

MEMO

FROM: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Trade
TO: Heads of Missions
DATE: 28th May 2020
REF: 22/46

RE-OPENING OF INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, EXPANSION OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AMID FURTHER RELAXATION OF CURFEW RESTRICTIONS

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda continues its program of prudent, phased re-opening of the economy as confirmed COVID-19 infection numbers have stalled at **25 cases** and three (3) disease-related deaths for the **past three (3) weeks**. As of current date, Antigua and Barbuda has only one (1) persons known to be infected with COVID-19.

This welcome development in the national effort of COVID-19 control has allowed for further expansion of economic activity for the benefit of the government and people of Antigua and Barbuda. Accordingly, government has in recent weeks given permission for several additional economic and social activities to resume, albeit with strict health protocols in place. Most notable include:

- **The V.C. Bird International Airport will open to international commercial traffic on June 1, 2020.** Several international carriers are expected to begin service to Antigua as

early as June 4, 2020. Strict protocols will be enforced at the points of embarkation and upon passengers' arrival in Antigua.

- In-house restaurant dining, bars, gyms, nightclubs are now allowed to re-open for business, subject to implementation of health protocols and subsequent inspection and approval by personnel from the Ministry of Health.
- Churches may resume regular services subject to the implementation of requisite protocols on hygiene and social distancing.
- Positive developments notwithstanding, **beaches in Antigua and Barbuda will NOT be open for use on Monday, June 1, 2020, Whit Monday**. The Cabinet is aware that many people would likely gather at the beach, disregard the social-distancing rules, and throw caution to the wind. Potential harm to the population is too great to permit large gatherings.

As previously stated, in the event of increased COVID-19 spread, current provisions may be rescinded. Health authorities continue to emphasize that the Covid-19 threat is very real. As such, all residents are strenuously urged to maintain proper hygiene and social distancing practices as a matter of principle amid the nation's gradual economic re-opening efforts. **ENDS**



Anthony Liverpool
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Economic Recovery Committee
Media Statement

27 May 2020

The Economic Recovery Committee (ERC), made up of fifteen of the smartest men and women leaders from different sectors within the Antigua and Barbuda economy, and chaired by Prime Minister Gaston Browne, met virtually for the fourth consecutive meeting on Tuesday, May 26, 2020, from 3:00 pm until nearly 6:00 pm.

The ERC unanimously agreed that the time had arrived to re-open the borders of Antigua and Barbuda on June 1, 2020, allowing airlines to return and hotels to begin receiving guests.

On March 26, 2020, or exactly two months earlier, Antigua and Barbuda's borders were closed to international traffic. The V.C. Bird International Airport and the St. John's Harbour would not receive airplanes and ships because of the Covid-19 global pandemic. The economy of Antigua and Barbuda ground to a halt as the hotels closed their doors and more than 4,500 workers were laid-off temporarily.

The restaurants, shops, vending kiosks, bars and other places of entertainment were also closed, putting many more additional workers out of an income. Taxi drivers and bus operators were adversely affected as a curfew imposed limited travel and reduced significantly the demand for transport services.

After two months of decline, the time has arrived to reset the economy and to place it on a path of growth, the ERC declared.

The Prime Minister requested each member of the ERC to indicate if there was any disagreement or if there was unanimity. The 15 participants all agreed that opening the economy on June 1 met with unanimous approval.

On June 4, 2020, American Airlines will fly from Miami to Antigua, arriving at about 11:00 pm. The crew and aircraft will overnight in Antigua, and return the following day at about 2:00 pm. The bookings indicate that more than 75% of the passengers arriving on June 4, 2020, are likely to be nationals of Antigua and Barbuda. A trickle of tourists will also be on board.

New protocols have been articulated for both groups, involving quarantine and testing, using rapid tests that are 87% accurate.

The ERC expressed the view that a return to normalcy is desired as Antigua and Barbuda moves to a Covid-free status. Only one person remains infected in Antigua and Barbuda. The ERC also recognizes that infected persons may travel to Antigua at some time in the future; however, the infrastructure to handle and effectively deal with all such cases has now been operationalized.

-end-