



## MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND JOB CREATION

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### PRESS RELEASE

#### **Vaz rejects suggestion that plastic/styrofoam ban is a knee jerk reaction**

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Minister Without Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation Daryl Vaz, is rejecting as false and without basis, a claim by Chairman of the Wisynco Group, William Mahfood, that the Government's decision to impose a ban on plastic bags and styrofoam "is a knee jerk reaction which will not work".

Mr. Mahfood made the statement yesterday in response to the Government's announcement of a ban on the importation, manufacture and distribution of three types of plastic products effective January 1, 2019.

According to Minister Vaz, the suggestion that the Government has taken a "knee jerk" decision could not be further from the truth. The Minister says extensive consultations were held, following the private members motion which was raised in the Senate in October 2016 by Government Senator, Matthew Samuda.

Minister Vaz says the motion went to Cabinet and a public/private sector working group was set up in January 2017, more than a year ago, to deliberate on the issue.

The working group included several Government agencies, the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica (PSOJ), the Jamaica Manufacturers and Employers Association, (JMEA) and the Opposition.

Minister Vaz says of note, is that representatives of WISYNCO were among stakeholders who made submissions to the working group, and the company submitted an extensive document which outlined its feedback to the proposed ban on polystyrene foam.

Following the submission of the Working Group's report to the Minister, the Cabinet asked for further consultations to be held. These were done specifically with Stakeholders, with many of these consultations actually being chaired by the Minister over the last 12 months.

According to Minister Vaz **"the consultations we had were comprehensive and the Government had signaled from long ago that the ban was coming but we wanted to have adequate deliberation with stakeholders. The Government has moved in the direction that many global countries are moving including our Caribbean neighbors, Dominica, the Bahamas and Grenada who this year announced similar measures"**.

The Minister further said that in 2016 when the intention of the Government was made clear, some companies had requested a five (5) year delay in the implementation of the ban but this was regarded as too long.

Minister Vaz says it has been almost three (3) years since stakeholders were aware of the direction in which the Government was heading.

He says last week a few companies again requested a five year extension before the ban was put into effect but this suggestion could not be countenanced given the aforementioned context and the notice given.

According to the Minister, it is noteworthy that Opposition Spokesman on the Environment, Senator Sophia Fraser Binns on public radio today, also dismissed the suggestion that the announcement of the ban was hasty or knee-jerk.

Senator Fraser-Binns stated that she "would not use the term knee jerk" and cited extensive consultations held by the public/private sector working group which deliberated on the issue. Mrs. Fraser Binns also stated that the Opposition participated in the deliberations and "is supporting the initiative of the Government".

Minister Vaz says the Government was reasonable. He says the move to implement a January 2020 timeline for local manufacture and distribution of polystyrene foam to be used as finished goods in the food and beverage industry was to mitigate against any potential losses which local manufacturers may incur due to the ban.

In further rejecting the notion that the ban should not have been announced, Minister Vaz said **"we have to put our country and the well-being of our global village first. I urge those resisting the move to note that it cannot always be about the almighty dollar. The time comes in the existence of any country when decisions have to be made in the interest of current and future generations."**

Minister Vaz also noted that suggestions made in the print media today that the passage of additional legislation is needed for the plastic and Styrofoam ban to take effect is not accurate.

He says the announced measures may be imposed via Sections 8 – 13 of the Trade Act, and where necessary a Ministerial Order from the Industry Minister can be promulgated. Also, the relevant provisions of the Natural Resources Conservation Authority Act will also apply.

Minister Vaz and Senator Samuda are currently in Canada attending the G7 summit of World Leaders where Minister Vaz is to deliver a keynote address to a meeting of G7 Environment Ministers. The Government officials are to return to Jamaica on Thursday September 20.

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