

Press Release

## Birmingham Commonwealth Association

Date 31 May 2016

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**Tri-lateral trade opportunities which have been developed in Jamaica by a West Midlands public-private sector alliance between the Birmingham Commonwealth Association , UK Trade & Investment and JAMPRO, could provide the springboard for further success in other Commonwealth countries.**

**That's the belief of the Birmingham Commonwealth Association led, UKTI and JAMPRO-supported mission which has returned home after taking part in Jamaica Expo 2016, hosted in Kingston by the Jamaica Exporters' Association, the Jamaica Manufacturers' Association in partnership with the Jamaica Promotions Corporation.**

**A highlight of the Expo was the business platform from which Jamaican and UK exporters and service providers could broker partnerships, market products and engage in one-to-one sessions with potential buyers.**

**“Valuable import-export orders were secured at the event, which featured 300 exhibitors – and what the partnership with the Birmingham Commonwealth Association achieved in Jamaica we will now be looking to replicate in other Commonwealth countries such as South Africa, ”said UKTI international trade adviser Pete West,. “It also enabled us with the opportunity to share ‘best practice’ and discuss the possibility of student exchanges.”**

**Birmingham City Council, Birmingham City University, Birmingham Commonwealth Association, and enterprises such as Cleone Foods, Diamond Travel and Medical Devices Technology International (MDTI) were also represented. In fact, Martin Levermore, Chairman of the BCA's Trade and Business Focus Group and Chief Executive of MDTI, the award-winning company which finances and produces innovative medical devices, who had a one-to-one meeting with the Prime Minister of Jamaica, Rt. Hon. Andrew Holness, donated equipment to help establish a mobile health clinic on the island. Ultimately, it is hoped that mobile health clinics will be available in all of Jamaica's 14 parishes.**

**Martin said: “The mission was very successful and demonstrated that the unique model of co-partnership between industry, academia, local government and central government agencies such as UKTI is able to scale heights at pace that only few can ever imagine.” He added: “The mobile clinic project looks at an unmet need and translates clinical knowhow and business intelligence in a manner that brings about Universal Health Care of a nation in the first-of-its-type public and private partnership. The resultant outcome of agreements will see the Midlands reaping in excess of £10 million worth of export business over the next five years, whilst creating long term and sustainable employment for 150 Jamaicans.”**

**Cleone Foods, established by managing director Wade Lyn in 1988 to produce and distribute Jamaican patties under the Island Delight trademark, signed a distribution agreement with a Jamaican food producer to repackage and distribute products into the UK and Europe. Cleone has invested £250,000 in new machinery and expects the contract to yield £1 million per annum of export business.**

**It also signed an agreement to manufacture under licence a Jamaican food product for the UK and Europe, creating new business worth £1 million a year. As a result, Cleone will require an additional manufacturing facility, creating ten new jobs in Birmingham.**

**As far as Birmingham City Council was concerned, one of the objectives of the mission – lauded as an ‘undoubted success’ - was to promote mutually beneficial practical linkages between the heritage communities and local authorities of Birmingham and Kingston – an initiative forming part of larger engagement with Jamaica’s business, government, education and cultural sectors. Council representatives, in discussions with Kingston officials, including the mayor, Dr Angela Brown Burke, agreed a joint work programme. Activities will include a programme of short-term internships around aspects of city management, local economic development and engagement, the exchange of school staff and student teachers and the creation of placements in businesses to gain experience, upskilling and personal development.**

**Keith Stokes-Smith, Birmingham Commonwealth Association chairman, said: “This was the BCA's first of many missions it intends to arrange, in collaboration with organisations like UKTI, to Commonwealth Countries. One cannot knock the EU as a trading partner; however, lets not underestimate the global significance, potential and advantages of trading with Commonwealth nations. 53 English speaking countries with a combined population of 2.2 billion – at least 60% of whom are under the age of 30– and a combined GDP of approximately US\$9.6 trillion. The Commonwealth Factor, with its shared language, complementary legal systems and business practices, helps make trade on average 10-15% cheaper between members’ countries. By 2020**

**Commonwealth trade is expected to double to US\$1 trillion.”**

**Commenting further, Mr Stokes-Smith said “ it is also opportune to announce, and I am very pleased to do so, that Ruth Lea CBE , a British political economist working in the financial sector, has agreed to be the Birmingham Commonwealth Associations first patron.**