

BELIZE:

**PETROLEUM OPERATIONS (MARITIME ZONE
MORATORIUM) ACT, 2017**

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No. 54 of 2017

I assent,

(SIR COLVILLE N. YOUNG)

Governor-General

29th December, 2017.

AN ACT to impose a moratorium on the exploration for and exploitation of petroleum and other petroleum operations in the maritime zone of Belize, to prevent pollution from installation devices and vessels used in the exploration or exploitation of petroleum resources of the seabed and subsoil of the maritime zone; to accordingly, make further provisions for the protection of the Belize Barrier Reef System inclusive of the World Heritage Site; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

(Gazetted 30th December, 2017)

BE IT ENACTED, by and with the advice and consent of the House of Representatives and Senate of Belize and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1. This Act may be cited as the

Short title.

PETROLEUM OPERATIONS (MARITIME ZONE MORATORIUM) ACT, 2017.

Interpretation.

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,

“Belize Barrier Reef System” means all that area bounded to the north by geographical coordinates UTM 412 384 E, 2009 873N, and bounded to the south by geographical coordinates 361402 E, 1777501 N, in NAD 27 Zone 16, without limit to the East and West, comprising corals, coral reefs, atolls, islands, seagrass beds, mangroves and other associated critical habitats and their inhabitants;

“maritime zone of Belize” means,

- (a) the internal waters,
- (b) the territorial sea, and
- (c) the exclusive economic zone,

as respectively defined in the Maritime Areas Act, and includes the Belize Barrier Reef System, but does not include that part of the internal waters that is landward of the low-water line along the coast of the mainland of Belize;

“Minister” means the Minister with the responsibility for petroleum;

“natural gas” means all petroleum which at atmospheric conditions of temperature and pressure is in a gaseous state; and includes wet mineral gas, wet gas and residue gas remaining after the extraction, processing or separation of liquid petroleum from wet gas, as well as non-petroleum gas or gases produced in association with liquid or gaseous petroleum;

“petroleum” means all natural organic substances composed of carbon and hydrogen which may be removed from the earth (including the seabed) and includes crude oil, natural gas and the oils derived from tar, sands, shale and coal, natural gas, and all other mineral substances, products, by-

products and derivatives that are found in conjunction with those substances;

“petroleum operations” means the operations related to the exploration, development, extraction, production, field separation, transportation, storage, or disposal of petroleum, but does not include any transportation or other operations in relation to petroleum that is imported into or exported from Belize by way of the maritime zone.

3. Notwithstanding the provisions of any other law, the carrying out of petroleum operations within the limits of the maritime zone of Belize is prohibited.

Prohibition of petroleum operations in maritime zone.

4. Any person who contravenes section 3 commits an offence and is liable on conviction on indictment,

Offence against prohibition

(a) in the case of an individual, to a fine not exceeding two hundred thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years;

(b) in the case of a corporate body, to a fine not exceeding three million dollars.

5. This Act does not affect the operation of any other enactment, the application of which is not inconsistent with the prohibition imposed under section 3, however, whenever the provisions of or under this Act are in conflict with or inconsistent with the provisions of any other enactment relating to pollution or environmental control, the provisions of this Act and any Regulations made under it shall prevail.

Other Acts not generally affected, unless inconsistent.

6.–(1) The provisions of this Act shall apply, notwithstanding the existence, in relation to any person, of any rights to carry out petroleum operations in the maritime zone of Belize, that were in existence at the date of coming into operation of this Act.

Prior rights subject to prohibition.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), the Minister may enter into compensation arrangements with persons who have been adversely affected by the prohibition under this Act.

Regulations.

7. – (1) The Minister may make regulations for the better carrying out of the purposes of this Act.

(2) Regulations made under this section may provide that a contravention thereof shall be punishable on conviction by a fine not exceeding three million dollars or by a term of imprisonment not exceeding two years, or by both the fine and imprisonment.

State to be bound.

8. This Act binds the State.