



PRESS RELEASE

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To: All Media

For Immediate Release

Re: Environmental initiative proposes charge to encourage phasing out of plastic bags

Barbados, November 10th, 2016 – A non-partisan private sector led environmental initiative is being proposed to unite all Barbadians in saving their country from the dangers posed by the annual disposal of millions of plastic shopping bags.

This comes as local environmentalists have identified the annual disposal of millions of plastic bags as a major problem both in terms of littering, and also polluting the natural environment including our water resources, ocean and seafood with unhealthy toxins.

The proposal to **significantly reduce the distribution of** plastic shopping bags by introducing a charge of **BDS. 15 cents** per bag, is supported by the Future Centre Trust, other environmental NGOs, and backed by a large grouping of local merchants, retailers and even plastic bag manufacturers and distributors.

Speaking at a Press Conference held at BICO Headquarters, Harbour Road, Public Relations Officer of the Future Centre Trust, Kammie Holder, said agreement had been reached among members of the multi-sectoral grouping, including Barbados' major retailers and supermarket chains, to introduce the charge **on May 1st, 2017**.

Holder said the idea was to give both consumers and the business sector a period of time to adjust to the new policy, which would allow for some exemptions including prescription medicines, uncooked meat products, unwrapped foods or those prone to leakage, live fish, and some others.

"Millions of plastic bags are discarded annually into our environment and the dangers posed to our human health and the environment are well documented. In Barbados we are lagging behind several Caribbean countries, and other international jurisdictions that have banned plastic shopping bags. We are proposing a six-month phasing in period before a charge will be levied by merchants in Barbados as a means of changing our culture and resorting to a reusable bag solution," Holder said.

The environmental spokesman said following the introduction of the charge, it was hoped that plastic bags would be significantly reduced from the now 100 million used annually, and subsequently phased out of usage altogether in just under a year's time. He said the plan was based on a similar initiative in the UK, where in the first six months since the introduction of a 5p charge in England in Oct 2015, consumption one-use plastic bags was reduced by 85% or **6 billion** bags.

Noting they were seeking buy-in from Government, the entire private sector and consumers, the group also announced plans for a joint introduction of **affordable reusable bags** promoting the environmental message "Saving Barbados One Bag at a Time" coming ahead of the introduction of the charge.

“We want to make it clear that this is an environmental campaign with the goal of reducing the massive quantities of plastic bags that end up in landfills or as litter in our gullies and coastal areas and the ocean. We are all aware that plastic does not decompose or biodegrade, and is also responsible for the release of dangerous toxins into our soil, water, and marine environment.”

A large number of both large and small retailers have already pledged their support in principle for the plan, including the representatives of major umbrella bodies such as the Barbados Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) and Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA).

Barbados would become the latest in a growing number of regional countries which have either proposed to or succeeded in banning plastic bags including most recently Antigua and Jamaica.

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