

CARPHA- IDB Regional Tourism Health Information, Monitoring and Response Systems and Standards to Enhance Sustainable Tourism Project



**Remarks by Dr. C James Hospedales
on the occasion of signing of IDB grant for tourism and health
CARPHA Headquarters, January 26, 2016**

Hon Shamfa Cudjoe, Minister of Tourism

Mr Julian Belgrave, Chief Operating Officer, Inter American Development Bank TT

Dr Akenath Misir, Principal Medical Officer Environment, Ministry of Health

Mr Hugh Riley, CEO, Caribbean Tourism Organisation

Mr Frank Comito, CEO, Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (participating via skype)

Dr Indar, Program Manager Tourism and Health, CARPHA

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning. I'm truly delighted to welcome you to CARPHA on the occasion of this signing ceremony of the IDB Grant for Tourism and Health, which reflects the efforts of many individuals and support from member states to get to this point. In a way, this project is a dream come true.

Permit me to reflect that travel and tourism as an industry has grown steadily in the past 50+ years, with global international travel arrivals steadily increasing from some 25 million per year in the 1950s, to over one billion ITAs annually. When you consider it, the growth in the industry is one of the most remarkable phenomena of modern times.

And the Caribbean is the most tourism dependent region in the world based on several indicators. And some 15% of that travel in intra-regional travel and arrivals.

But as we have heard, these remarkable levels of travel which bring so many benefits, can also bring different health, social and environmental challenges, including the possible international spread of disease and we in the Caribbean, more than in any other region, need to be proactive in putting in place stronger, more fit-for-purpose, prevention and mitigation initiatives, and measures to ensure happy, healthy guests and staff. So the interests of health and tourism sectors are very inter twined including wellness of the tourism workforce.

And therefore the timing for this project therefore could not be better as new threats to health and travel in the region emerge.

The six member states that will implement the project will be among the earliest beneficiaries, and CARPHA will be seeking complementary resources to extend the range and impact of the project to member states, e.g., via CDB for implementation in the OECS countries.

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This project will contribute also to improving regional health security in the face of new and re-emerging threats to health of residents and visitors through strengthening member states ability to achieve and sustain the capacities under the International Health Regulations for monitoring and response systems.

This project is aligned with key strategic objectives for CARPHA in our Strat Plan, including 'taking a regional approach to member state needs', and "to develop new, value-added services for member states".

This THIMRS Project will add value by improving the quality and competitiveness of the tourism industry, through strengthened tourism health and environment monitoring systems, so that threats can be detected earlier, problems nipped in the bud, to minimize human, economic and reputational damage to the region.

Another key Strategic Objective for CARPHA is, "to take a partnership approach to address public health priorities" and in this regard I'm very pleased to state that this project is a fruit of a partnership agreement signed between CARPHA/CTO/CHTA in June 2014 in NY recognizing the mutuality of interests.

The project is cutting edge, both in the health technical aspects and the close public private collaboration, which is building on years of collaboration and on understanding and trust between leaders in the regional public health and hotel and tourism sectors.

For the project to succeed that sort of public-private partnership also needs to be fostered at national level. It is fitting that the most tourism dependent region in the world develop and pilot these innovations.

The project will also support the achievement of the goals of the Caribbean Cooperation in Health, the CARICOM Strategic Plan, and of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG-3.

CARPHA is well-placed to implement the project as the single regional public health platform, established by member states as a more effective and efficient arrangement for delivery of public health services and regional public goods. But CARPHA needs more investment in order to fully realize its potential in health and development.

CTO and CHTA are well placed partners in the tourism public and private sector, respectively, with many decades of combined service to and knowledge of the industry. I thank and recognize both partners.

Related to this project, we recently launched with other partners, a CaTHNet - Caribbean Travel and Health Network, in which CARPHA CDC, Public Health Agency Canada and Public Health England share info on travel and health related events and issues in the Caribbean and facilitate coordinated responses.

In concluding, I wish to recognize and thank the IDB as a partner on this important project which will deliver and important set of regional goods and strengthen the PPP needed in the region. We have other collaborations with the IDB on health security and on NCDs and look forward to deepening them.

I thank and recognize the internal project team and project lead for this initiative, Dr Lisa Indar, who all worked very hard to get to this point. And now of course, we have to deliver.

I thank you.