

Foreign Exchange Summary

as at January 15, 2021

Member State	USD	CAD	GBP	Euro
Bahamas (BSD)	1.00	0.79	1.36	1.21
Barbados (BBD)	2.03	1.61	2.79	2.48
Belize (BZD)	2.02	1.60	2.77	2.46
Guyana (GYD)	218.00	165.45	287.17	255.26
Haiti (HTG)	74.90	57.76	100.58	89.16
Jamaica * (JMD)	144.97	118.45	198.34	179.32
OECS (XCD)	2.71	2.12	3.69	3.29
Suriname (SRD)	14.29	11.12	19.47	17.33
T&T (TTD)	6.78	5.67	9.75	8.64

*Rates applicable for Customs & GCT purposes

Business News In Brief

Capital expenditure slashed in The Bahamas

The government of The Bahamas has cut funding for planned upgrades to 5 airports and is instead seeking to implement a public-private partnership (PPP) program to complete the projects, Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis has said. Speaking during the annual Bahamas Business Outlook, the PM advised that “as a temporary measure to avoid any further deterioration in our fiscal position, we are reducing new capital expenditure for the current fiscal year.” In December, it was announced that the government is seeking to reduce capital and recurrent expenditure by as much as \$200 million for the remainder of the fiscal year. [\(NG\)](#)

World Bank Approves US\$30 Million Credit for St Lucia

The World Bank has approved the US\$30 million Saint Lucia COVID-19 Response, Recovery, and Resilience Development Policy Credit as the country’s GDP is projected to contract by 18% in 2020 due to the nearly complete halt in tourism. This quick-disbursing credit aims to help mitigate the negative economic impacts of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable and to strengthen the country’s economic recovery. Specifically, the operation supports medium-term resilience through structural reforms to improve public financial management, procurement, and debt transparency. Resilience will also be enhanced through reforms related to financial resilience to disasters and education sector policies. [\(WB\)](#)

Jamaica’s securities market grows by 100%

Finance Minister Dr Nigel Clarke, says Jamaica’s private securities market grew by approximately 100% between 2017 and 2020, with the value of bond issuance transactions doubling from some \$200 million to \$400 million. This metric was noted within the context that the banking sector recorded loan growth ranging between 16 and 35% over the period. He was speaking during the digital launch of the Jamaica Stock Exchange private market. The private market will facilitate the listing of private bonds and equities securities on the NASDAQ Platform. “It will build secondary market participation and offer opportunities for investors and corporates alike [by providing a] transparent mechanism for the pricing and trading of private market securities,” Dr Clarke said. The private listing and trading of securities on the new platform will be in accordance with the FSC’s guidelines for exempt distributions which allows companies to issue securities to raise money without filing a prospectus. [\(JO\)](#)

Corporate Movements

- ⇒ Barita Investments has appointed Junior Graham as Vice President – Information Technology, effective January 4;
- ⇒ Scotiabank Trinidad and Tobago Ltd has appointed Kimi Rochard as Corporate Secretary effective January 4;
- ⇒ Digicel Jamaica has appointed Jabbor Kayumov as CEO.

Bermuda to reform ‘unfair’ tax system

Premier David Burt is planning to reform the country’s tax system in time for the 2022/23 budget year, noting Bermuda’s wealth generation was tied to an unfair system of taxation. He noted that the existing system taxes labour, through a payroll tax, but no other sources of income. To balance the jurisdiction’s fiscal position, which has suffered budget deficits and a high and growing government debt burden, Bermuda’s government has ruled out new taxes in the short term. However, Bermuda’s Fiscal Responsibility Panel in its pre-pandemic 2019 report noted that meeting the country’s fiscal targets, in terms of budget surpluses and a debt-to-revenue ratio of 80%, will require significant revenue increases. The panel recommended Bermuda should significantly raise tax revenues as a share of GDP in line with similar economies. This could include a move from a payroll tax to a progressive income tax, as well as the taxation of capital income in addition to labour income. [\(CC\)](#)

Stock Market Summary

as at January 15, 2021

Jamaica Stock Exchange

Overall Market activity resulted from trading in 44 stocks of which 19 advanced, 22 declined and 3 traded firm. Market volume amounted to 6,649,726 units valued at over J\$37,545,320.43. Pulse Investments Limited was volume leader with 2,515,270 units. Index advanced by 665.72 points to close at 389,411.86.

Jamaica Junior Stock Exchange

Overall market activity resulted from trading in 40 stocks of which 28 advanced, 10 declined and 2 traded firm. Market volume amounted to 10,923,530 units valued at over J\$27,075,113.82. Jamaica Teas Limited was volume leader with 4,080,360 units. Index closed at 2,702.59.

Barbados Stock Exchange

I security advanced as 10 shares traded with a total value of \$315.50. The sole trader was West India Biscuit Company Limited. Index closed at 2,603.63.

Trinidad & Tobago Stock Exchange

Overall Market activity resulted from trading in 20 securities of which 9 advanced, 8 declined and 3 traded firm. Trading activity on the First Tier Market registered a volume of 200,379 shares crossing the floor of the Exchange valued at TT\$3,049,318.11. JMMB Group Ltd was volume leader with 65,298 shares changing hands for a value of TT\$126,699.78. The All T&T Index declined by 10.31 points to close at 1,776.00 and the Composite Index declined by 0.29 points to close at 1,331.42.

Guyana Stock Exchange

1 stock and 2 traded firm as 1,124,394 units crossed the floor. Banks DIH (DIH) was volume leader with 1,016,273 shares traded. The LSI closed at 692.49.

Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange (ECSE)

1 stock traded firm with 444 East Caribbean Financial Holding Company Ltd trading. Index closed at 147.02.

CARICOM Business is a weekly newsletter produced by the Directorate of Trade & Economic Integration.

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Business News In Brief

RF Holdings to accept digital currency regionally

RF Holdings Limited, parent company to a group of investment banks in The Bahamas, Barbados, and the Cayman Islands, has entered into partnership with financial technology company, Bitt to facilitate the acceptance of digital currency transactions across its Caribbean network. The partnership, which focuses on developing a platform based on Bitt's digital currency infrastructure, will allow for digital currencies, such as 'Sand Dollar' in The Bahamas, 'mMoney' in Barbados, and the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank's 'DCash', to be accepted and accessed across the investment's bank's products by a wider network of Caribbean clients. The platform will be able to facilitate payments from and between institutions such as banks, individual consumers and merchants. [\(JO\)](#)

News Highlights

- [Global Economy to Expand by 4% in 2021](#)
- [Legally Speaking, is Digital Money Really Money?](#)

US bans anonymous shell companies

The US has taken steps with the Corporate Transparency Act to eliminate the potential use of anonymous shell companies for money laundering and tax evasion. Congress passed the Act, as part of the US Defense Appropriations Bill, on January 1. The new law requires corporations, LLCs and "similar entities" to report the natural persons who own and control an entity to the US Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN), which has responsibility for storing and reviewing the data. The information can be accessed by law enforcement for authorised investigations as well as financial institutions, with the consent of the reporting company, for customer due-diligence purposes. Under the new law, private companies must provide the name, address, date of birth, and driver's licence or other identification number of its beneficial owners. [\(CC\)](#)

International Oil Prices as at January 15, 2021

Futures	Price	US\$ Change	Change %
WTI Crude	US\$52.15	-1.58	-2.96
Brent Crude	US\$54.91	-1.55	-2.75
OPEC Basket	US\$55.19	-0.62	-1.11
Natural Gas	US\$2.75	+0.09	+3.38