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## Barbados Diaspora Spends Tens of Millions of Dollars Each Year on Barbados Goods Exported to U.S.

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**BARBADOS** — The government of Barbados recently urged Barbados businesses to capitalize on the spending power of the Barbadian Diaspora, according to a news release from the government-run news service.

Barbados Minister of International Business and Industry, Ronald Toppin, made this call during the launch of the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation's (BIDC) major programs for 2020: Bajans Connect, Innovate Barbados and Bloom.

Bajans Connect, an integrated export marketing campaign, seeks to promote the sale of Barbadian goods and services to diaspora markets across the globe.

During the launch, the B IDC signed a memorandum of understanding with Cross Media Designs, the company responsible for the website <https://gatherin2020.com>.

This e-commerce platform will allow local businesses and manufacturers to sell tangible products, downloadable items or promote bookable services online, while targeting Barbadians in the diaspora and friends of the island.

Lauding the initiative, Mr. Toppin stressed that the Barbadian diaspora is “our greatest asset”. He noted that their purchasing capacity was extremely important to the island’s export thrust and foreign exchange earnings.

In the 2010 U.S. Census estimation report, over 62,000 Barbadian Americans lived in the U.S., the majority in the New York City area extending from Rhode Island to Delaware.

“What we sometimes take for granted is that the Barbadian diaspora forms the basis or foundation for what we sell overseas, and therefore the money we earn in foreign exchange. In other words, Barbados would not be able to sell \$37 million in alcoholic beverages or \$3 million in sweet biscuits to the United States in 2018 if it were not for those members of our diaspora in the US demanding our rum and biscuit products,” he said.

Mr. Toppin argued that many economies of origin, such as India, Ireland, Israel and China, have reaped significant benefits bolstered by their diaspora groups. He believed the Barbadian diaspora was just as keen in its devotion to its homeland.

“It is therefore pertinent for us to connect with and tap into the minds of our diaspora. It is imperative that we harness all the data we can on who they are; what they want and why they want it. With that information, the B IDC, under the Bajans Connect programme will put the necessary infrastructure in place to ensure that Barbadians, no matter how far they roam, can buy the authentic Bajan products they desire.

“Achieving this would result in tremendous earnings for our local manufacturers and service providers, and help us as a nation to improve our standard of living and wellbeing in a more sustainable way,” he outlined.

The Industry Minister also praised the other B IDC programs: Innovate Barbados and Bloom.

Innovate Barbados is one of the region’s more progressive innovation conferences. This year it will be held under the theme Blue-Green Caribbean.

Bloom has been described as a Clean-Tech Cluster designed to assist government in the development of a thriving green economy ecosystem. Participating businesses and start-ups will get access to operating space, high quality business intelligence, coaching and financial support, business development, match-making and business incubation services, and much more.