



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kingston, Jamaica

JET & C-CAM CALL ON THE GOJ TO REVEAL PLANS FOR THE TRANSSHIPMENT PORT

Over the past several months, the Jamaica Environment Trust (JET) has received telephone calls and e-mails from the public, alleging that there is a plan for the building of a transshipment port development by Chinese investors in the vicinity of the Goat Islands in St Catherine, within the Portland Bight Protected Area. The Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation (C-CAM) is currently negotiating a management agreement with the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA).

Neither JET nor C-CAM has received concrete details of these plans. We call on the GOJ to inform the public exactly what is planned for the transshipment port, including details of efforts to identify the most suitable site in Jamaica.

JET and C-CAM outline below the reasons why the Portland Bight Protected Area is entirely unsuitable for large scale port development.

The site is protected under three different statutes – the Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA) Act declared the Portland Bight Protected Area in 1999. There are also two declared fish sanctuaries under the Fisheries Industry Act - Galleon Harbour and Three Bays Special Fisheries Conservation Areas. There are two Game Reserves declared under the Wildlife Protection Act, at Amity Hall and Cabaritta Point.

The draft Portland Bight Protected Area Management Plan and Hellshire Hills and Goat Islands Management Plans currently being developed by C-CAM as required by the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA), both identify the Goat Islands as of outstanding importance for biodiversity, currently because of their ecological functions and in the future because of their unequalled potential as a predator free area for reintroduction and management of threatened species, including the Jamaican Iguana. There is no comparable site in Jamaica. There is also great potential for ecotourism activities, benefiting local communities.

Large scale port development will have devastating impacts on the coastal environment adjacent to and including the Goat Islands. These impacts include destruction of mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs, opening up access to currently inaccessible areas on land leading to further degradation of the ancient dry limestone forest of the Hellshire Hills. The marine area is a major fish nursery – which is why the fish sanctuaries were declared. In short, any port development and associated infrastructure would have a major adverse impact on the ecology of the Portland Bight Protected Area.

Over decades, many international donor agencies have invested in a wide range of projects in this area – too many to list. They have relied on the legal protections. If the GOJ ignores its own laws, the

confidence of overseas donors in Jamaica's commitment to environmental protection and sustainable development is going to be seriously compromised.

At the Caribbean Summit of Political and Business Leaders in the British Virgin Islands in May 2013, Hon Robert Pickersgill, Minister of Land, Water, Environment and Climate Change made commitments to protect 25% of Jamaica's marine and coastal areas protected by 2020 and referred to the declared fish sanctuaries as evidence of Jamaica's progress towards this goal.

These commitments are entirely inconsistent with the construction of a major port in a protected area, with an extensive marine component.

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