

REGIONAL TOURISM AND HEALTH STAKEHOLDERS WORKSHOP

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Remarks by

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In 2015, I realized the THP was built on one of the key pillars of the IDB's health and nutrition frameworks, by focusing on partnering with key institutions such as CARPHA to address key public health issues and challenges facing the Caribbean region. The IDB is therefore happy to be part of this innovative project and is excited about the widespread application of key project deliverables. In fact, this is one of the three (3) projects in which the IDB is partnering with CARPHA; the other being addressing Ebola in the region, and very recently signing on to strengthen countries to build their capacity to address and meet international health regulation requirements.

I also recognized very early on, that one of the critical factors for the successful operation of the project, would be the buy in and full participation of key players, from both the health and tourism sectors, hence the reason why we are all here today. From where the bank sits, I cannot over emphasize the importance of all the organizations represented here to fully embrace the project and commit to working through for it to reach its point of efficient sustainability. Tourism is import to the Caribbean, and as Dr. Indar and Dr. Hospedales said we are a tourism dependent region, and given the recent events caused by mother nature, we really need to buckle down and work together if we are going maintain and expand our tourism product. And while CARPHA is doing its job in fulfilling its mandate and role as a convener and facilitator to the process, it is up to all of us here as partner organizations to work to make it happen, because simply put we don't have much of choice if we want to build capacity and differentiate ourselves in the tourism market. It is important that part of the discussion over the next two days, is that we have some clarification and maybe redefinition of terms, because there tends to be discussions on the side, a bit of discussion whether the THP is addressing healthy tourism, as opposed to medical tourism, and as far as I know, it deals with people and healthy tourism.

This THP is too important with respect to building Caribbean tourism competitiveness, to allow any implementation slippage, and as such we need to maintain and sustain strong working and collaborative relationships with all key stakeholders. While CARPHA is doing its part to provide convening capacity

and training, it's important for key project stakeholders (including international agencies, private sector and civil societies) to buy-in to the project in order to sustain and build on project achievements to date. Implementation success, depends on deep commitment and timely action.

In closing it would be remiss of me to recognize the hard work and contribution by a number of people today, and of course I would start with Dr. Lisa Indar, Mr. Roger Belgrave and Ms. Shenelle Chung; they are the real unsung heroes of the project who work "*around the clock*" and do a lot of work behind the scenes, and I wish to publicly recognize them for organizing this workshop, twice. And of course, I would like to recognize my friend and colleague Dr. James Hospedales and Dr. Virginia Asin-Oostburg for their strategic and oversight and advocacy role in moving this project forward.

I thank you.