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To: All Media

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New ICO website models 'Transparency by Design'

Hamilton, Bermuda. The Information Commissioner's Office (**ICO**) is pleased to announce that its redesigned website, ico.bm, will go live on Friday, 15 July 2022.

The ICO's website continues to include the Information Commissioner's decisions, public authorities' Information Statements, ICO guidances, policies and procedures, work dashboards and other ICO publications and information. Enhancements include better search functionalities within the decisions and public authorities' listings. The redesigned website also includes a specific webpage on how to make a PATI request, in a more accessible format for the public.

"The Public Access to Information (PATI) Act offers a promise to Bermudians and residents of more transparency from public authorities and raises expectations about their openness and accountability. To fulfil this promise, public sector leadership should embrace a culture of transparency and readily place more information in the public domain," explained Information Commissioner Gitanjali Gutierrez. "The idea of 'transparency by design' embraces the culture shift within the public sector that was furthered by the PATI Act. In a culture of transparency, increased public disclosure of public authorities' activities, decisions and policies is the goal. The public sector should be creating and managing information to support this openness. The ICO's redesigned website seeks to model this approach to transparency for the benefit of the public and public authorities".

The redesigned website models transparency by design by making additional documents publicly available that shed light on the ICO's management of public funds and its work. The website now includes the:

- ICO's PATI disclosure log (without PATI requesters' identities),
- Meeting minutes from ICO staff meetings,
- Information Commissioner's business credit card statements,
- Unaudited quarterly expenditure reports,
- ICO salary scales, and
- Other finance, governance and administrative records.

This redesign is a direct result of the ICO's work with the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC). In addition to sitting on the ICIC Executive Committee, Bermuda's ICO is a member of the ICIC's Transparency by Design Working Group. The Working Group aims to advance global knowledge and understanding of, and establish agreement amongst Information Commissioners on, the principles underpinning the culture of 'transparency by design'. The working group will gather and compare the experiences of ICIC members with their governments' and public authorities' current attitudes towards proactive disclosures, as well as the opening of more data and general information for the public to access. Ultimately, the aim is to develop a policy paper with best practices for adoption at the 2023 ICIC Conference. The Working Group is currently comprised of Information Commissioners from:

- Brazil - Office of the Comptroller General of the Union (Co-chair)
- Albania - Information and Data Protection Commissioner's Office
- Bermuda - Information Commissioner's Office
- Canada (Ontario) - Information and Privacy Commissioner's Office of Ontario
- Hungary - National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information
- Mexico - Institute for Transparency, Access to Public Information and Personal Data Protection
- Mexico (State of Mexico) - Institute for Transparency, Access to Public Information and Personal Data Protection of the State of Mexico and Municipalities (Infoem)
- Nepal - National Information Commission
- Philippines - Freedom of Information Programme Management Office (FOI-PMO)
- South Africa - Information Regulator
- United Kingdom - Information Commissioner's Office (Co-chair)

"A priority for the ICO is to ensure that our experience with the ICIC serves to benefit the public and public authorities in Bermuda. Our website redesign is a local application of international best practices when it comes to public access to information. It demonstrates in a concrete way how public authorities can proactively embrace the idea of transparency by design," stated Commissioner Gutierrez. "For example, to support accountability for public expenditures, we now publish the ICO's corporate credit card statements, which are paid from the government's Consolidated Fund. Publishing government credit card statements has long-been a practice of public authorities in other jurisdictions, such as the Cayman Islands and the UK, and is a practice the ICO has now adopted."

"The international trend towards transparency by design is consistent with the culture shift seen in Bermuda's public authorities. The Government's public sector reform initiatives have sought to improve information management and to increase trust between the public sector and the public," explained Commissioner Gutierrez. "The ICO also joins other public authorities in Bermuda who are demonstrating a culture of openness, for example, by publishing their meeting minutes on their websites. The Information Commissioner's Annual Reports highlight other examples of the broad

scope of information that public authorities are voluntarily disclosing. The ICO is pleased to recognise that a culture of transparency by design already has a strong foothold in Bermuda and will inevitably continue to grow amongst public authorities.”

The ICO invites the public and public authorities to explore the ICO’s new website.

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Editor’s Notes:

The ICO is an independent public office responsible for promoting the use of and overseeing compliance with the Public Access to Information (PATI) Act 2010. The PATI Act gives the public a right to access records held by public authorities, subject to listed exemptions and administrative grounds for denial of access. Individuals who are dissatisfied with the response of a public authority may seek a review by the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner shall investigate and the decisions by the Information Commissioner are legally binding.

Further information about the ICO is available at www.ico.bm.

The International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC) is a permanent network established in March 2019, which connects member Information Commissioners to foster the protection and the promotion of access to public information as a fundamental pillar to social, economic and democratic governance. Bermuda’s Information Commissioner is an Executive Member of the ICIC and a member of the Transparency by Design Working Group.

Further information about the ICIC is available at www.informationcommissioners.org.