

E-Newsletter

MARITIME MATTERS

INTERNATIONAL MERCHANT MARINE REGISTRY OF BELIZE

Belize Commemorates World Maritime Day 2026

This year's theme, "From Policy to Practice: Powering Maritime Excellence," offered Belize's maritime community an opportunity to come together, reflect on the importance of our sector and highlight the work under way to translate maritime policies and commitments into action. The theme spans 2026 and 2027, with an emphasis on implementation, capacity building and collaboration.

In Belize, the occasion was marked by the inaugural World Maritime Week, a series of activities that brought together IMMARBE, the Belize Port Authority, the Belize Coast Guard and other maritime stakeholders.

The week featured a Maritime Sports Day and a World Maritime Day Expo, at which maritime authorities, industry stakeholders and students learned more about Belize's maritime sector, its services and the career opportunities it offers.

For IMMARBE, the week reinforced an important message: maritime excellence is a collective responsibility. It requires strong institutions, capable people, effective regulation and meaningful collaboration with our maritime partners.

The theme highlights the essential link between the policies and regulations that guide our sector and the actions that give them effect. Maritime excellence is built through consistent implementation, robust regulatory oversight, continuous improvement and, above all, the commitment of the people who make it happen.



"Every registration, certification, inspection and service contributes to our shared objectives of safety, compliance, quality, sustainability and professionalism."

As the maritime industry continues to evolve, IMMARBE remains committed to strengthening our systems, developing our people and embracing innovation in support of a safer, more resilient and sustainable maritime future for Belize and the global maritime community.

This World Maritime Day, we reaffirm our commitment to turning policy into meaningful action and continuing to power maritime excellence.

Policy sets the direction. Practice brings it to life.

Happy World Maritime Day 2026!" — Eng. Abilio Dominguez

Belize on the Global Stage: Belize Delegation to Showcase Tourism and Maritime Opportunities at the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show 2026

The Belize Delegation will participate in the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show (FLIBS) from 28 October to 1 November 2026, bringing together representatives of the Belize Tourism Board (BTB), the International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize (IMMARBE) and industry partners to promote Belize's maritime, tourism and business sectors.

Throughout the show, BTB representatives will work alongside IMMARBE and its Fort Lauderdale-based affiliate, Mr. Joel Da'Costa of Conarina Group, to strengthen relationships, promote Belize's maritime and tourism sectors, and engage with current and prospective stakeholders from around the globe.

Together, the delegation will highlight the range of opportunities Belize offers and deepen connections within the international yachting and maritime community.

For IMMARBE, FLIBS offers a valuable opportunity to engage directly with stakeholders, showcase the services of the Belize Ship Registry and reinforce Belize's reputation as a responsive and accessible Flag State. The event also supports ongoing efforts to raise awareness of Belize's maritime offerings and strengthen relationships across key international markets.

As the delegation prepares to welcome visitors to Fort Lauderdale, attendees are invited to learn more about Belize's maritime services, tourism products and investment opportunities.

Discover the Belize Advantage. Visit the Belize Delegation at Bahia Mar Yachting Center, Stand 854.

Meet the Belize Delegation at

FL | FORT LAUDERDALE
INTERNATIONAL
BOAT SHOW

OCT 28 - NOV 01, 2026

			
Simone Bell Belize Tourism Board	Andrew Usher Belize Tourism Board	Kenisha Allen IMMARBE	Joel Da'Costa Conarina Group
			

Promoting Safe Shipping and Seafarer Welfare Under the Belize Flag

The Technical and Seafarers Department plays a vital role in upholding the safety, compliance and integrity of Belize-flagged vessels and in supporting the men and women who serve at sea. The Department administers the key international maritime conventions, including SOLAS, MARPOL, STCW and the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), ensuring that Belize continues to meet its obligations as a responsible Flag State.

Beyond regulatory oversight, a significant part of the Department's work is dedicated to the welfare and protection of seafarers serving aboard Belize-flagged vessels. The Department maintains dedicated resources to assist seafarers facing difficulties, which have been exacerbated by rising geopolitical instability. Working closely with shipowners, insurers, embassies, welfare organizations and international partners, the Department strives to ensure that seafarers receive the support and protection afforded to them under international maritime standards.

The Department also oversees seafarer certification and maritime training institutions, ensuring not only that ships are technically sound but also that their crews are well trained and competent to operate them safely and responsibly. Through active engagement with industry stakeholders and international organizations, Belize remains committed to promoting safe shipping, protecting the marine environment and safeguarding the rights and welfare of seafarers worldwide.

By combining technical expertise with a strong commitment to seafarer training and welfare, the Technical and Seafarers Department helps maintain the credibility and reputation of the Belize flag across the international maritime community.



**Trusted Digital Certification
for Seafarers**

CERTIFIED • VERIFIED • CONNECTED
Through trusted certifications and modern services, we help seafarers navigate their journey with confidence at sea and on shore.

THE BELIZE ADVANTAGE

Approved Medical Practitioners	Approved Training Network
Global Accessibility	Fast Digital Verification
Secure QR-enabled Verification	Belize Seaman's Book
Electronic Certificate of Proficiency (COP) issuance	Electronic Medical Certificates

SCAN TO ACCESS OUR SEAFARER SERVICES
Certification • Verification • Medical Practitioner Applications



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Investing in Expertise to Strengthen the Belize Flag

Continuing the Voyage: New Belizean Scholars Attend World Maritime University

This year, two Belizean scholars, Ms. Ameera Marin of IMMARBE and Lt. Ruby Jimenez of the Belize Coast Guard, began postgraduate studies at the World Maritime University (WMU), joining an international community of professionals preparing to shape the future of the global maritime industry.

Their studies represent more than an academic achievement. They are an opportunity to gain international knowledge, broaden their maritime perspectives and bring valuable expertise back to Belize's maritime sector.

Reflecting on her journey, Ms. Marin shared:

"What is meant for you will always find its way. Never stop believing in what you desire, and always give your best, even when the journey becomes difficult. The pursuit of excellence was never meant to be easy, but the challenges along the way make the reward at the end all the more meaningful."



The International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize (IMMARBE) continues to invest in the professional development of its team as part of its commitment to regulatory excellence, compliance and quality service delivery.

Deputy Managing Director Mrs. Valarie Lanza and Director of Registration Services Ms. Felicia Vargas participated in the 2026 Global Maritime Security and Sanctions Enforcement Symposium, co-hosted by the United States Department of State and Antigua and Barbuda's Department of Marine Services and Merchant Shipping (ADOMS) in St. John's from 13 to 15 July 2026.

As the international regulatory landscape grows increasingly complex, continuous training and professional development are essential to ensuring that IMMARBEE maintains the expertise needed to support shipowners, operators and stakeholders worldwide. Forums such as this symposium provide valuable insight into the challenges and developments shaping the maritime sector.

By building internal capacity and enhancing technical knowledge, IMMARBEE reinforces its commitment to remaining a responsive, compliant and reputable ship registry. These investments equip the Registry to navigate emerging regulatory expectations while continuing to deliver the high standard of service the global maritime community expects.

Modernizing Belize's STCW Framework: IMMARBE Advances Regulatory Reform

By Mrs. Janelle Thomas-Shorter, Director of Legal Services

Over the past several months, IMMARBE's Legal Department, in close collaboration with the Technical and Seafarers Department, led a comprehensive review and modernization of the Merchant Ships (Registration) (Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping) Regulations. The exercise involved a detailed gap analysis of the existing regulatory framework, extensive consultation with the technical team and IMMARBE's Managing Director, and the development of targeted amendments to align Belize's STCW regime with evolving international standards and industry practice.

Key enhancements include provisions recognizing e-learning, distance learning and blended learning methodologies; requirements for high-voltage training for electro-technical officers; and a legal framework for the issuance and verification of electronic certificates.



Following multiple rounds of technical and legal review, all of IMMARBE's proposed amendments were accepted and incorporated into the final draft Regulations. The amendments are expected to strengthen regulatory oversight, make maritime training more accessible and flexible, support technological innovation in the certification process, and further align Belize's maritime administration with International Maritime Organization (IMO) and STCW requirements.

The next step is the gazettelement and entry into force of the amended Regulations, which will mark an important milestone in the continued modernization of Belize's maritime regulatory framework.

Charting the Course for Quality: ISO 9001:2026 and IMMARBE

By Mr. David Guerra, Director of Quality Management Systems

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) formally published ISO 9001:2026 on 16 September 2026, marking an important milestone in the evolution of quality management systems worldwide. As the first major revision of the standard in over a decade, it reflects the realities of today's business environment, in which organizations must balance operational excellence, resilience, innovation and stakeholder expectations. As Director of Quality Management Systems at IMMARBE, I view this revision not as an overhaul but as an opportunity to strengthen the effectiveness and maturity of our existing Quality Management System while continuing to support IMMARBE's commitment to excellence, compliance and customer service.

The revision places greater emphasis on quality culture, ethical behaviour, leadership accountability and the effective management of risks, opportunities and organizational change. It also provides clearer guidance on distinguishing risks from opportunities and strengthens alignment with other ISO management system standards. These enhancements recognize that quality depends not only on documented procedures but also on leadership commitment, organizational culture and informed decision-making.

At IMMARBE, we have already begun evaluating our current processes, governance arrangements and management practices, and will implement the changes needed to further strengthen leadership engagement, risk and opportunity management, internal governance, performance monitoring and organizational resilience. While organizations have a three-year transition period to adopt the revised standard,

IMMARBE aims to complete the transition well ahead of the deadline, demonstrating our commitment to embedding quality throughout the organization so that it contributes directly to effective oversight and service excellence.

For our Deputy Registrars, vessel owners, vessel managers and seafarers, the key message is simple: no action is required on your part. The transition to ISO 9001:2026 applies to IMMARBE's internal Quality Management System and introduces no new requirements or additional administrative burden for you. Rather, we will leverage the revised standard to improve efficiency, strengthen digital workflows, enhance governance and deliver an even better customer experience.

ISO 9001:2026 is a reminder that quality is not a destination but an ongoing journey. For IMMARBE, this revision is an opportunity to strengthen our management system, enhance organizational performance and continue providing efficient, reliable and customer-focused services to the global maritime community.



MEET OUR STAFF

Meet the New Additions to Our Team

Ms. Aurelie Leon
MONITORING OFFICER – BHSFU



When I first joined the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit (BHSFU) as an intern, I knew very little about IMMARBEL or the wider maritime sector. As a Marine Biology major, I had always been interested in the ocean, but I had not realized how many areas of work are connected to fisheries and maritime operations. My internship introduced me to high-seas fisheries, fisheries monitoring, international regulations and the many departments that work together within the sector. The more I learned, the more interested I became, and what began as an internship led to an opportunity to join the team as a Monitoring Officer.

As I begin this new chapter, I look forward to deepening my knowledge of high-seas fisheries management, monitoring, control and surveillance, and other areas of maritime operations. My goal is to keep building my experience, grow within the sector and contribute to the effective monitoring of high-seas fisheries in support of Belize's responsibilities within the international fisheries community.

Ms. Jessica Villarreal
TECHNICAL OFFICER – IMMARBEL



I am pleased to introduce myself as the newest member of the International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize (IMMARBEL), having joined the Administration as a Technical Officer on 15 September 2026.

I am a maritime professional with more than 17 years of experience across flag administrations, recognized organizations (classification societies) and maritime training institutions. My career has spanned technical surveying, vessel operations management, quality assurance, and compliance with key international instruments, including SOLAS, MARPOL, STCW and the MLC. I have managed technical departments, conducted audits, overseen vessel administration, and supported safety, security and environmental compliance through implementation of the ISM and ISPS Codes and the MLC. These experiences have strengthened my commitment to high standards and to safe, efficient shipping. I am currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Naval Repair, focusing on ship repair and maintenance, which reflects my passion for technical excellence and lifelong learning.

I am excited to join IMMARBEL and look forward to working with my colleagues, contributing to the Administration's objectives and supporting the continued growth and reputation of the Belize Maritime Registry.

Department Spotlight

Operations Department:

Coordinating. Connecting. Communicating. Delivering.

At IMMARBE, the work the maritime industry sees, from ship registration and technical services to seafarer services and stakeholder engagement, is supported by a wide range of activity behind the scenes.

The Operations Department keeps those moving parts connected. From coordinating organizational activities and supporting our people to managing IMMARBE's digital presence and public-facing communications, Operations plays a cross-functional role in ensuring that plans move from idea to execution.

What Does the Operations Department Do?

⚓ **Organizational Coordination**

Supporting management with planning, coordination, follow-up and implementation of organizational priorities and initiatives.

⚓ **Office & Administrative Operations**

Coordinating the day-to-day administrative functions, resources and logistics that enable IMMARBE's departments to carry out their work.

⚓ **Human Resources & People Support**

Supporting recruitment, onboarding, employee relations, performance management, staff development, engagement and other key HR initiatives.

⚓ **Events & Stakeholder Engagement**

Coordinating the logistics and organizational support behind internal activities, stakeholder engagements, exhibitions, workshops and other official events.

⚓ **Website & Digital Management**

Managing and maintaining IMMARBE's website content, including updates, announcements, and notices that help ensure stakeholders have access to relevant and timely information.

⚓ **Social Media & Corporate Communications**

Supporting IMMARBE's digital presence by developing and coordinating social media content, campaigns, announcements and visual communications that showcase IMMARBE's work and keep stakeholders informed.

⚓ **Connecting the Inside to the Outside**

One of the distinctive aspects of Operations is its reach across the organization.

Operations works with management, every functional area, employees, external stakeholders and the wider maritime community. Whether coordinating an internal initiative, preparing for an international exhibition, supporting an employee program or announcing an organizational milestone online, Operations helps bring the pieces together.

A successful event, a well-coordinated meeting, an updated website, a timely social media post, a staff development program or a new organizational process may each appear to be a separate activity. For Operations, they all serve one objective:

Making sure people, processes, information and resources come together to move IMMARBE forward.



