



Preliminary programme

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TOURISM AS A KEY SECTOR FOR DEVELOPMENT IN ISLAND STATES

JOINTLY ORGANIZED BY THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM OF THE BAHAMAS, THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (IDB) AND THE WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION (UNWTO)

MELIÁ NASSAU BEACH RESORT, NASSAU, BAHAMAS 19-20 FEBRUARY, 2014

Background

Tourism is one of the principal economic activities in islands and therefore an essential source of job opportunities, livelihood, and inclusive growth for these destinations. For Small Island Developing States (SIDS), international tourism is of special significance and often represents a major source of foreign currency, while at the same time it is subject to specific social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities.

The Conference will build up on the conclusions of the Conference on Sustainable Development of Tourism in Islands held in Reunion Island in September 2013 and shall serve as guidance to National Tourism Authorities and the international community as an input to the Third International Conference on SIDS, scheduled to convene in September 2014, in Samoa, and called for by the United Nations as a follow up to the Rio+20 Conference.

It will address a whole range of relevant issues for island destinations, from the competitiveness and sustainability perspectives, to regional integration, air connectivity, travel facilitation and risk management, to identifying specific challenges and vulnerabilities and examples of relevant actions. The Conference will focus mainly on the Caribbean scenario but will also provide an opportunity to share with the international community, at the ministerial and expert levels, further knowledge and lessons learned for tourism in SIDS all over the world.

As a United Nations specialised agency, the World Tourism Organization has engaged, together with a series of partners, like the IDB, in initiatives aimed at promoting awareness of the role of tourism in sustainable development, including the special needs of SIDS. This comprises the production and dissemination of the UNWTO report Challenges and Opportunities for Tourism in Small Island Developing States launched on the occasion of RIO+20 Conference.

The Inter-American Bank (IDB) has been and remains a strategic partner of Latin America and the Caribbean countries for the expansion of their tourism sector as a tool for local development, through financial and technical support. With this Conference, the IDB hopes to consolidate a joint agenda highlighting tourism development priorities in SIDS and next needed steps to strengthen the positive impacts of tourism on local economies and communities.

Wednesday, 19 February

0830-0900 **Registration**

0900-1000 **Official Opening of the International Conference: TOURISM AS A KEY FACTOR FOR DEVELOPMENT IN ISLAND STATES** by the Prime Minister of the Bahamas, Hon. Perry Christie.

Opening session of the Conference:

Mr. Héctor Malarín, INE/RND Division Chief at the IDB

Mr. Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General

Hon. Obediah Wilchcombe, Minister of Tourism of The Bahamas

1000-1130 **SESSION 1: Maximizing the local benefits of tourism**

This session will address the enhancement of the benefits of the industry, utilising those benefits to alleviate poverty and increase the quality of lives of the local communities. It will look into the issues of leakage and linkage ensuring that revenues from the industry are more widely and equitably distributed among local stakeholders, and will analyse under what conditions the link between tourism and poverty alleviation is likely to be strongest.

Introduced by: **Dr. Denny Lewis-Bynoe**, Economic Adviser, Small States, Economic Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat, United Kingdom

Moderated by: **Mr. Carlos Vogeler**, Regional Director for the Americas, UNWTO

Panel discussion:

- **Hon. Obediah Wilchcombe**, Minister of Tourism, The Bahamas
- **Hon. Carlos Ricardo Benavides**, Minister of the Presidency, Costa Rica
- **Dr. Fritz H. A. Pinnock**, Executive Director, Caribbean Maritime Institute, Jamaica

1130-1200 **Break**

1200-1330 **SESSION 2: Transport and air connectivity as a major factor for SIDS' destinations**

Connectivity is one of the main challenges that islands face, especially in terms of infrastructure development and policies for air transport, adapted to the needs of the tourism sector. Intra-travel in the Caribbean in particular is also costly and cumbersome with lengthy travel between destinations due to a shortage of network. The session will explore how to intensify efforts to develop a convenient, affordable and reliable intra air service and to enhance airlift with conventional and emerging outbound markets, while contributing at the same time to emission reductions goals.

Introduced and moderated by: **Mr. Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace**, Principal Partner Bedford Baker Group, Travel, Tourism & Hospitality Advisors, The Bahamas

Panel discussion:

- **Hon. Richard Skerrett**, Tourism Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis
- **Mr. Jean Marc Bourreau**, IOS Partners, Aviation Experts, USA
- **Mr. Lesroy Browne**, Special Advisor to CEO, LIAT, Antigua

1330-1430 LUNCH

Side-Event: UNEP Global Partnerships relevant to SIDS & Sustainable Tourism

1430-1800 Ministerial meeting on Air Connectivity (Closed meeting for Ministers and invited guests)
– A technical visit will be provided by the organizers for those not participating in the meeting

Thursday, 20 February

0930-1100 **SESSION 3: Regional integration. Building partnerships to compete globally**
The Caribbean islands face the need for greater cohesion as a single tourism region and for permanent coordination mechanisms in critical issues, such as tourism immigration policies, statistics, safety and security.
This session will analyse the possibilities - for SIDS to speed efforts to promote regional integration in order to benefit from economies of scale and a distinctive branding -to ensure a coordinated and competitive industry. It will also present various international and regional best practices and initiatives including partnerships in a process of South-South cooperation, such as the "Vanilla Islands" initiative, which aims to revitalize the tourism islands of the Indian Ocean.

Introduced and moderated by: **Ms. Maryse Robert**, Director of the Department of Economic and Social Development, Organization of American States, USA

Panel discussion:

- **Hon. Jeanne Rogers-Vanterpool**, Commissioner of Tourism, St. Martin
- **Mr. Donald Charles**, General Manager, Antigua & Barbuda Development Bank & Chairman, Association of Development Banks of the Eastern Caribbean
- **Mr. Julio Orozco**, Director of Sustainable Tourism, Association of Caribbean States (ACS)
- **Ms. Sherin Naiken**, CEO, Seychelles Tourism Board (STB)
- **Ms. Lila Ramjeawan**, CARICOM, Special Assistant, CARICOM, Guyana

1100-1130 Break

1130-1300 **SESSION 4: Climate Change and Environmental Challenges**
SIDS are particularly vulnerable to the effects of natural hazards and climate change (CC), as a result of highly sensitive ecosystems, concentration of population, and restricted financial-technical-institutional capacity for adaptation. This session will analyse different strategies and tools to respond to these challenges, from planning to minimize vulnerability and Climate Change risks to opportunities for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services in tourism investments and products.

Introduced and moderated by: **Mr. Philip Weech**, Director of The Bahamas Science and Technology Commission (BEST)

Panel discussion:

- **Dr. Murray Simpson**, Representative, CARIBSAVE, Barbados
- **Mr. Amos Bien**, Technical Director, Global Sustainable Tourism Council, USA
- **Dr. Ulric Trotz**, Deputy Director and Science Adviser, Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, Belize
- **Mr. Vincent Sweeney**, GPA Coordinator, UNEP, Kenya

1300-1400 LUNCH

1400-1600

SESSION 5: Innovation in Tourism Product Development: High volume vs. high value tourism. Where do we want to go?

The increasing external competition and changes in demand's preferences are eroding the competitive advantage of the traditional sea-sand-sun product, on which many SIDS still depend. It is important to further develop innovative approaches to niche tourism products, based on the uniqueness of each destination and on activities and experiences rather than just on tourist physical plants. It is also important to acknowledge that the quality of product is declining in many of the mature destinations, with a significant proportion of accommodation inventory in need of upgrading and revamping. At the same time, the tourism sector is embracing technology at a rapid pace. Internet marketing is now recognized as a mechanism suitable for small businesses and offers the potential to directly reach the consumer. The session will analyse each of these challenges, looking for new approaches and strategies to overcome them.

Introduced and moderated by: **Prof. Dimitrios Buhalis**, Director of the E-Tourism Lab at the School of Tourism at Bournemouth University, UK

Panel discussion:

- **Ms. Sofia Panayiotaki**, Director, MediaCofss, Greece/United Kingdom
- **Dr. Auliana Poon**, Tourism Intelligence International, Trinidad & Tobago
- **Mr. Daniel Levine**, Executive Director, The Avant-Guide Institute, USA
- **Mr. Fred J. Lounsberry**, Chief Executive Officer, Nassau Paradise Island Promotion Board, The Bahamas

1600-1730

SESSION 6: Resilient tourism development

The growing importance of tourism and the increased dependencies of other economic activities on tourism require a stronger focus on the elements contributing to the resilience of the tourism sector. The session will therefore focus on how to improve the resilience, effective prevention ensuring the safety and security of tourists, but also deal with perception crises often unnecessarily impacting tourism destinations. The presentations will address mitigation strategies, actions and instruments to evaluate risks and prevent natural and man-made disasters for tourism development. Special attention will be given to the handling of crisis communications in difficult environments.

Introduced and moderated by: **Mr. Dirk Glaesser**, Director of the Sustainable Development of Tourism Programme, UNWTO

Panel discussion:

- **Ms. Sandra Howard**, Vice Minister of Tourism, Colombia
- **Ms. Birgitte Alvarez-Rivero**, Senior Expert on Sustainable Tourism, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations
- **Mr. Santiago Saltos**, Senior Manager, Industry Affairs, ALTA
- **Dr. James Hospedales**, Executive Director, Caribbean Public Health Agency, Trinidad & Tobago
- **Mr. Ronald Jackson**, Executive Director, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, Barbados

1730-1800

Conclusions and Nassau Declaration on SIDS by Mr. Carlos Vogeler, Regional Director for the Americas

Closing