

Foreign Exchange Summary

as at October 18, 2019

Member State	USD	CAD	GBP	Euro
Bahamas (BSD)	1.00	0.76	1.30	1.12
Barbados (BBD)	2.03	1.55	2.63	2.27
Belize (BZD)	2.02	1.55	2.62	2.26
Guyana (GYD)	218.00	160.13	270.96	234.57
Haiti (HTG)	93.20	70.75	124.33	103.40
Jamaica * (JMD)	138.97	105.64	177.33	153.76
OECS (XCD)	2.71	2.06	3.48	3.00
Suriname (SRD)	7.52	5.68	9.71	8.39
T&T (TTD)	6.76	5.45	9.17	7.91

*Rates applicable for Customs & GCT purposes

Business News In Brief

Bermuda to accept digital currency

As at January 2020, Bermuda will be accepting digital currency as payment for government taxes, fees and services. Digital payments will be allowed, provided they are licensed by the Bermuda Monetary Authority, in the form of stablecoins, which are pegged to the US dollar and derive their value from the fiat currency. Specific legislation has been passed for initial coin offerings and a regulatory sandbox established whereby digital asset companies can launch their services on a limited scale to allow supervisory authorities to study the best regulatory approach. [\(CC\)](#)

Jamaica imports from CARICOM plunge 38.3%

Jamaica's imports from CARICOM were valued at US\$178.7 million for January to July 2019, which represented a 38.3% decline relative to January to July 2018. The major commodity group that contributed to this decline were "Mineral Fuels, etcetera" and "Chemicals". Imports of "Mineral Fuels, etcetera" was valued at US\$33.7 million while "Chemicals" was valued at US\$13.2 million. Imports of "Food", however, increased by 6.0% and were valued at US\$84.0 million. Total exports to CARICOM were valued at US\$50.8 million, 10.4% above the US\$46.0 million earned in the similar 2018 period. Re-exports for January to July 2019 increased to value US\$7.6 million, moving down by 3.8%, from the US\$7.3 million for January to July 2018. [\(STATIN\)](#)

IMF: Bahamas economy will shrink 0.6% in 2020

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is projecting that the economy of the Bahamas will shrink by 0.6% next year. That's the word according to the recently released "[World Economic Outlook: Global Manufacturing Downturn, Rising Trade Barriers](#)" report. Based on its projections, The Bahamas will return to positive growth by 2024, when the IMF forecasts the country will see a real gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 1.6 %. In April the IMF projected economic growth of 2.1 % for The Bahamas in 2019, but revised that projection in this recent world economic report to 0.9% growth. The IMF also predicted double-digit percentage changes to the government's deficit in 2020. It projected that the percent balance on current government accounts will hit -7.4 % in 2019, -12.8 % in 2020 and -5.5 % in 2024. Prices are projected to level off at a 2.8 % expansion in 2019, up from the 2 % increase in 2018. However, the IMF projected prices to deflate in 2020, settling at 2.4 by the end of 2020. [\(NG\)](#)

Corporate Movements

⇒ Access Financial Services Limited (AFS) has advised of the appointment of Frederick Williams to the position of Chief Operating Officer effective October 7, 2019.

Barbados reaches debt restructuring deal with creditors

Barbados agreed to settle with international creditors nearly 18-months after defaulting on its debt under an arrangement that includes plans to issue new bonds. Creditors, will take a 26.3 % cut on the aggregate sum of the original principal and 14 months worth of past due and accrued interest as of October 1, 2019. Barbados will issue new bonds of at least \$500 million that mature in 2029 and carry a 6.5% coupon. Creditors will receive an upfront cash payment of \$7.5 million at the closing to those participating in the exchange offer. In addition, bondholders will get \$32.5 million paid out in the form of Past Due Interest (PDI) bonds with a fixed annual coupon of 6.5%. These PDI bonds will amortize \$30 million in October 2020 and have a final maturity in February 2021. The balance of the restructuring will be capitalized by the new bonds maturing in 10 years. The debt restructuring agreement includes a natural disaster clause, that "will enable the government to capitalize interest and defer principle maturities due on the new bonds for two years." [\(LF\)](#)

Stock Market Summary

as at October 18, 2019

Jamaica Stock Exchange

Overall Market activity resulted from trading in 31 stocks of which 16 advanced, 10 declined and 5 traded firm. Market volume amounted to 31,484,701 units valued at over J\$125,777,352.06. Wigton Windfarm Limited Ordinary Shares was volume leader with 24,544,031 units (77.96%) traded. JSE Index advanced by 2,582.15 points (0.52 %) to close at 501,776.77.

Barbados Stock Exchange

1 security advanced as 250 shares traded on the Regular Market, with a total value of BD\$6,250.00. West India Biscuit Company Limited was the sole trader, trading 250 shares at \$25.00. Index closed at 3,272.60.

Trinidad & Tobago Stock Exchange

Overall Market activity resulted from trading in 16 securities of which 9 advanced, 2 declined and 5 traded firm. Trading activity on the First Tier Market registered a volume of 86,394 shares crossing the floor of the Exchange valued at TT\$2,407,278.75. Trinidad and Tobago NGL Limited was the volume leader with 42,050 shares changing hands for a value of TT\$1,087,002.50. The All T&T Index advanced by 2.45 points (0.14%) to close at 1,756.26. The Composite Index advanced by 0.34 points (0.02%) to close at 1,414.27 and the Cross Listed Index declined by 0.25 points (0.17%) to close at 145.38.

Guyana Stock Exchange

1 stocks advanced, 2 declined and 2 traded firm as 41,287 units traded on the Regular Market. Banks DIH Limited (DIH) was volume leader with 28,644 shares traded. Guyana Bank for Trade & Industry Limited (BTI) traded 3,098 shares The LSI closed at 583.49.

Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange (ECSE)

Market activity resulted from trading in 4 stocks with a volume of 14,054 shares. TDC Limited was the volume leader with 10,000 shares traded. Index closed at 148.68.

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Business News In Brief

Jamaica's unemployment rate falls to 7.8%

As at July 2019, Jamaica's unemployment rate fell a further 0.6 percentage points to 7.8 % relative to July 2018. The Employed Labour Force was recorded as 1,254,100 with the decline in the unemployment rate reflecting the higher growth in employment (31,500) rather than the overall growth in the labour force. In July 2019, the Labour Force stood at 1,360,800 persons, representing an increase of 26,100 (2.0%) when compared to the 1,334,700 recorded in July 2018. The male labour force increased by 13,900 (1.9%) to 735,900 in July 2019 and the female labour force increased by 12,200 (2.0%) to 624,900. The occupation group 'Clerks' recorded an increase in employment of 19,100 persons (23.2%), to 101,300 in July 2019. The group 'Professionals, Senior Officials and Technicians' increased by 7,500 persons from 263,500 in July 2018 to 271,000 in July 2019. Females accounted for the larger share of the increase in employment within these two groups. [\(STATIN\)](#)

International tax evasion by EU nationals amounts to \$50B

A new study by the European Commission estimates European Union member states lost US\$50.7 billion (46 billion euros), about 0.3% of GDP, in tax revenue in 2016 to international tax evasion by individuals. The report, commissioned by the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament, put the annual tax gap in Europe resulting from tax evasion at between \$850 billion and \$1 trillion. The study however concluded that domestic tax evasion across the spectrum of the population in Europe's shadow economy was by far the biggest problem. Traditional estimates of offshore wealth are based on the gap between international portfolio assets and liabilities, which in theory should balance but in practice do not. This leads analysts to conclude that much of the gap results from the underreporting of offshore assets. The European Commission estimates a total of \$7.8 trillion in global wealth is held offshore. This 2016 figure equated to 10.4% of global GDP at the time. [\(CC\)](#)

International Oil Prices as at October 18, 2019

Futures	Price	US\$ Change	Change
WTI Crude	US\$53.70	-0.40	-0.74
Brent Crude	US\$59.30	-0.55	-0.92
OPEC Basket	US\$59.54	+0.26	+0.44
Natural Gas	US\$2.36	+0.04	+1.72