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For Immediate Release

SIB Releases the Latest Statistics

September 12, 2008 The Statistical Institute of Belize (S.I.B.) announces the release of the latest Gross Domestic Product (GDP), External Trade and Consumer Price Index statistics for 2008.

Gross Domestic Product– 2nd Quarter 2008

After virtually no growth in the first quarter of 2008, Belize's economy bounced back by 7.3% in the second quarter to post growth of an estimated 4.0% in the first half of this year. The expansion in the second quarter was spurred almost equally by the wholesale and retail trade and manufacturing sectors, both of which grew by more than 10%.

The fishing sector, which declined by 20.5% in the first quarter due to the collapse of the country's largest shrimp farm, rebounded strongly in the second quarter, making it the third largest contributor to the expansion of the economy during that period. Other sectors of growth included agriculture and transport and communication.

On the downside, the hotel and restaurant sector declined for a second consecutive quarter, reflecting the continued decrease in tourist arrivals. The electricity and water sector suffered the same fate, as lower rainfall at the Chalillo Dam resulted in a 23.4% drop in electric power generation.

The table below provides a summary of performance of the major sectors of the economy during the past year, including the second quarter of this year.

Growth Rate of Quarterly GDP by Sector (%)

Sectors	QI-08 over QIV-07	QII-08 over Q1-08	Q1-08 over Q1-07	QII-08 over QII-07	H1-08 over H1-07	Source of growth year on year
Agriculture, Hunting and Forestry	73.0	2.1	2.8	6.7	4.7	0.8
Fishing	-7.1	-14.8	-20.5	162.1	17.0	1.2
Manufacturing(inc. mining/quarrying)	40.2	11.6	-7.8	10.7	1.1	1.3
Electricity and Water	-40.8	25.3	-27.5	-5.5	-16.7	-0.2
Construction	-4.1	0.8	-1.1	-0.3	-0.7	0.0
Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair	0.9	10.6	5.0	10.4	7.8	1.5
Hotels and Restaurants	66.3	-24.8	-4.6	-5.4	-5.0	-0.2
Transport and Communication	10.3	-0.2	6.8	5.9	6.4	0.7
Other Private Services (exc. FISIM 1)	0.7	0.2	2.0	2.0	2.0	0.3
Producers of Government Services	0.0	-2.0	4.8	0.7	2.8	0.1
All industries at basic prices	13.0	2.3	-0.5	6.4	2.9	5.5
Taxes on Products	0.3	11.0	9.0	12.6	10.8	1.8
GDP at market prices	11.0	3.6	0.8	7.3	4.0	7.3

International Merchandise Trade– January to July 2008

In the seven months up to July 2008, Belize imported \$990.3 million worth of goods, an increase of 24.5% or \$194.8 million from the same period of 2007. At the product group level, the most significant spending increases were in: machinery and transport equipment (↑\$73.8m), manufactured goods (↑\$40.8m) and mineral fuels and lubricants (↑\$31m).

In terms of origin, there were no significant shifts in Belize's foreign purchases during the seven-month period. The United States continued as the largest supplier, providing almost 34% of total imports. Central America ranked second with a 21% share, most of which were for the Commercial Free Zone in Corozal.

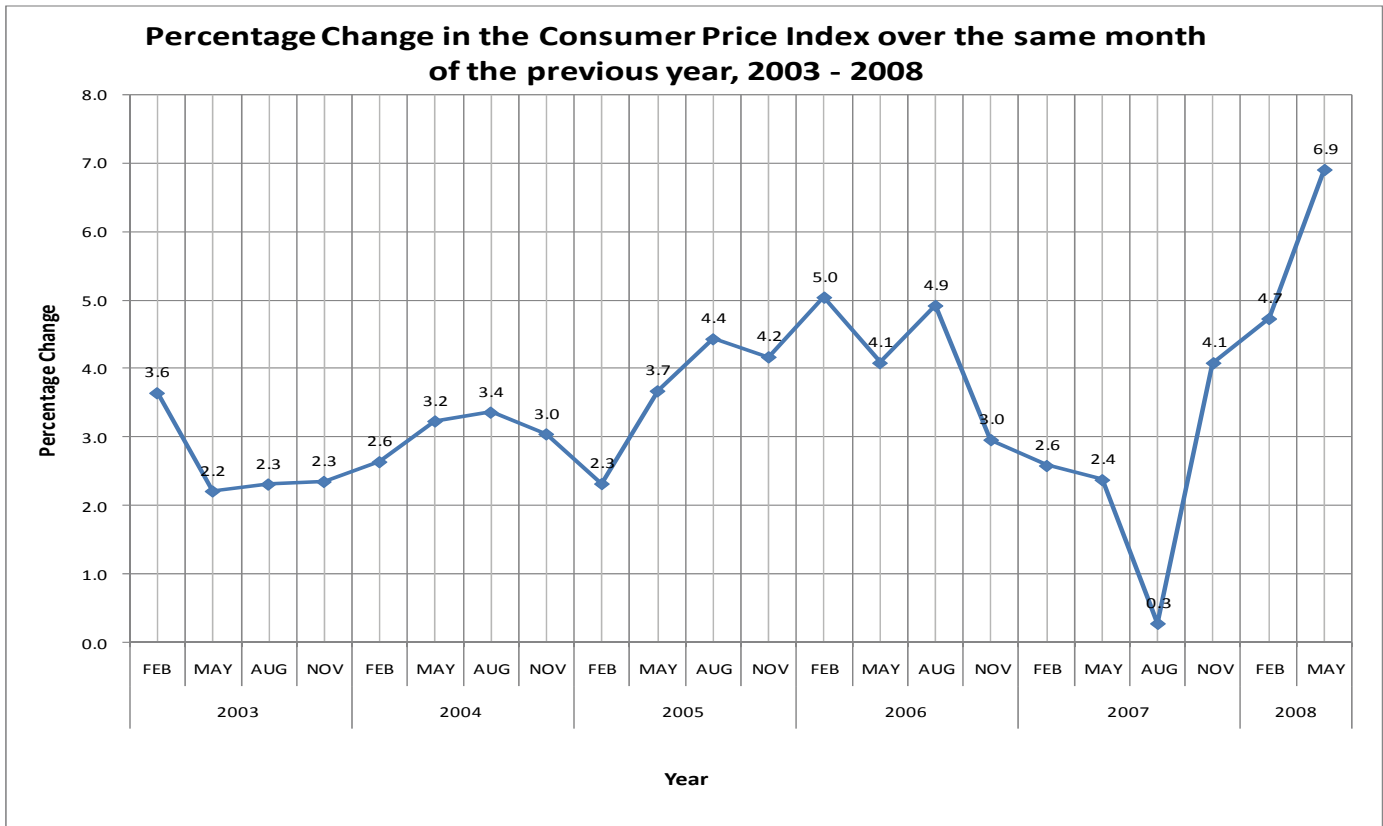
Domestic export earnings meanwhile rose by 4.9% to \$367.7 million. The bulk of this increase was due to higher oil prices. Among the other major export commodities, only marine products and bananas saw increased sales during the period under review. In fact, when crude petroleum oil is excluded, there was a 9.2% or \$25.7 million shortfall in domestic export revenues between January and July 2008.

In value terms, the share of domestic export sales to the United States of America remained at 30% while the percentage to Central America rose from 19.9% to 29.0%. The share of sales to Europe, on the other hand, fell from 37.7% to 31.7%.

Consumer Price Index (CPI)

In May 2008, consumers were paying 6.9% more than they did in May 2007 for the goods and services in the CPI basket. This 12-month change is the highest recorded since August 1996 when consumer prices grew by 7.4%.

The most significant increases were in the prices of food and beverages, which rose by an average of 12.3%. The price of rice went up by 21.3%, while the cost of flour and whole chicken increased by 51.5% and 13.4% respectively. Increases were also recorded in the transport and communication category, as prices of gasoline and diesel rose by 7.8% and 35.4% respectively.



For further information, analysis and tables please visit our website at www.statisticsbelize.org.bz or email info@statisticsbelize.org.bz or call our headquarters.