

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Trinidad & Tobago Yacht Services Sector - Approximately 2000 Jobs and their Dependents Still Awaiting Relief**

**Chaguaramas, Trinidad & Tobago - 14 December 2020:** Yacht Services Association Trinidad & Tobago (YSATT) pleads with the government authorities to allow for international yacht arrivals. Since the beginning of the pandemic and border closures the yacht services industry in Trinidad & Tobago has been largely shut down. The yacht services sector in Trinidad is world class and operates as a direct foreign exchange earning industry; this income is being lost. The customers to this industry directly and indirectly support several thousands of local incomes and their families; their livelihood is being lost.

The jobs and quality/variety of services provided by our yacht service workers in Trinidad cannot be found anywhere else in the Caribbean. There are many yachts owned by international customers that are in storage in Trinidad. These customers are being barred from entry to return to their property as well as those who would like to sail to Trinidad to conduct much needed work and repairs.

There is a perceived apathy on the government's part to the plight of our workforce. As shown in the following details and timeline, there is no scientific basis for not granting travel exemptions to these customers of which Covid transmission risk is incredibly low and manageable.

Among the yachting community in the Caribbean there have been NO reported cases of Covid infection or transmission, and the same holds for the yachting community globally. The majority of this population are of retirement age and take all precautions to reduce the risk to themselves and others from this viral pandemic.

In the months since the easing of lockdowns, Trinidadian borders have remained closed to international customers in spite of various protocols in place that would allow for safe arrivals by air or sea. Various other Caribbean nations, such as Grenada and St Lucia have successfully demonstrated the ability to welcome yachting customers through their ports with incredibly low risks of Covid transmission. This has been achieved through testing, quarantine periods aboard vessels in designated areas, or designated hotels, and other strict controls.

In May, YSATT submitted a letter to the Road to Recovery Committee set up by the government, as requested by the Prime Minister. Following consultation with the Committee a Joint Proposal, by YSATT and the Port Health Safety System (PHSS), for the safe reopening of the Yacht Services Industry was submitted to the Chief Medical Officer.

In June, stakeholders and government agencies met to discuss the Joint Proposal. Government agencies involved in discussions included: Maritime Services Division, Port Health Officer, a Representative of the Ministry of Health, North Post Radio Station, Customs, and Immigration. All concerns were discussed and addressed. The Coast Guard had also been separately consulted.

YSATT representatives also met cordially with Minister Young and Minister Imbert. Both Ministers were sensitive to the plight of the industry and its many suffering labourers and gave assurances to revisit the situation. To date, YSATT has been unable to secure any further meeting with the Honourable Ministers.

Later that month, June, the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) stated that the Joint Proposal was well done and of a high standard. In consultation with the Chief Public Health Inspector (CPHI) YSATT addressed and corrected minor issues with the Joint Proposal for Safe Reopening as requested by the CMO and resubmitted the Proposal.

In August, the CMO gave his final approval for the Joint YSATT - PHSS Proposal for a Safe Reopening of the Yacht Services Industry. This approval validated the methods and procedures to be used for the reopening of the Yacht Services Sector and satisfied the scientific requirements being requested by the Prime Minister, the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Health for all Industries.

In November, after several attempts to arrange meetings, YSATT wrote to the Minister of National Security, the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Trade & Industry requesting any possible assistance for the travel exemptions to yacht services customers, or any possible facilitation/travel exemptions for the industry. This plea was made in light of all the requirements and requests for procedures from the Government being completed.

After no reply or acknowledgement of the previous letters, YSATT has most recently written directly to the Minister of National Security requesting any possible exemptions or facilitation for cruisers needing to return to Trinidad. No facilitation or exemptions have been granted to date for the entry of foreign customers to the industry.

In addition to the existing approved protocol, the YSATT stands ready and willing to take any further action necessary. Should our government deem further protocols and measures to be required for the safe reopening YSATT would take all possible actions to see that they are fulfilled.

A whole season has been missed for thousands of dependent workers in the sector. It is absolutely imperative that any approvals come ahead of the season which is fast approaching. This is because many customers will require time to plan their journeys and make reservations for their arrivals. Should another season be missed or delayed, YSATT fears it could be the final nail in the coffin for many in the industry.

In light of the efforts made by the YSATT, the approvals given by Health Authorities, consultation with various government bodies and the desperation of thousands of struggling workers in the industry, YSATT has felt pressure to make public these details. Our people's livelihoods are at stake.

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Contact: For more information please contact .....