development & Investment and the Caribbean Development Bank, and sought to build private sector capacity and awareness of the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and led the design and submission of two bankable funding proposals to the GCF.

Belize Livestock Producers Association (BLPA)⁴⁶

- **Capacity building:** Through the Global Environmental Facility/UNDP Small Grants Programme, BLPA has carried out projects such as Building Resilience and Sustainability in Livestock Farming, Voisin Pasture Rotation Management, and Promotion of Silvopastoral Systems for Livestock Intensification and Climate Resiliency. These provided training on sustainable livestock practices, including pasture management, rotational grazing, farm planning, and silvopastoral systems. BLPA also implemented the project Integrated Management of Production Landscapes to Deliver Multiple Global Environmental Benefits – Belize Watershed, focused on environmentally conscious water resource practices.
- **Awareness raising:** BPLA operates a model farm showcasing Voisin rotational grazing, highlighting pasture recovery, stocking capacity, productivity, and economic viability. It also features a 1.5-acre micro-farm to counter the belief by farmers that large areas are required for grazing.

Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA) and Belize Hotel Association⁴⁷

- **Advocacy:** BTIA maintains an active advocacy agenda and holds seats on boards/committees including the Belize Tourism Board, Sargassum Task Force, PACT, and the DFC.
- **Policy communication:** BTIA and the Hotel Association have published opinion pieces and reports that touch on the climate transition, including opportunities in sustainable tourism.⁴⁷
- **Awareness raising:** With support from the Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future, BTIA is implementing an awareness and education project on marine conservation. Activities include educational packages for students, field trips, training workshops for tour guides, and the creation of a sustainable marine conservation training curriculum.⁴⁸

Other smaller EBMOs, such as the Belize Women's Seaweed Farmers Association and the Chunox Fishermen's Association, are also engaged in projects to develop their members' capacities toward sustainable practices.⁴⁸

► Social dialogue mechanisms and the Employer's organisation engagement on the Just Transition

Social dialogue is a fundamental mechanism for achieving a Just Transition.³⁶ It ensures that the perspectives of employers, workers, and other stakeholders are considered. In Belize, several spaces for social dialogue and private sector engagement exist, though their effectiveness and degree of institutionalisation vary.

A key space for climate change dialogue is the **Belize National Climate Change Committee (BNCCC)**. The BNCCC is designed to monitor climate policies and projects and identify gaps and opportunities. The BNCCC brings together fourteen representatives from government ministries, civil society, academia, and the private sector. Government members include ministries responsible for infrastructure, transport, emergency management, finance, economic and sustainable development, climate change, disaster risk management, the blue economy, civil aviation, natural resources, agriculture, health, tourism, and energy. The Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) serves as the private sector representative, while the Association of Protected Areas Management Organisations (APAMO) represents non-governmental organisations. The University of Belize and the National Meteorological Service of Belize are also members. The committee is chaired by the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management (MSDCCDRM), with the National Climate Change Office (NCCO) acting as its secretariat.⁵⁰ The BNCCC also has two sub-committees (technical and finance).^{49,50} The BNCCC has historically met on an ad hoc basis but is currently inactive. In NDC 3.0, the government noted plans to strengthen its role and improve cross-sectoral coordination.⁸ Its membership and functions are not legislated, which has an impact on its inactivity.⁴⁹ The BNCCC is mentioned in the Climate Change and Carbon Market Initiative Bill, which, when approved, will change its composition slightly^{ix} and give legal standing to its functions and composition, including meeting frequency of at least quarterly.⁵⁰ From tripartite partners, only the private sector participates in the BNCCC, including the proposed new council.

The **Economic Development Council (EDC)**, established in 2011, is a public-private advisory body aimed at strengthening collaboration and advancing reforms to improve the business environment in Belize. Its 14 members include seven senior public-sector managers and seven private-sector representatives from finance, tourism, logistics, agriculture, trade, ICT, and business process outsourcing. The EDC's existence and functions are legally enshrined.⁵²

The EDC has been instrumental in fostering public-private partnerships that support the climate transition. By 2021, it had mobilised over USD 200 million in energy sector investment.²⁹ It also took part in consultations for NDC 3.0.⁸ Going forward, the EDC can serve as a platform to integrate a Just Transition perspective into public-private collaboration.

There are **additional mechanisms for dialogue**, either enshrined in law or created through policy initiatives, that include private sector participation. These platforms could be leveraged to advance Just Transition discussions, though their current effectiveness, membership, and activity could not be assessed.

- **Fisheries Resources Act (2020):** establishes a Fisheries Council as an advisory body with 12 members, including two from fishing cooperatives, two from registered fisher organisations, and one from a conservation NGO.⁵³ Fishing is vital to local business, food security, trade, and tourism, while also highly vulnerable to climate change—making it a key Just Transition sector.
- **Coastal Management Act:** establishes an Advisory Council that includes one representative from the tourism private sector and two members with expertise in fisheries/aquaculture, marine

^{ix} The National Climate Change Council (renamed) will include the Chief Executive Officers of the ministries responsible for climate change, finance, economic transformation, natural resources, energy, and the blue economy; a private sector representative nominated alternately by the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Belize Business Bureau; and a representative from the main NGO umbrella body.

technology, environmental science, or business management.⁵⁴ As the Coastal Management Plan is updated,⁸ active private sector engagement will be essential.

- **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations:** created a National Environmental Appraisal Committee to review DOE's EIA process and advise on improvements. Of its 16 members, two may come from NGOs or the private sector.⁵⁵ Given the EIA's central role in investment projects, private sector participation can both safeguard business interests and promote Just Transition.
- **Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT):** as noted in the previous section, its Board of Directors includes the Belize Tourism Industry Association as vice-chair. PACT has been a key mechanism to incentivise sustainable eco-tourism and access climate funding.
- **Special Electricity Committee:** The government launched in 2025 a Special Electricity Committee (SEC) to develop a National Electrical Energy Mix Master Plan. The initiative pursues actions such as prioritising the use of renewable energy and proposing regulatory reforms to attract investments.⁵⁸ The SEC includes the participation of private sector representatives and can serve as a space for Just Transition dialogue, on how this master plan will be equitable in access, benefit smaller businesses, and build skills to operate and maintain renewable technologies.

The previous section on the role and actions of Employers' Organisations highlighted other spaces where EBMOs engage in dialogue on climate action with potential relevance for a Just Transition. These include representation on the Transportation and Tourism Master Plan committees, the National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, the Belize Tourism Board, the Sargassum Task Force, and the DFC.

Just Transition discussions also appear in **traditional tripartite social dialogue bodies**. A majority of surveyed union representatives (70%) and government representatives confirm that it is an agenda item within social dialogue institutions such as the **Labour Advisory Board**.⁷³ Consulted EBMO, highlighted that, within the Board, ongoing debates address skills development. In terms of climate risks and workers' protections, it was noted that these conversations occur, but not frequently and can be event-driven. Risks such as hurricanes, floods, and droughts have been briefly discussed.¹⁴ Employers and workers are also advancing bipartite discussions and actions—such as adjusting fieldwork hours, scheduling rest breaks, ensuring access to water, and providing shelter—particularly to address rising heat risks in the agricultural sector.¹⁴

For BCCI, a key future dialogue space for the Just Transition and decent work in Belize will be via an occupational safety and health (OSH) council/board.¹⁴ Belize lacks an overarching OSH legislation, though a bill was recently introduced in the House of Representatives.^{7,56} If passed, it would create an OSH Advisory Committee and an Inspectorate within the Ministry of Labour, while also outlining a path toward a standalone OSH Authority.⁵⁶ For BCCI, these measures would open opportunities for inclusive social dialogue, stronger enforcement and monitoring of workplace conditions, and opportunities to address environmental OSH concerns.¹⁴

► Box 1: Citizen-Driven Referendum on Offshore Oil Moratorium

In a striking demonstration of civic agency and green sentiment, Belize enacted the Referendum (Amendment) Bill 2023, mandating that any proposed lifting or alteration of the offshore oil moratorium must first be approved via a national referendum. This change came in response to the mobilisation of 22,090 Belizean voters who called for an amendment requiring a referendum if the government contemplates lifting the offshore oil exploration moratorium on Belize's maritime zone. The amendment has become law, thereby institutionalising a mechanism for direct citizen participation in energy and environmental policymaking. This action exemplifies how public pressure can translate into structural reforms aligned with Just Transition ambition and principles, linking social inclusion, democratic engagement, and green governance.

Oceana. 2023. [People's Referendum on Offshore Oil in Belize is now Law](#).

► Current Just Transition Challenges and Opportunities in Belize

Greening the economy offers major opportunities to advance economic and social goals, but the production model diversification also brings significant challenges for businesses, workers, and the wider economy—shifting how goods and services are produced, with direct effects on jobs and livelihoods.

Because the needed structural change will not affect all workers equally, a just transition is essential: one that builds environmentally sustainable economies that are inclusive, create decent work, reduce inequality, and leave no one behind. This demands managing challenges and maximising opportunities around climate action while building the enabling conditions for change. It also requires anchoring policies in social dialogue to ensure fairness and broad buy-in.

This section outlines key **challenges** and **opportunities** that shape Belize's just transition toward a green, low-emission economy.

Challenges

Belize faces constraints to growth that can significantly slow the Just Transition. GDP growth in the coming years is projected at around 2.0%, reflecting capacity limits and lagging behind regional peers.⁴ Key constraints include limited access to credit, fiscal sustainability risks, low human capital, weak diversification, crime, infrastructure gaps, and vulnerability to natural disasters.^{5,7} With growth and fiscal space constrained, the country has fewer resources to effectively drive the Just Transition and NDC implementation.

Import-reliance dilemma. Nearly 70% of Belize's total energy supply^x is imported—mainly fuels and electricity from Mexico—while the energy sector (including transport) accounts for 73% of 2022 emissions estimates.^{8,59} Cutting fossil fuel dependence is therefore critical to meeting NDC targets and advancing the transition. Belize's NDC calls for renewables to reach 75% of domestic electricity generation by 2030, and its National Energy Policy seeks renewable energy supply penetration of 75% by 2030.^{8,60}

However, these goals face significant hurdles. The government depends heavily on tax revenues from imported fuels, which represent nearly 20% of total energy spending (about BZD 190 million). Renewable energy in Belize is also highly vulnerable to climate conditions, especially rainfall patterns that affect agricultural output and, in turn, bagasse-based generation.⁵⁹ In addition, regulatory gaps and infrastructure challenges—such as interconnection, grid feeding, and storage—must be addressed to achieve renewable energy targets.^{14,59,60}

Lack of institutionalised climate policy. Belize has demonstrated commitment to climate planning through multiple overarching and sectoral strategies, yet it has not passed a dedicated climate change legislation—though a bill was introduced in 2025.⁶⁴ In the absence of a formal legal basis, the National Climate Change Committee (BNCCC)—to be renamed the Council if the Bill is enacted—cannot effectively function as a key platform for Just Transition and climate action dialogue. The BNCCC has operated on an ad hoc basis and is currently inactive.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, even with a formal legal basis, the BNCCC would still include only private sector representatives at the Council level and no other tripartite partners.⁷⁵

Undeveloped incentives and support programs. Several Belizean laws and policies call for incentives to drive their objectives (e.g., Pollution Regulations, National Landscape Restoration Strategy, Transport Master Plan, National Energy Policy), but these are not always implemented. The business sector has advocated for tax credits and other support to foster the just transition of businesses, but the government

^x Different energy terms are used, which can cause confusion on what the target means for those unfamiliar with the concepts. Energy supply refers to all energy entering and used in the economy, this includes uses before electricity such as fuel for transport (high share) or gas/firewood for cooking. Electricity generation mix refers to electricity being produced.

cites fiscal sustainability constraints.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the Belize Investment & Business Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029 has as a task to revise and develop fiscal investments for green investments.⁷⁸

Effective dialogue and engagement are needed. Belize has multiple spaces and policy opportunities that could support social dialogue on the Just Transition, but they are not fully leveraged. Challenges stem partly from how the government engages social partners—often more informative than consultative—and from time commitments required. Social partners also acknowledge their own limits in time, resources, and technical capacity to engage effectively.¹⁴ There are also reported challenges in inter-ministerial coordination that further affect the effectiveness of social dialogue.⁶⁶

Women and youth participation rates, along with brain drain/gain, are main structural challenges.

Women's labour-market outcomes lag men's: in April 2025, participation was 46.9% for women versus 72.3% for men, and women account for over 60% of working-age non-participants, with domestic duties or family care cited as the most common reason to not work.¹ Youth outcomes are also a concern: participation among 14–24-year-olds is 42.1%, and they constitute 30% of working-age non-participants, and the 2021 NEET rate was 30.2% (~25,000), with a much higher incidence among young women (43%) than young men (19%).^{1,7} Without policies that support the effective and decent inclusion of these populations, Belize will keep facing growth constraints and lower levels of human capital.

The emigration of high-skilled workers—especially to the United States—has accelerated in recent decades, affecting not only industries but also health and social services.⁶⁵ Although Belize remains a net recipient of migrants, the share of foreign-born residents has been declining.¹ These dynamics pose a challenge as the economy shifts further toward service-oriented sectors that demand higher skills.

Current social protection capacities will face challenges in accommodating the Just Transition.

Structural changes will directly affect jobs and livelihoods, especially for vulnerable groups. Businesses and workers will require stronger support and expanded coverage to cope with transition pressures and climate risks. Yet social protection coverage in Belize remains limited: in 2021, only 32% of the population had access to at least one benefit, with women's coverage even lower at 23.9%. Belize also lacks unemployment insurance.⁷

Informality is not compatible with decent work. Informality accounted for 35.7% of total employment in April 2025, concentrated in retail and agriculture.¹ A Just Transition must ensure the creation of decent jobs, which cannot be achieved if large segments of the workforce remain informal.

Just Transition and NDC familiarity [Survey insights]. A survey of tripartite partners for this report found that all were “somewhat familiar” with the Just Transition concept. Yet integration into their activities remains limited: EBMOs reported modest efforts, Ministry of Labour representatives noted most staff were unfamiliar, and unions indicated no integration. Awareness of supportive policies also varied—EBMOs affirmed awareness, while unions reported none. Ministry of Labour representatives highlighted limited involvement in shaping Just Transition policies, a gap emphasised by BCCI, in light of recent ministerial changes in March 2025 that brought leadership less familiar with the concept.¹⁴

A stronger familiarity gap exists with the NDCs. EBMOs reported being somewhat familiar, unions noted they were aware but not familiar, and government actors described themselves as moderately familiar. The NDC process is often led and consulted with various public actors. While NDC 3.0 featured a highly inclusive process with broad private-sector participation, there was no evidence of union consultation.^{xi} This limited familiarity and involvement of social partners in NDC development and implementation is a critical challenge for advancing NDC goals and aligning them with the Just Transition.

^{xi} Five surveyed union representatives affirmed they are not consulted in NDC processes in general.⁶⁶

Social partners were also asked about the main challenges their members face when transitioning toward a sustainable economy:^{xii}

Survey insights – Just Transition Challenges⁶⁶

Tripartite partners in Belize responded to a short survey for this report on the challenges they and their members face in advancing a Just Transition:

- **EBMOs.** Key selected constraints are capital and capability: limited access to green finance and high upfront costs (high), shortages of technical expertise and skills mismatches (high), gaps in actionable information and best practices (medium). Additional hurdles include regulatory uncertainty (medium), infrastructure limitations (medium), market demand/competitiveness for sustainable products (medium), and public incentives and support (low). *BCCI* highlighted that skills mismatch is the main challenge. It also stressed that members perception of just climate transition varies, with the commercial sector seeing more as cost while business in agro-industry and tourism see it more as an opportunity and necessity.¹⁴
- **Unions.** The dominant issue is workforce development: a scarcity of reskilling programmes (very high) and weak systems for anticipating green-skills needs (high). Unions also face constrained access to policy-making fora (high), regulatory and policy uncertainty (high), and limited technical support and practical information (high), and organisational/cultural resistance to change (medium).
- **Government.** Obstacles to address are to establish a clear, stable regulatory framework for sustainable enterprise and decent work; embed just-transition provisions across national strategies and labour-ministry agendas; strengthen inter-ministerial coordination; and build institutional and technical capacity at sub-national levels. There was also a recognised need for structured social dialogue with employers' and workers' organisations, robust labour-market data systems, and routine use of research and impact evaluation to guide policy.

Note: A predefined list of challenges was presented. Presented challenges differed according to each tripartite partner context.

International and domestic financial access and gap. Belize faces an 85% (USD 1.3 billion) financing gap for its NDC by 2035.⁸ With international funding under pressure—partly due to shifting policy priorities in the United States—the ability of many nations to secure climate finance is at risk. In Belize, access to finance, including for climate-related efforts, is a commonly reported constraint.^{5,7} While initiatives such as the Sustainable and Inclusive Belize Program, the Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future, and the Development Finance Corporation provide support, a more systematic expansion of credit access from private creditors and banks is needed to finance the Just Transition of businesses.

Productive businesses must drive the Just Transition. Labour productivity in Belize has stagnated, remaining at levels comparable to a decade ago.⁷ Low productivity limits business growth and job creation. Employers also highlight constraints beyond labour inputs, including weak managerial and business-planning skills (especially in MSMEs), limited digitalization, and gaps in financial management.⁷

Data ecosystem remains deficient in supporting an evidence-based transition. The Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB) and the National Climate Change Office have worked to expand capacities and improve climate data availability. For instance, the SIB hosts an [environment portal data](#) with information on deforestation, climate licenses and permits, waste, and water. Still, the supply of climate data is estimated at 89 indicators, while effective monitoring is projected to require around 215.⁶⁷

For NDC monitoring and to support the Just Transition, additional data are needed—such as migration flows, green jobs inventories, skills mismatch analysis, renewable installations, and information on climate finance opportunities for businesses—along with higher-quality and timelier reporting.^{7,14,42,63,66,67} Key challenges

^{xii} The transition to sustainable economy wording is used as respondents tend to be more familiar with this concept, while it still aligns with Just Transition principles.

include insufficient financial and human resources to maintain systems, high staff turnover, and reliance on external consultants for data production.⁶⁷

Skills gaps are cited by social partners as the main challenge for the Just Transition.^{14,66} Belize currently lacks sufficient technical expertise to meet current and future demands needed for the Just Transition (e.g., green, blue, ICT skills).^{7,14,42} A key area for the Just Transition is Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), which enrolls about 800 students per year. TVET faces persistent gaps, including weak links with industry needs, outdated equipment and expertise, and stigma.⁶⁸ The system is receiving support from the IDB, and green-skills pilots have been launched.⁴² However, major funding for a national TVET policy and system overhaul was expected from the Millennium Challenge Corporation, a U.S. aid agency—creating uncertainty on feasible activities to advance and align with the Just Transition.^{14,41} *The Belize Education Sector Strategy 2021–2025 highlights other challenges in education and skills development by strategic area and program offering.*⁶⁸

Opportunities

A strong policy commitment to steer change. Belize has demonstrated regional leadership in shaping its climate agenda, with long-term vision reflected in its Long-Term Low-Emissions Development Strategy (LT-LEDS) and National Energy Policy. As of September 2025, it is also among the few Caribbean nations to have submitted NDC 3.0.³³ These actions provide clear evidence of Belize's commitment to the transition. Still, stronger alignment is needed between existing policies and Just Transition principles to move beyond climate and environmental issues toward a more holistic transition. NDC 3.0 begins to address this by incorporating a focus on gender, vulnerable populations, and loss and damage. The successful passing of the recently introduced Climate Change Bill could bring further institutionalisation and opportunities, such as establishing in law the National Climate Change Council and the introduction of a carbon market.⁶⁴

Comprehensive sectoral focus. Belize has developed a wide range of sectoral policies and plans spanning energy, transport, fisheries and coastal management, waste, tourism, agriculture and agro-industry, water, and biodiversity. In addition, the NDC and the National Climate Change Policy are multisectoral, covering roughly 12–14 sectors depending on classification. This breadth enables social partners to understand planned sectoral actions and hold the government accountable for implementation. While some plans are due for updates, this also creates opportunities for dialogue and private sector inclusion. The update of the Coastal Management Plan, for instance, is already underway through an inclusive consultation process.⁶²

Institutional spaces for private sector engagement. Belize has multiple councils and committees that already include private sector participation—covering climate change, environmental appraisal, fisheries and coastal management, transport, tourism, conservation, and economic development. Although their level of activity and institutionalization varies, these bodies offer opportunities to strengthen and repurpose existing spaces to address the Just Transition. The advancement of OSH legislation could open opportunities for structured social dialogue on worker protections, skills, and the sequencing of change—helping move from ad hoc consultations to negotiated, predictable transition pathways for employers and workers.

Tourism's shift to sustainability and resilience. The updated National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan outlines measurable actions to position Belize as a leader in sustainable tourism. The country has also conducted extensive vulnerability assessments and evaluations of the tourism areas' potential. Already recognised as an eco-tourism destination, Belize is seeing the results of its efforts. Tourism's role as the country's main economic activity also makes sectoral change more feasible than in nations reliant on extractives or mining. In 2023, the sector accounted for 15.7% of jobs (~25,265) and is projected to reach 32,038 direct jobs by 2033.^{1,45} However, growth in sustainable tourism must be paired with broader economic diversification to reduce vulnerability to shocks from natural disasters or global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which paralysed the industry.

Blue economy focus and potential. Belize has a Ministry for the Blue Economy, underscoring the priority given to this sector. It has introduced key sustainable and Just Transition-oriented measures, such as the Managed Access Program for fishers. A major catalyst was the 2021 **blue bond debt conversion** with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), which restructured USD 364 million and reduced Belize's debt by 12% of GDP. At the time, it was the largest debt deal for ocean conservation.⁵⁷ The agreement included conditions such as protecting 30% of Belize's ocean, meeting policy milestones, and establishing sustainable finance mechanisms. From this, the Belize Blue Fund for Sustainable Future was created and now actively finances blue projects, with opportunities for businesses to apply. Under the bond terms, the government must also finalise the updated Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan and launch a Sustainable Ocean Plan, creating greater clarity and new spaces for social partners' engagement around the Just Transition.

Growing commitment to renewable energy. Belize has maintained a steady policy focus on renewables, aiming for 80% of its domestic electricity mix by 2035, with a peak in the last decade of 59.2% in 2017 (including imports).⁵⁹ With nearly 70% of its total energy supply imported (mostly fuels) and the energy sector (including transport) accounting for 73% of 2022 emissions,^{8,59} reducing fossil fuel dependence is critical to meeting NDC targets and advancing the transition. Belize has conducted feasibility studies on solar, wind, and biofuels, recognising strong potential—especially given declining solar and wind costs.⁶⁰ The country is also investing in battery energy storage to reinforce renewable capacity and further cut import dependency.⁶¹ This commitment is key to surmounting the previously expressed challenges of energy import and fuel tax dependency, climate conditions vulnerability, and regulatory and infrastructure gaps.

Existing strategies for climate finance. Belize acknowledges significant funding gaps for climate action, estimating by 2035 a 75% gap (USD 455 million) for mitigation, 90% (USD 480 million) for adaptation, and 93% (USD 386 million) for cross-cutting actions—an overall gap of 85% (USD 1.3 billion) for its NDC.⁸ Recognizing these constraints, Belize has pursued strategies to mobilize additional resources, with the blue bond as a notable example. The National Climate Finance Strategy 2021–2026 provides an integrated plan to mobilise and use climate finance effectively, strengthen national capacity, and align investments with NDC actions and sectoral development plans.⁶³ In 2021, the funding gap for 2030 under NDC 2.0 was 87% (USD 1.6 billion)⁶³, meaning that in absolute terms the gap has narrowed, reflecting progress in securing finance without lowering ambition. Belize is also expanding the number of entities accredited to access climate finance directly, without intermediaries. PACT already held accreditation, and the Development Finance Corporation obtained it in 2025.³² The Climate Financial Unit within the Ministry of Economic Development, which implements the Climate Finance Strategy, is also pursuing accreditation.⁴⁹

In 2025, Belize launched an **NDC Private Sector Investment Strategy** aimed at reducing the NDC finance gap by 16% and raising private sector contributions from 3.09% to 15.4% by 2030 (about USD 264 million).³⁵ The strategy outlines concrete actions and priority measures, including lowering barriers to climate investment and financing, and identifying opportunities in solar, energy efficiency, public transport, crops, livestock, and climate insurance.

Freedom of movement and talent pool access. In July 2023, several CARICOM Heads of Government agreed to move toward full freedom of movement, expanding beyond the skilled-worker regime, with Belize expected to implement this by October 2025.⁹ The country currently shows low unemployment (2.1% in April 2025) and underutilization (5.0%), though participation rates remain below pre-pandemic levels (<60%). Unlike most Caribbean countries, Belize remains a net recipient of migrants.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the share of foreign-born residents fell from 15.5% in 2010 to 11.5% in the 2022 Census and the country continues to face persistent emigration of highly skilled workers.^{1,65} The private sector has advocated for a modern migration policy to help attract skilled labour for key industries,¹⁴ which aligns with low unemployment and

a tight labour market. The free movement of CARICOM nationals could ease labour supply and skill gaps, though it will need close monitoring and, if necessary, measures to support local workers.

Increased technical support and capacity. Belize has built strong partnerships with international stakeholders to secure robust technical support for its climate agenda. Through the NDC Partnership and UN agencies, it has received direct assistance on NDC implementation, MRV systems, policy development, and project preparation. In parallel, ILO support has strengthened skills development, social dialogue, and OSH frameworks. It also has a dedicated Climate Change Office and a Climate Finance Unit, that have worked closely with these partners and projects. These partnerships have helped build the institutional capacity needed to turn plans into projects centred on tripartite engagement.

The Decent Work Country Programme. Belize's social partners and the ILO have launched a Decent Work Country Programme 2024–2029, pursuing outcomes that align closely with a Just Transition. Priorities include aligning policies with international labour standards, strengthening social dialogue, increasing women's participation, upgrading technical education and training to meet current and future labour market needs, establishing an advanced labour market information system, expanding MSME support to improve productivity and decent work, and fostering economic development in rural areas.⁷

Green jobs creation opportunities. Belize's LT-LEDS projects the creation of more than 30,000 jobs from implementing mitigation actions, with most in agriculture (~20,000) and FOLU (~10,000), reflecting the labour intensity of these sectors.⁵⁰ Job creation is expected from sustainable livestock and land management, agroforestry expansion, and especially reforestation, given its reliance on manual labour (e.g., tree planting).⁵⁰ Since agricultural and forestry workers are highly exposed to climate risks such as extreme heat and often work under vulnerable or informal conditions, these new jobs must be supported by decent work frameworks and Just Transition safeguards.

► Recommendations to support the Just Transition and NDC 3.0 in Belize

A just transition can turn climate ambition into decent work, social justice, and prosperity—ensuring no worker, enterprise, or community is left behind. To advance on this pathway, this section presents recommendations to social partners, particularly EBMOs in advancing Just Transition and NDC implementation. These recommendations are developed based on the Belizean context explored on previous sections and on the policy areas highlighted in the ILO's 2023 Resolution concerning a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all and on the enabling environment conditions from the conclusions concerning the promotion of sustainable enterprises adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2007.^{36,69}

► Social dialogue and tripartite engagement

- 1. Reactive, revamp, and engage existing spaces.** Belize already has several bodies—including in tourism, energy, transport, coastal management, agriculture, finance, conservation, and biodiversity—that include private sector representation and could be leveraged to advance the Just Transition and NDC implementation. Social partners need to increase their capacity for engagement and awareness of these spaces. [A useful example comes from an EBMO in Jalisco, Mexico, which mapped all councils with mandated private sector participation and placed members as representatives. It then created a simple reporting system—first through WhatsApp, later via a web-based app—where members shared location \(attendance\), meeting name, level of engagement, and a brief meeting reflection.](#) The Labour Advisory Board, as the principal tripartite advisory body on labour matters, could be strengthened to serve as a platform for social dialogue on the Just Transition—either directly or through a dedicated subcommittee. [Enhancing the Board's effectiveness is already a priority under Belize's Decent Work Country Programme, and existing ILO support within this framework could be leveraged](#)
- 2. Include the tripartite voice in the Belize National Climate Change Council.** The BNCCC is currently inactive, though efforts are underway to reestablish it via the Climate Change Bill. Tripartite partners should engage the National Climate Change Office and Parliament to ensure that, beyond the mandated private-sector representation in the 2025 Bill, unions and the Ministry of Labour are also included. If such amendments are not feasible or desirable, the BNCCC could instead make use of its authority to establish working groups or other mechanisms to support its functions—for creating a dedicated Just Transition Working Group with tripartite participation. [As the main body to discuss and monitor climate action, including the NDC, tripartite partners must have a seat at the table. Other countries already include tripartite representation in similar committees.](#)
- 3. Engage in multistakeholder dialogue but prioritise tripartite spaces.** Climate action discussions are largely multistakeholder, as they must capture diverse perspectives. Yet social partners should also work to establish tripartite spaces that bring the employment dimension into climate debates. [Around the world, climate councils often form working or technical groups; Belize could strengthen this space by creating a dedicated Just Transition working group.](#)
- 4. Start bipartite engagements.** [Collective bargaining](#) is a core tool of social dialogue, and environmental dimensions are increasingly being integrated. Relevant topics include OSH risks from extreme weather, adapting work schedules and spaces, training for green technologies, other training and reskilling, consultation provisions, adequate protective equipment, and early-warning systems.⁷⁶ [The ILO published in 2025 a report on “The role of collective bargaining in promoting just transitions” with six case studies from various sectors and countries that can be consulted.](#)⁷⁶ [Labour-productivity](#) should also be part of the dialogue. While Belize has seen recent productivity gains, levels remain close to those of a decade ago. A green productivity lens can create shared benefits for employers and workers—through lower energy and material use, avoided externalities, circularity gains, and green product sales, which can be linked to worker incentives schemes. [These are conversations that can be advanced through both bipartite and tripartite dialogue.](#)
- 5. Cultivate young leaders' interest and secure leadership renewal.** Belize has a relatively young population, making it important to create spaces that build the capacity and interest of young leaders

within social partner organisations. A useful model comes from Argentina, where the Multisectoral Under-40 Table serves as a voluntary dialogue space for young representatives of environmental, civil, workers', employers', and social organisations. It engages future leaders in debates on climate and the future of work while bringing a youth perspective to these discussions.

- 6. Develop capacities for policy engagement and monitoring.** Social partners in Belize need stronger capacities to influence and monitor policies so their members' voices are reflected in the Just Transition and NDC implementation. [Given resource constraints, practices from peers worldwide can serve as models: engaging member volunteers to review policies, running short opinion surveys, preparing concise data-driven policy briefs, creating social dialogue calendars and KPIs, and leveraging evidence from regional networks \(CARICOM, SICA\), international networks \(IOE, ITUC\), and organisations such as the ILO.](#) In Belize, BCCI already applies many of these practices on core issues like minimum wage and maintains a policy tracker platform. The next step is to extend these tools to climate action. Tracking dialogue and lobbying engagements can also help demonstrate value-added to members.

► Support policies and mechanisms

- 1. Increase financial feasibility and access.** High transition costs and limited financial access are among the main barriers in Belize. Employers' organisations have called for [green tax credits](#), while the government cites fiscal constraints. Several laws and policies already call for incentive schemes (e.g., Pollution Regulations, National Landscape Restoration Strategy, Transport Master Plan, National Energy Policy). One solution is to reorient existing schemes—such as the Designated Processing Areas, the Fiscal Incentives Act, and the Belize Diaspora Returnee Incentive Program—toward green investments. Developing a [Green Taxonomy](#), as in the EU or Colombia, could also build financial sector capacity and unlock green financing to close NDC funding gaps and businesses' transition. [Green public procurement](#) can serve as a catalyst by introducing green purchasing with a focus on small business opportunities. [BCCI is already working with the Development Finance Corporation to expand financial access and has provided financial literacy training for members.](#) These initiatives could be scaled up with a green focus, starting with accessible measures like loans for energy efficiency (e.g., replacing outdated A/C units or installing solar panels).
- 2. Skill shortages and mismatches remain a priority.** Social partners widely agree that skills gaps are a major constraint on economic growth, productivity, and transition efforts (diversification, green and blue economy, ICT). [Technical and Vocational Education and Training \(TVET\)](#) is seen as central to addressing these gaps. While conversations and national policy development efforts are ongoing, the system faces funding and alignment uncertainties (e.g., prioritisation of other skills given donors' priorities). Other options to pursue are: pilot programs in green skills with IDB support should continue; private sector and stakeholder funding (e.g., scholarships) should be mobilised; and the TVET Council should engage in frequent dialogue to find solutions. The ILO's expertise in national training and skills systems (e.g., CARICOM's Regional TVET Strategy) can be a valuable resource to be leveraged. With CARICOM freedom of movement underway and Belize a net recipient of migrants, a flexible [migration](#) policy could help ease skills gaps, though it must be monitored to safeguard local workers. Belize has ratified the ILO [Employment Service Convention](#), 1948 (No. 88), which requires free, nationwide public employment services to facilitate job matching. The existing Employment Services Unit could be reviewed and oriented to account for and track green jobs. Ratifying the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122), a governance priority, would further improve job-matching systems. [Better and timelier data](#) on migration, skills mismatch, and green jobs are also needed to design evidence-based responses. [Recent reports already provide occupational profiles in sustainable tourism and guidance for adapting TVET to green skills, as referenced in references 42 and 45.](#)
- 3. Advance key legislative gaps to support the transition and NDC implementation.** Belize still lacks essential frameworks such as a national climate change law, carbon market regulation, comprehensive OSH legislation, a circular economy framework, and updated energy laws. Development of this legislation must balance compliance requirements with incentives, ensuring they do not create excessive administrative burdens—particularly for MSMEs. Thresholds and requirements should reflect sectoral and firm-size realities to avoid excluding and overburdening smaller businesses. [Belize's largest share of emissions comes from waste, mainly methane. Under NDC 3.0, the country has advanced commitments such as developing a Waste Management Master](#)

Plan, introducing a legal framework for the circular economy, ending open burning, and exploring waste-to-energy options. As the waste sector globally often relies on informal practices, it is essential that, as these goals move forward, social partners ensure that decent work and Just Transition principles are pursued in tandem with the sector's transformation. Belize, through its Belize Investment & Business Climate Action Plan, is taking steps to balance administrative requirements by developing fiscal incentives for green investments and revising environmental impact requirements for MSMEs.⁷⁸ Another key area of opportunity to connect Just Transition actions is the current review and amendment process of the Labour Act that is being done in consultation with the Labour Advisory Board.

- 4. Strengthen social protection to enable the Just Transition.** Social protection coverage is limited, and nearly one-third of workers are in the informal economy. Stronger linkages are needed between labour-market policies and protection schemes—for example, unemployment insurance, activation programmes, and reintegration support for women after maternity. These changes should be designed with fiscal and business sustainability in mind, to avoid undermining the feasibility of future measures needed to safeguard livelihoods during the transition
- 5. Support Belize's diverse population, women, and youth.** Women, youth, and vulnerable groups face weaker labour outcomes and uneven access to education, finance, business support, social protection, and infrastructure. Addressing these gaps must be a policy priority under the ILO Just Transition framework. Promising approaches include formalisation programmes for workers and enterprises, creation of cooperative-led green jobs in agriculture and waste sectors, and care-economy policies that respond to the fact that domestic and family duties remain the main cited barriers for women's labour participation in Belize. While community consultation is common in Belize, there is no formal regulation guaranteeing the participation of vulnerable groups or citizens in general, which limits the ability to inclusively shape transition policies that directly affect them. [Belize has taken important steps with its NDC 3.0 Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion section and the National Climate Change Gender Action Plan 2022–2027, both of which call for inclusive data, participation, targeted projects, and policy alignment.](#)
- 6. Multiple transitions, not always just.** Belize is undergoing parallel transitions in energy, production, and digitalisation, but these do not always integrate a just lens. Firms—particularly MSMEs—prioritise upgrading processes and adopting new technologies, while national strategies emphasise attracting investment to diversify the energy mix and expand ICT, with partial attention to skills. This framing often relegates the Just Transition to a secondary role. Yet the Just Transition is not sequential; it must be planned and carried out simultaneously. [The rapid rise of business process outsourcing \(BPO\) and platform work, along with accompanying remote work or no “workplace,” illustrates how quickly new industries can reshape the labour market.¹⁴ Employers note that these trends have raised fundamental questions about the “workplace.” Social partners are engaging in discussions but remain underprepared to engage with the implications for jobs, protections, and worker rights of these transitions.](#)

► Sustainable enterprises

- 1. Build an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises as a driver of a Just Transition and decent jobs.** The ILO's 2023 Just Transition Resolution underscores that sustainable enterprises are essential to the transition. Belize social partners should be guided by the 17 enabling-environment conditions for sustainable enterprises: 1) Peace and political stability; 2) Good governance; 3) Social dialogue; 4) Respect for universal rights; 5) Entrepreneurial culture; 6) Sound and stable macroeconomic policy; 7) Trade and sustainable economic integration; 8) Enabling legal and regulatory framework; 9) Rule of law and secure property rights; 10) Fair competition; 11) Access to financial services; 12) Physical infrastructure; 13) ICT; 14) Education, training and lifelong learning; 15) Social justice and inclusion; 16) Adequate social protection; and 17) Responsible stewardship of the environment. Sustainable enterprises strengthen social dialogue and labour relations, develop people and skills, adapt working conditions to climate risks, focus on shared productivity gains, and embed CSR and good corporate governance. [Social partners in Belize can map these conditions at national, local, and sector levels to identify where the business climate already supports sustainability and can be leveraged to advance just-transition measures and create decent, green jobs.](#)

- 2. Advance the implementation of business sustainability strategies, reporting, and standards adoption.** The spread of the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards has made these more common global practices. However, practice varies by firm size, with SMEs generally further behind. The ESG and related standards (e.g., ISO 14001, ISO 26000, GRI standards, SASB/ISSB, TCFD, SBTi, UN Global Compact) support companies towards their transition, show commitment and credibility, and open investment and financing opportunities. [Social partners in Belize should promote these practices and provide hands-on support and training for companies, ensuring strategies, standards, and reports explicitly integrate just-transition considerations. For smaller companies, the principles of these standards can still be applied without engaging in the official adoption process. Credible sustainability strategies and reporting can improve profitability and strengthen reputation](#)
- 3. Support small producers and suppliers to become sustainable business units.** Belize's potential in sustainable tourism, blue economy, agri-industry, bioeconomy and need for circular economy practices can propel a Just Transition for smallholders and micro-suppliers (e.g., farmers, tour operators, small exporters, community recyclers). Business associations and partners can help these actors formalise (e.g., cooperatives), meet environmental and social standards aligned with decent work, and access projects and finance, opening pathways to higher value-added, resilient livelihoods. [Initiatives like the Sustainable and Inclusive Belize Program, the Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future, and the Development Finance Corporation support these efforts, but their scale remains limited.](#)

► NDC 3.0 recommendations

Belize was among the first Caribbean nations to fulfil its obligation to submit an NDC 3.0. As implementation of ongoing and new targets proceeds, the following recommendations can help social partners engage more effectively—bringing their members' perspectives into the NDC process and strengthening its Just Transition lens. While some earlier recommendations connect indirectly to the NDC, the points below are more explicit:

- 1. Institutionalise engagement in implementation.** Engagement should not stop at the development stage. Mechanisms are needed to consult and inform partners during NDC implementation. Thematic working groups could be established, and—as previously recommended—the BNCCC should be revamped to include tripartite voices. Social partners also need to take a more active role in monitoring and demanding implementation. These practices would strengthen dialogue, coordination, monitoring, accountability, and the overall effectiveness of the NDCs.
- 2. Address barriers to union engagement and tripartite inclusion.** There is no evidence of union participation in the NDC 3.0 consultations. While the Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour, and Local Government took part, it is unclear under which capacity. Future consultation and implementation processes should more deliberately include tripartite partners to ensure balanced perspectives and seek to strengthen inter-ministerial collaboration.
- 3. Bring labour and Just Transition into the NDC.** NDC 3.0 advances several relevant actions for employers and workers—such as loss and damage measures, capacity building, financial support, and gender/vulnerable-population-focused initiatives (see Table 1 for a list of NDC-relevant actions towards businesses). Yet, there is no explicit inclusion or targets on OSH concerning environmental risks, job losses/gains considerations, social protection enhancement, or transition planning. Both NDC 2.0 and 3.0 frame Just Transition mainly through gender and vulnerable groups. NDC 3.0 provides concrete actions but could be strengthened to better reflect the needs of workers and businesses, particularly for MSMEs and informal units. Since NDCs are living documents updated every five years, there is room to expand this focus. [For NDC 2.0, 75 NDCs included Just Transition considerations and around 51% of the Americas. For the 2025 update, many countries are expected to include Just Transition aspects—offering learning opportunities for Belize.⁷⁰ For the 2025 update, countries such as Barbados, Jamaica, and Suriname are referencing the Just Transition in their NDCs. For the previous round of NDC countries, such as Antigua and Barbuda, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, and others mentioned Just Transition in their NDCs.⁷⁰](#)
- 4. Assess how the NDC supports sustainable enterprises.** As outlined in Table 1, NDC 3.0 contains business-support actions. Employers' organisations could review how effectively these align with the ILO's 17 enabling conditions for sustainable enterprises and areas of expansion—for example, fostering a green/blue entrepreneurship culture, ensuring inclusive governance with tripartite

partners, and promoting fair competition. The concept of green manufacturing, particularly in the agro-industry, is another area for further exploration and integration.

- 5. Seek clarification and greater ambition in energy targets.** NDC 3.0 sets a goal of 80% renewable energy in domestic electricity generation by 2035. Yet Belize's domestic production is mostly renewables, and in several years over the past decade, renewables (including imports) have exceeded 50% of generation.^{59,60} This raises questions about whether the 80% target is sufficiently ambitious—or simply a “low-hanging fruit.” Clearer baselines and ambition levels are needed to make the target more explicit. Some main structural challenges are Belize’s dependence on imported energy, high fossil-fuel use in transport, government reliance on fuel taxes, and stagnating growth in renewable generation capacity.^{59,60} Addressing these explicitly would strengthen NDC credibility. As noted by the World Resources Institute, many countries increase renewable targets in their NDCs but remain less explicit about how they will cut fossil-fuel consumption.⁷¹
- 6. Directly include the private sector in targets and actions.** Many NDCs include specific targets led by private and public companies (e.g., Colombia). In Belize, companies and financial institutions could engage in the Science-Based Targets Initiative (SBTi), adding robustness and credibility to pledges and aligning with Paris Agreement goals. Similar mechanisms exist for cities, such as the Global Covenant of Mayors. *The Belize Sugar Company—already central to renewable energy generation—and the Development Finance Corporation, with its role in green and blue financing, are strong candidates. Several firms were consulted during NDC 3.0 development and could also be engaged in target-setting and SBTi commitments.*

► EBMOs activities and services

As part of the ILO Just Transition Resolution, social partners are expected to build members’ capacities, implement initiatives, and support training and reskilling. Options for Belizean EBMOs include:

- 1. Research and monitoring.** Conduct member surveys on adoption of green practices (e.g., % of sales from green products, circularity and energy-efficiency measures, green strategies) to inform services and lobbying.
- 2. Company engagement in NDCs.** Encourage members to pledge through initiatives like SBTi, showcasing private-sector leadership in meeting climate goals
- 3. Advisory and support services.** Provide environmental consulting (carbon footprinting, energy efficiency, ecological KPIs, certification support, circular practices) and raise awareness of existing programs such as the Sustainable and Inclusive Belize Program and the Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future (with low private-sector applications).⁴⁸ EBMOs could also help members integrate circular practices to accompany compliance with the Returnable Containers Act.
- 4. Capacity building.** EBMOs already provide training and can integrate Just Transition themes into existing programs. *For example, BCCI could add green finance modules to its financial literacy sessions, showcase sustainable business models, or train members on adapting workplaces to climate risks like extreme heat. Its annual Made in Belize Trade Show could more intentionally feature green and sustainable businesses. In tourism, EBMOs could expand communication workshops to build storytelling skills for immersive, climate-conscious visitor experiences.*
- 5. Awareness raising.** Awareness activities are ongoing but should increasingly focus on Just Transition themes, given Belize's high climate vulnerability and commitment to the green transition.

► Conclusion

The Belize case offers clear examples of how climate ambition can include enterprise-driven action and perspectives. The country's transition builds on a long tradition of environmental stewardship that extends beyond its borders and a growing policy framework linking green growth, decent work, and resilience. Through successive NDCs and complementary strategies—such as the Long-Term Low-Emission Development Strategy, Plan Belize, the Decent Work Country Programme, and the expected Climate Change and Carbon Market Initiative Bill—Belize has improved coherence, broadened participation, and strengthened its readiness to deliver on its commitments.

From an employers' perspective, the Just Transition presents an opportunity to turn environmental goals into competitiveness gains. Cleaner production, energy efficiency, and sustainable tourism can lower costs, open new markets, and attract climate finance. Yet these benefits require active engagement: EBMOs and businesses must strengthen their role in implementation, not just consultation. Direct company participation in climate targets, public-private investment partnerships, and joint efforts on skills and innovation will be essential to accelerate progress.

The country's strengths—its net-sink status, expanding green-finance mechanisms, and growing MSME programmes—provide a strong foundation. However, challenges remain: limited fiscal space, dependence on fuel imports, and the weak rollout of incentives. Most micro- and small firms still lack the skills and capital to invest in sustainability, while training systems and labour-market data require urgent strengthening and alignment. Addressing these gaps calls for coordinated action and dialogue among government, employers, and workers.

EBMOs can lead by example—helping members access finance, adopt ESG standards, and build workforce capabilities for green sectors such as renewable energy, agriculture, and eco-tourism, while also advancing circular-economy practices. They can advocate for strengthening dialogue platforms such as the Economic Development Council, the Labour Advisory Board, and the forthcoming Climate Change Council to ensure private-sector perspectives inform policy design and monitoring, and that the Just Transition becomes an explicit agenda item. Institutionalised participation by other tripartite partners, particularly unions, must also be strengthened within climate action.

The Belize experience shows that a Just Transition is not an external agenda but a business and development imperative. With sustained social dialogue, enterprise innovation, and shared responsibility, Belize can turn its climate ambition into a source of competitiveness, inclusion, and resilience—offering a model for other Caribbean nations seeking to make the green and blue economy work for all.

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