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Rotating Presidency of the Central American Integration System

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

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Report Highlights:

Currently, the President Pro Tempore of the Central American Integration System (SICA) is Prime Minister Dean Barrow of Belize. The presidency is set to rotate every six months among the Presidents of member nations. Belize assumed the SICA presidency in July of 2010.

Prime Minister Dean Barrow's goals for Belize, including asserting Belize's participation throughout the Central American Integration Process and regional cooperation programs, will most likely be reflected throughout Central America as President of SICA. Belize's objectives as President Pro Tempore include: continuing to work towards full integration into SICA matters such as image and statistics, enhancing relations between SICA and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), working towards a policy on unified candidatures, addressing issues relating to climate change, security and trade, enhancing regional tourism integration.

Executive Summary:

SICA's purpose is to provide a juridical-political framework for a comprehensive development approach for the region by promoting peace, freedom, democracy and development within Central America and Panama. SICA is comprised of seven members: Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Panama.

In 1991, the Organization of Central American States (ODECA) signed the Protocol of Tegucigalpa, which pursued regional peace, political freedom, democracy and economic development. SICA was founded in 1993 with headquarters of the General Secretariat located in El Salvador. The current General Secretariat is Dr. Juan Daniel Alemán Gurdián. SICA's main objective is to be the economic, cultural and political organization of Central America. Founding member countries were Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. Belize joined in 2000, becoming the seventh full member. Integration efforts incorporate economic, social, cultural, political and ecological areas.

Background:

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General Information:

In defining SICA's framework and goals, many aspects were taken into consideration. Primarily, SICA members wanted to avoid another failed attempt at integration. When identifying the objective of SICA, consideration was given to past attempts for regional integration, historical political crisis, former conflict and dictatorial rule, internal constitutional transformations and democratic regimes of all members.

The United Nations General Assembly is a supporter of SICA. The Tegucigalpa Protocol, the foundation for SICA framework, is duly registered with the United Nations. Because the protocol is internationally invoked, SICA's bodies and institutions have the ability to interact with the United Nations. Furthermore, SICA maintains a standing invitation to observe the United Nations General Assembly Sessions and to possess offices at the United Nations Headquarters.

The SICA pro tempore presidency is rotated every six months. There is not a precise schedule to be followed. The next pro tempore president is selected and approved by the other member states of SICA. Usually, the presidency is passed to a member that has not held the position in recent years. The rotation generally follows a geographic order: Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. However, a country may be by-passed in the rotation, as in the case of Costa Rica. In July of 2009, President Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua opted to hand the SICA presidency to Guatemalan

President Álvaro Colom instead of Costa Rican President Oscar Arias. President Ortega is alleged to have disagreed with what he considered as protectionist tendencies and reluctance towards regional integration of the Costa Rican government.

Recently held presidencies of SICA:

January 2007 – Belize

July 2007 – Guatemala

January 2008 – El Salvador

July 2008 – Honduras

January 2009 – Nicaragua

July 2009 – Guatemala

January 2010 – Panama

July 2010 - Belize

** Information extracted from various media sources.*

Additional Participants

SICA involves other participating states besides the seven member countries. The Dominican Republic acts as an Associated State. Regional Observers include: the United Mexican States, the Argentine Republic, the Republic of Chile and the Federative Republic of Brazil. Extra-regional Observers are: the Republic of China (Taiwan), the Kingdom of Spain, the Italian Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany.

SICA and SIECA

The Secretariat of Economic Integration of Central America (SIECA) is a regional legal entity which directly focuses on fulfilling the economic integration procedures of SICA by providing technical and administrative support. The efforts of SIECA are centered on the progression of the Customs Union and furthering regional trade in the worldwide economy. Technical activities support these goals. SIECA provides analysis and supporting studies in addition to assistance and training in regional and foreign trade. SIECA is committed to a common external tariff and the development of common positions in international trade negotiations. The Secretary General, who is appointed by the Council of Ministers of Economic Integration (COMIECO), manages SIECA.

Belize's Participation in Regional Integration Systems

Belize joined SICA in 2000 by signing the Treaty of Tegucigalpa. As a member, Belize has the right to participate in all institutions of the integration process. Out of the three main SICA organs (the General Secretariat, the Central American Parliament, and the Central American Court of Justice), Belize only participates in the Secretariat and Institutions of SICA. Belize does not currently belong to SIECA. It is necessary to subscribe to the Treaty of Guatemala to allow its participation in SIECA, and therefore, become part of COMIECO.

**Information for this report was obtained from regional media sources and the official websites of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Belize, SICA and SIECA.*