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**CARIBBEAN HOTEL & TOURISM ASSOCIATION CEO APPLAUDS
TURKS & CAICOS ISLANDS, CAUTIONS ABOUT FUTURE**

PROVIDENCIALES, Turks and Caicos Islands (April 8, 2016) – “Turks and Caicos Islands’ (TCI) incredible rise to the top echelon of the region’s tourism destinations is to be commended,” according to Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) CEO and Director General Frank Comito during his recent address to members at the Annual General Meeting of the Turks and Caicos Hotel and Tourism Association (TCHTA).

Comito spent three days touring Providenciales and meeting with industry representatives. Joining him in his AGM address was CHTA’s Chairperson for Advocacy and Government Affairs Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace who provided an overview of CHTA’s various public-private sector initiatives.

“The destination has much to be proud, of and is poised for even greater things if the private and public sectors can work together to address potential tipping point issues over the next several years,” said Comito.



Comito touted TCI's incredible beauty, the high quality of its resorts, a committed private sector and hotel and tourism association, and high level service standards as attributes which have elevated the country's status as a top destination in the Caribbean.

He did, however, offer words of caution, citing examples of tourist destinations which have risen to the top but failed at keeping that momentum because they failed to address important issues.

"It would be painful to see all of the strides, made by so many people to put TCI on top, reversed because of the need for a greater resolve by the public and private sectors to work together to address important developmental issues," stated Comito.

Comito cited three key areas of concern that TCI must be cognizant of:

- Arrival and departure experience at the Provo airport
- Need to invest more in the development of TCI's people
- The immediacy of addressing the inequities faced by operators with the emergence of the sharing economy – vacation stays offered through groups like VRBO.

"It's unacceptable for visitors and residents to spend two hours going through the departure processing experience at any airport. The TCI public and private sectors must work together to find both short- and long-term solutions to this vexing problem which clearly is impacting visitor impressions," says Comito. His observation was based upon firsthand experience, discussions with visitors, and visitor comments throughout various internet channels including the highly influential social media platforms.

Comito cites successful public/private sector efforts elsewhere in the region where hoteliers, airlines, airport authorities, tourism officials and other stakeholders have worked together to address the problem. "Queue management, design flow, having sufficient personnel to process passengers, and use of processing technology, are all matters which can - and should be - more effectively put in place," he added.

Comito commended TCHTA for its commitment to working on various education and training initiatives. "Making the public and young people aware of the incredible range of job, career and entrepreneurial opportunities in tourism - the world's largest employer - and how to prepare them to succeed, is essential to national development. It's great to see this commitment, and I encourage even stronger collaboration to address the continuum of education and training initiatives which can be pursued."

He noted that while TCI's condo resort development model has been key to the destination's success, unless there are changes to how the sharing economy is permitted to operate, the model may be in jeopardy. "There must be fair play in terms of pricing, taxation and standards as applied to hotels, vacation units and homes which are available for rental thru services like VRBO. CHTA is advancing recommendations regionally in this regard with its soon-to-be released white paper on the Sharing Economy. The short-term gain by some could be to the long-term detriment of all if this is not effectively addressed in the near future," added Comito.

Comito concluded his remarks indicating that the outlook for tourism in the Turks and Caicos Islands is bright but challenges must be addressed. National Hotel and Tourism Associations like

the TCHTA have the ability to affect positive change with the government and other stakeholders.

He pointed to the recent success between the industry and Ministry of Tourism collaborating on marketing efforts, and the association's work with the schools as strong examples of constructive engagement. "Public and private sector collaboration is key to leveraging solutions and should be front and center in the minds of stakeholders," Comito stated.

Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association

The Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association (CHTA) is a federation of 32 National Hotel Associations, with more than 600 member hotels and over 300 allied members. CHTA is the largest representative of the private sector in the Caribbean hotel and tourism industry. We are the voice of the Caribbean hospitality industry for the development of the region in the highly competitive and sophisticated environment of international tourism. Today, tourism is widely recognized as a pivotal industry in the economy of the region – and CHTA functions as the common denominator for this industry in a region of diverse nationalities, languages and styles, identifying mutual problems and marshaling the resources of the active and allied members to devise solutions. CHTA represents all facets of the hospitality industry with more than 600 member hotels and over 300 allied members.

CHTA, including the events staged by the association, is supported by Strategic Partners AskMe Inc., Clear Channel Airport Division, Interval International, JetBlue Getaways, MasterCard, OBM International, Tambourine and TravelZoo.

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