

➤ Regional Market Review

BARBADOS

- The Barbados economy indicated growth of 11.8% during the first quarter of 2022, primarily driven by the revival of the tourism sector .
- At the end of 2021, the unemployment rate was recorded at 10.9% compared to 17.6% in 2020.
- Inflation measured on the 12-month moving average between March 2021 to March 2022 rose by 9.3%
- The stock of gross international reserves decreased by BBD\$40M during Q1 2022 to reach BBD\$3,019M. The demand for foreign exchange by the private sector was higher than for Q1 2021, but improved earnings from the tourism sector enabled commercial banks to meet customer demand while selling more foreign exchange to the Central Bank. This continued build-up of reserves enabled the import reserve cover to reach 36.4 weeks of import cover.

JAMAICA

- The economy is estimated to have grown in the range of 4.5% to 6.5% for the March 2022 quarter, a slower pace of growth relative to the expansion of 6.7% recorded for the December 2021 quarter.
- Real GDP growth for FY2022/23 is projected to moderate within the range of 2.0% to 4.0% from the range of 7.0% to 10.0% previously estimated for FY2021/22.
- In March 2022, annual inflation recorded at 11.3%, above the 7.3% at December 2021 and the 5.2% at March 2021. The March 2022 inflation mainly reflected an increase in energy related inflation.
- The current account deficit for March 2022 quarter ranged between 0.5% to 1.5% of GDP, higher than the March 2021 quarter.
- In March 2022, Central Bank of Jamaica (BOJ) further increased the policy interest rate by 50bps to 4.50% p.a. effective 30 March 2022.

GUYANA

- Real-oil GDP growth of 49.6% and non-oil economy growth of 7.5% is projected for 2022, mainly a result of expansions in all major sectors of the economy, as all COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, and the economy has been fully reopened.
- The inflation rate was recorded at 1.7% at the end of March 2022, below the 5.7% at end-December 2021, mainly driven by increased prices in the fuel and food categories.
- The overall balance of payments recorded a higher deficit of US\$132.0M compared to US\$55.1M for the same period last year. This reflected a higher current account deficit which offset the increase in capital account surplus. The current account deficit resulted from higher payments for both factor and non-factor services whereas the capital account surplus was due to higher inflows to the private sector in the form of foreign direct investment (FDI) despite outflows attributed to oil cost recovery by the oil & gas sector.

EASTERN CARIBBEAN

- The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) projects GDP growth of members to be approx. 6.68% for December 2022, with a target growth rate of 5.0%.
- Economic activity in the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) is expected to be driven by growth in tourism activity over 2022/23. The tourism sector began to recover in mid-2021 as international travel restrictions loosened, the rebound in this sector is likely to speed up in 2022-23. The increased vaccination coverage in OECS countries further supports this trend.