



2017
INTERNATIONAL YEAR
OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
FOR DEVELOPMENT



Global Conference on Jobs and Inclusive Growth: Partnerships for Sustainable Tourism

Keynote Address

The Most Honourable Andrew Holness, ON, MP

Prime Minister of Jamaica

SALUTATIONS

Thank you Masters of Ceremonies Ms Anita Mendiratta and Mrs Emily Crooks

His Excellency Mr Danilo Medina Sanchez, President of the Dominican Republic

Honourable Allen Chastenet, Prime Minister of St Lucia

Honourable Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism and other Colleague Cabinet Ministers

Ministers of Government and Heads of Delegations

His Excellency Dr Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation

Mrs Gloria Guevara Manzo, President of the World Travel and Tourism Council

Mr Alexandre Meira daRosa, Vice President for Countries, Inter-American Development Bank

Heads of Delegations

Members of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), World Bank Group and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

Mr Eduardo Fayos-Sola, Senior Advisor, ITS George Washington University

Members of the Diplomatic Corps and International Organizations

Permanent Secretaries

His Worship the Mayor Councillor Homer Davis, Mayor of Montego Bay

Speakers and Panellists

Delegates

Sponsors

Heads of Organisations, Agencies and Departments

Members of the Private Sector

Members of the Media

Performers

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to be here with you; a very pleasant good morning. I know that yesterday Minister Bartlett would have welcomed you to the conference and to Jamaica, but let me add my own warm welcome to all of you. Welcome to Jamaica. This event is truly a remarkable success. The numbers have surpassed expectations. It is indeed an honour for the Government of Jamaica; along with the United Nations World Tourism Organization, the World Bank Group and the Inter-American Development Bank to host this historic global conference – the first world conference on tourism to be held in the Caribbean, and indeed in the Western Hemisphere. In fact, I understand it is the first time that a tourism conference of this nature has occurred – where Prime Ministers, Ministers, Heads of international organizations along with the cruise and land sectors, airlines, bankers, academia, NGOs, among others; are all in one space to focus on the tourism industry. This is truly the right place and the right time to make the right connections and show the effectiveness of strong partnerships.

With over a thousand five hundred participants from over 60 countries registered, the convening of tourism stalwarts, government and non-government representatives, and other partners from across the globe at this conference positions Jamaica and the Caribbean as serious players in the business of tourism. I am sure the dialogue here will positively impact the future of the tourism industry globally. I am sure the

discussions here will open minds, deepen understanding, strengthen resolve, create links and partnerships and ultimately inspire action.

Recently, Jamaica also hosted the 2017 International Monetary Fund High Level Caribbean Forum, and one of the major discussion points emerging from that conference was the need to transition from focusing on macroeconomic stability to growth-inducing activities, and how these activities must be inexorably linked to promoting social inclusion and poverty reduction. This conference complements those discussions. We must pivot our tourism growth strategies in line with the key areas that the United Nation's International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development promotes:

- inclusive and sustainable growth;
- social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction;
- resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change;
- cultural values, diversity and heritage;
- mutual understanding, peace and security

Tourism-dependent countries like many Caribbean nations, must critically consider how our tourism product should adapt and evolve to reflect the new realities: climate change, evolving tourist preferences, terrorism and travel safety and security concerns and new and emerging tourism markets, products and technology. It is a time when we must truly embrace and give meaning to the words: *"Travel, Enjoy, Respect"*.

There has been somewhat of a revolution in travel (*in terms of how people book; places they want to stay; what they want to experience*). We are very cognizant of this and understand that we must also change. Travel facilitation is at the core of developing tourism and unlocking its socio-economic benefits. We must place emphasis on how we market our destination and on finding new markets. Recently, Jamaica has been placing renewed emphasis on revitalizing some markets and on introducing new direct airlifts such as from Poland. In fact; Jamaica recorded a phenomenal 91.3 per cent increase in stopover visitor arrivals from the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB)-defined Southern and Western Europe region for the month of September 2017 over the same period last year. I am pleased to note that for the ten months of 2017, there was a 7.0 percent increase in stopover arrivals in comparison to the corresponding period for 2016. In addition, cruise passenger arrivals were up 12.7 percent for January to October. From a total of 3,394,472 visitors

in that ten month period, Jamaica earned US\$2.332 billion or 10.2 percent more in gross foreign exchange earnings than the US\$2.115 billion earned last year over the same period

In addition to increasing airlift capacity and new destinations, we are also looking at our infrastructure in terms of ease of access throughout the island. In addition to road improvement including the Montego Bay bypass; a revitalization of Ocho Rios is planned, and \$1.9 million has been earmarked for the redevelopment of the boardwalk/promenade from the marina to Ocho Rios Bay Beach and the upgrade of Main Street. Also, as part of an overall strategy; better organization of traffic management in the cruise ship areas so that passengers can leave the ship and the port in a more structured manner is planned. An artisans' village is also planned for Falmouth, which will offer space for craft vendors.

The Government of Jamaica continues to take concrete steps to expand our tourism product and to create more opportunities that will improve the livelihoods of Jamaicans. For example, we recently declared the boundaries of the Cockpit Country Protected Area which is recognized nationally and internationally for its lush forests, rich biodiversity, freshwater resources, and historical and cultural significance. Preserving the Cockpit Country Protected Area allows us to create new economic opportunities from heritage, health, wellness tourism, and eco-tourism while sustaining our environment. I am very pleased that on Thursday, along with the Rasta Indigenous Village and Bunkers Hill Cultural Xperience & River Tour; Cockpit Country Adventure Tours is one of the local community tourism enterprises being showcased.

We are taking steps to make the changes to the infrastructure and the activities offered to ensure that visitors “enjoy” their stay while also ensuring “respect” for the environment. Tourism must be developed in a sustainable way so as to preserve the resources of destinations; its development must be properly planned and managed as the resources on which tourism depends must be available for future generations.

As the global economy expands, and tourism along with it, there is strong evidence that tourism, if properly designed and managed, can contribute significantly to the global agenda of tackling poverty and fostering development. Tourism is fundamentally a people based activity. Careful planning of human resources, with private enterprises and employee representatives, is needed to

ensure that tourism can fulfil its employment creation potential and has a sufficient supply of suitably skilled labour to meet future growth. Designing tourism that enhances opportunities for local communities to leverage on their cultural and natural assets, benefit from employment in tourism activities, as well as the supply of services and goods to tourism businesses or directly to visitors, and in this way, securing livelihoods and empowering local communities will help to achieve inclusive and sustainable growth. Besides its direct contribution to jobs, tourism's multiplier effects on related sectors such as trade, agriculture, manufacturing, or construction further amplifies the employment impact of tourism. It is already one of the largest employment sectors in many countries and a fast entry vehicle into the workforce for our young people.

Just as tourism growth can foster inclusion through the wide net it casts in job creation and across related sectors, tourism growth and sustainability can be mutually reinforcing by embedding sustainability strategies into tourism planning. All forms of tourism have the potential to contribute to the transition towards a green economy through:

- investments in energy and water efficiency,
- climate change mitigation through reduction in greenhouse gas emissions,
- waste reduction,
- biodiversity and cultural heritage conservation, and
- the strengthening of linkages with local communities.

Tourism can contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as it is among the world's largest industries. For seven consecutive years; international tourist arrivals have continued on a growth path, realising 1.2 billion in 2016 and a projected 1.8 billion by the year 2030. Tourism also contributes to 10 per cent of world gross domestic product (GDP), seven per cent of global trade and provides one in every 10 jobs. Between January and June of this year international tourism had already accounted for 598 million tourists — 36 million more than the same period in 2016. This has been the strongest growth for the first half of the year since 2010.

While the Caribbean tourism product remains in high demand; it is unfortunate that, by virtue of location, size, and sometimes poor infrastructure, Caribbean destinations are most vulnerable to climate change realities. With this reality, we must call for greater collaboration and a renewed sense of partnership to

catapult the discourse on a more resilient and sustainable tourism product. This conference provides an excellent platform to leverage and deepen this conversation and strengthen this partnership.

In closing, let me commend the numerous local and international partners and sponsors for all the work involved in ensuring the success of this conference. This is a true and powerful demonstration of public-private partnership in action promoting socio-economic development, sustainability, job creation and competitiveness through tourism as the economic powerhouse. I am excited about this conference and its deliverables in promoting a tourism sector that is sustainable and inclusive.

Jamaica's strong tourism sector performance since the start of the year builds on the successes of 2016, when the sector expanded and welcomed over 3.84 million visitors in total and we are definitely on track to surpass that for 2017.

Tourism must ensure inclusive growth where everyone participates in the growth process and everyone shares equitably in the benefits of growth. That must be the outcome; it must have the impact of making communities better places and by extension better nations. Tourism can move nations from poverty to prosperity.

Respect due to tourism!

I thank you.