

**PARTNERING TO STRENGTHEN THE LINK BETWEEN TOURISM AND HEALTH  
FOR MORE RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE CARIBBEAN**

**Friday May 2, 2014**

**Renaissance Aruba Resort**

**REMARKS BY GAIL HENRY, SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRODUCT SPECIALIST  
CARIBBEAN TOURISM ORGANIZATION**

**Dr. Rufus Ewing, Premier, Turks and Caicos Islands**

**Hon. Otmar Odouber, Minister of Tourism, Aruba**

**Hon. Dr. C.A. Schwengle, Minister of Health, Aruba**

**Hon. John Maginley, Minister of Tourism, Antigua**

**Dr. C James Hospedales, Director, CARPHA**

**Dr. Lisa Indar, Coordinator, Tourism and Health, CARPHA**

**Other Distinguished Guests**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

**Good Afternoon:**

I bring you warm greetings on behalf of Mr. Hugh Riley, Secretary General and CEO of the Caribbean Tourism Organization. It is my esteemed pleasure to represent him at this important Workshop today. Unfortunately, due to prior commitments abroad, he was unable to join us here in Aruba and sends his

apologies. For me, it is good to be back in Aruba, familiar territory from my prior work here with UNDP.

This Workshop at such a beautiful venue in Aruba takes on even more significance when we take note of the scale of demand for travel to this region. Just to give you a snapshot of this, the Caribbean welcomed more than 25 million stayover visitors and nearly 22 million cruise passenger visits in 2013. They collectively spent an estimate of more than 28 billion dollars. For 2014, it is generally expected that global economies will perform better, with the IMF predicting one per cent growth across Europe and 2.8 per cent in the US - major source markets for Caribbean destinations. The demand for travel, therefore, will remain buoyant once these predictions are realized. As a result, tourist arrivals to the Caribbean are expected to rise between two and three per cent in 2014. Cruise activity is also expected to increase with more ships being delivered, several of which will be deployed in our region. The Caribbean Tourism Organization predicts that cruise passenger arrivals to the Caribbean will increase by about three per cent this year.

In order to realize this anticipated increase in visitors, the Caribbean Tourism Organization's current vision of positioning the Caribbean as the most desirable, year round warm weather destination by 2017 is even more relevant. This is both our challenge and our opportunity to excel as Caribbean destinations which are operating in an increasingly globally competitive situation. The Caribbean brand is powerful and we are still a major player in the rapidly expanding global tourism industry. Notwithstanding this, we are very aware that as consumer confidence and disposable incomes begin to rise again, travellers have many options open to them including destinations, accommodation facilities, travel modes and destination experiences which are influenced by many different internal and external factors. However, as Leaders in Sustainable Tourism in the Caribbean, we cannot ignore the necessity and importance of such growth in the context of creating and maintaining healthy environments, safe workplaces, healthy and highly productive workforces and enhancing the safety of our visitors and communities. We must therefore strive to create even more reasons for travellers to confidently choose to visit our destinations over those in other regions by

providing them with reasonable assurances that when they visit us, they will have positive, memorable, enriching, exciting and safe experiences.

The cross-border nature of tourism renders the industry susceptible to risks and crises but at the same time we have seen past evidence of tourism's resilience. However, even resilience cannot be taken for granted and it definitely does not warrant a do-nothing, business-as-usual approach in the face of unforeseen events. Risk and crisis management must therefore be planned for so that we can minimize potential issues such as the international spread of diseases and encourage enhanced surveillance and responsible reporting of diseases in accordance with the World Health Organization's International Health Regulations. Additionally, the tourism sector employs an estimated 12.3% of the region's workforce. In order to totally satisfy or even exceed our visitors' expectations with the highest level of quality service provision, we need a happy, healthy, safe and efficient workforce.

In fact, the Caribbean Tourism Organization's Regional Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework has set as one of its Development Goals, to manage the health, safety and security issues that impact the sustainability of tourism in our CTO Member countries. This includes:

- Enhancement of communication and coordination mechanisms related to health, safety, security and multi-hazard risk management,
- Improvement of the health and safety of citizens and visitors to the Caribbean, and
- Management of security issues to reinforce the reputation of the Caribbean as a secure destination

As such, this joint programme fits neatly into the Caribbean Tourism Organization's vision, purpose and development goals. What an influential, ground-breaking and precedent-setting statement its success can make by demonstrating to the international travel trade and potential travellers that this region's tourism sector partners care about the wellbeing of our potential visitors, employees and communities. The sustainability of this vital regional industry,

sustainable destination management and by extension, the sustainability of Caribbean societies and economies depends on such a commitment.

The Caribbean Tourism Organization is therefore keen to collaborate with the Caribbean Public Health Agency, the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association and other key regional and national partners to contribute to the positive synergies that will emanate from this initiative. We look forward to supporting the successful implementation of this Tourism, Health, Safety and Environment Programme and to your insightful contributions towards it at this afternoon's Workshop.

Thank You.