



MEDIA STATEMENT

Grantley Adams International Airport Inc. and The Office of His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Dalmoock Al Maktoum of Dubai and Agencias Universales S.A. of Chile sign a Memorandum of Understanding towards a new Public Private Partnership for the investment, development and operation of the airport, a hemispheric hub for cargo, expanded airlift and additional luxury hotel capacity.

START

Bridgetown and Dubai, July 18th, 2023. Building on the Barbados-UAE State-to-State MOU earlier this year, supporting closer cooperation of commercial activities, GAIA Inc. and the Office Of H.H. Sheikh Ahmed Dalmoock Al Maktoum of Dubai and Agencias Universales S.A. of Chile announced today a Memorandum of Understanding to finalise contractual arrangements towards a new Public Private Partnership for the investment, development and operation of the airport, a hemispheric cargo hub, expanded airlift and additional luxury hotel capacity.

Background

The Government of Barbados is keen for more and better employment opportunities for all Barbadians. In the international transport sector, this can only come through an investment in Grantley Adams International Airport of approximately BDS\$300 million that improves the customer experience, upgrades the infrastructure, develops retail revenues, a hemispheric cargo hub, and links these investments with initiatives for new airlift and hotel capacity. The Government of Barbados recognises that without substantial investment, the airport will not be able to maintain standards and certifications in the long run.

At the same time, the Government of Barbados is in a debt-reduction program to safeguard the value of the Barbados dollar. As a result of that program, the ratio of national debt to national income peaked at 176.8% in 2018 and, despite the pandemic, is now at 119.6% - almost halfway to the long-run sustainable target of 60%. But this track leaves little room on the Government's balance sheet for substantial addition of debt for required airport investments.

The Government of Barbados also has no desire, under any circumstances, to sell Grantley Adams International Airport. Consequently, the best avenue for new investment is a Public Private Partnership which brings investment and international airport management experience and expertise in return for sharing airport revenues.

Partnership

The proposed Public Private Partnership follows the earlier MOU between the Governments of Barbados and the UAE that looked towards closer commercial interests, especially in the transport and travel sectors.

The Government of Barbados is pleased that in The Office of H.H. Sheikh Ahmed Dalmook Al Maktoum, it has found a partner with the shared priorities of protecting and expanding national employment through investment, training, service excellence and certification, employee and customer safety, net-zero targets, higher revenue growth and better integration between airport-cargo-air lift and hotels.

The partner group, led by the Office of H.H. Sheikh Ahmed Dalmook Al Maktoum of Dubai and Agencias Universales S.A. of Chile, has substantial experience in airport passenger and cargo operations in over 20 countries across three continents. In addition to the approximately BDS\$300m to be invested in the airport by the Office of H.H. Sheikh Ahmed Dalmook Al Maktoum of Dubai, The Office is committed to coordinating and facilitating investments in new hotels and airlift.

Quotes

Barbados Minister of Tourism and International Transport, Ian Gooding-Edghill said, "We are excited about the prospect of more jobs, training and certification across the eco-system of the airport, airport services, and tourism sectors. I know that change can be unsettling, even if positive, so a critical component of this potential PPP is that there will be no change in the ownership of our airport and no change in the terms and conditions of employees. We have also tried hard to keep all workers and their representatives updated and consulted about developments, opportunities and challenges. I commit to continue to do so and keep the public updated. To that end, I will announce a town hall meeting shortly to present the plan and answer any questions Barbadians may have. I thank the Government's Negotiating Committee, and its Chairman, Avinash Persaud, for getting us here with the strong support of the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry, Francine Blackman, GAIA Inc.'s Board and Chairman, Dr. Jerry Emtage, and GAIA Inc. staff, led so well by CEO Hadley Bourne.

Chairman of Grantley Adams International Airport, Dr. Jerry Emtage, said, "I welcome our potential new partners and look forward to seeing the broader positive impact on Barbados of an upgraded airport, greater airlift and more hotel rooms. I thank my Board members for their help in weighing up many complex issues."

Grantley Adams International Airport Inc. CEO Hadley Bourne said, "My team and I have spent many months discussing with our potential new partners at commercial and technical levels. I can vouch for their expertise and understanding of our issues, challenges and opportunities. I am pleased that we have a strong investment plan to maintain and upgrade the airport. I believe visitors, staff and Barbadians will appreciate the differences they will see in a couple of years. I thank my team who worked assiduously supporting the negotiation and planning, in particular, Gale Yearwood."

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Dalmook Al Maktoum said, "We are very pleased to collaborate with the Government of Barbados on this project. We are looking forward to positively contributing to the economy of Barbados by creating jobs, improving airport infrastructure and facilities and promoting tourism in the country."

Mr. Fernando Rodriguez, CEO of Agencias Universales S.A., said, "We are very excited about our partnership with the Government of Barbados and the Office of H.H. Sheikh Ahmed Dalmook Al Maktoum of Dubai. We are committed to the success of this project and making every Barbadian proud of their airport and the upgrades to come."

END

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