



CAST CURRENTS

July 2023

A briefing by the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism, a member of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association family of organizations, supporting a more sustainable tourism industry.



Message from CAST Chairman

Net Zero = Net Profits

Talk about carbon credits and achieving net zero by the hospitality industry is gaining traction within the tourism industry. A growing number of major chains, airlines, destinations and local and regional industry associations are gearing up to align their operations with reducing their carbon footprint and also appealing to shifting consumer sentiments about supporting sustainable practices.

CHTA and CAST are moving towards providing the Caribbean tourism industry with information and tools to support their review of operational and developmental practices. We will be holding an informational session titled 'Net Zero = Net Profits' on Thursday, August 10th and encourage your participation.

The good news for the industry is that achieving net zero carbon emissions often translates into a reduction in operating costs and an increase in consumer receptivity to sustainable practices.

In this issue of CAST Currents we will highlight several resources you can tap into to understand and adopt sound operating practices and to benchmark and measure your progress. Our recently signed MOU with the Foundation for Environmental Education opens the door for resources you can use to start on the path and to build towards credentialing. We are also sharing with you information about 'Sustainability Basics', new tools recently made available to hotels through the World Travel and Tourism Council.

Please join us on August 10th for the virtual learning session 'Net Zero = Net Profits' where we will provide an overview of these programs with practical advice provided by hoteliers and experts who are on the 'net zero' path.

PM Mottley Headlines Annual Forum ... Sets a Challenge for the Industry

Setting the tone and backdrop for discussions at CHTA's second annual Caribbean Travel Forum, held in May in Barbados, Prime Minister Mia Mottley challenged the region's public and private sector tourism industry to be "shapers not takers". She asserted that the region had been a "taker" of a tourism system driven by foreign capital, driven by foreign airlift, driven by foreign markets, and generally "driven by things that are exogenous effectively to our development." She questioned whether such models were sufficient to carry the region to a sustainable future.



"If you don't summon the courage to claim your destiny, then you will continue to be victims of a globally uncertain world," she stated.

In a clarion call for sustainability, Mottley declared: "If this region does not get on top of its food security and on top of its basic supplies, we are going to pay an awful price when we least expect it."

She urged the building of more synergies with multiple sectors, including agriculture and manufacturing. "And of course with our artistic community, both performing and fine arts become absolutely critical," she stated, adding there was "a far greater reliance on tourism, direct and indirect, than we give credit for."

In a lucid illustration of the climate crisis, she pointed to the United States, which instead of suffering a billion-dollar significant natural event every three to four months was now suffering a billion-dollar loss event every 20 days. "That is the climate crisis," she stated, "not climate change, the climate crisis".

Summarizing, she declared, "I want to hear that the hoteliers of the region have determined that they will not simply, in a post-independence era, be a taker of circumstances shaped by others to profit others, but that we shall be shapers of our destiny. Or as the national anthem of Barbados says, "firm craftsmen of our fate."

Expert Panel Weighs In On Industry Resiliency at Travel Forum

At the second Annual Caribbean Travel Forum held in Barbados, CAST Chair Kyle Mais led a discussion with an experienced panel addressing the topic: *'Positive Mind Change = Positive Climate Change'*. The session focused on impactful and innovative ideas and solutions to drive responsible and resilient tourism with an emphasis on human capital development.

Opening the session was Dr. Avinash Persaud, Climate Change Ambassador for Barbados, who has become a leading global advocate for putting in place financing mechanisms to assist areas like the Caribbean in preparing for climate changes which are already placing an unfair heavy financial burden on countries which have contributed least to climate change.

In providing his insights on the matter, he challenged the tourism industry to exert its influence to help accelerate the pace of actions, particularly around financing infrastructure, efficiencies, crisis management, and advocating for far greater support mechanisms for Caribbean governments and the tourism industry.

Joining the panel was Dr. Shelly-Ann Cox, who is Chief Fisheries Officer for the Barbados Ministry of Environment and National Beautification, Green and Blue Economy, and a leading regional resource on sargassum mitigation and use, who provided the Blue Economy perspective.

Marie McKenzie, Vice President, Global Ports and Caribbean Government Relations for Carnival Cruise Lines, provided insights into the work and commitments being made by Carnival on resiliency matters in recent years. She called for greater collaboration between land-based and sea-based tourism industry stakeholders to address the growing impact of climate change.

Hoteliers Cresi Biemans from the Bucuti and Tara Beach Resort in Aruba and Patricia Affonso-Dass from Ocean Hotel Group in Barbados, who also served as CHTA President, provided insights into the work and challenges they face as they continually strive to adjust and adapt to the changing environment and ensure relevancy and market appeal into the future.

Cresi shared insights from a millennial's perspective about how the industry can better tap into the interests in supporting companies which are committed to sustainable practices.

Patricia pointed to the ongoing commitments by their hotels but also addressed the challenges faced with workforce shortages and the various activities being undertaken to develop, attract and retain talent.

For additional information about the forum, visit: <https://chtamarketplace.com/marketplace/caribbean-travel-forum>

CAST/CHTA Submit Annual Action Plan to Meet Glasgow Commitment



As part of its commitment to the Glasgow Climate Change Agreement, CAST/CHTA recently submitted a report to the UNWTO outlining its activities and plans to help shape a more sustainable future for Caribbean tourism and extending for another year its commitment to working towards sustainability goals.

The *'action-oriented'* plan focuses on:

- Strengthening CAST and CHTA's capacity to facilitate the Caribbean tourism industry's commitments to a sustainable future
- Broadening industry's representation and engagement in sustainability activities
- Building and expanding partner relationships, and
- Aligning CAST and CHTA's work with the sustainable goals identified in the 2022 Glasgow Agreement, with which CAST and CHTA are recognized global partners. These goals focus on the following:
 - Supporting the global commitment to halve emissions by 2030 and reach net zero

- Delivering climate action plans within 12 months from becoming a signatory
- Aligning with five pathways: measure, decarbonize, regenerate, collaborate, finance
- Reporting publicly on an annual basis on progress against targets and actions
- Working in a collaborative spirit, sharing good practices and solutions

For a copy of the CAST/CHTA submission visit: <https://caribbeanhotelandtourism.com/cast/cast-resources/>

WTTC Launches Hotel Sustainability Basics: Tools You Can Use

CAST and CHTA have joined destinations, international and independent hotels, and industry stakeholders in the launch of the World Travel and Tourism Council's groundbreaking **Hotel Sustainability Basics** initiative. Announced at ITB Berlin, Basics will enable tourist accommodation providers from around the world, regardless of their size, to begin their sustainability journey.



Basics, an industry-wide supported initiative, is a globally recognised and coordinated set of 12 key criteria that all hotels should implement as a minimum to drive responsible and sustainable travel & tourism. Basics emerged as a result of a clear demand from a group of influential global hotel brands and whilst there are a great number of sustainability initiatives, Basics focuses on an achievable starting point. It will encourage all hospitality businesses to begin their sustainability journeys and redefine the non-negotiables of sustainability in the industry.

To learn more, visit: <https://wtcc.org/initiatives/hotel-sustainability-basics>

CHTA/CAST Partners with FEE ... *New Tools, Training Resources and Recognitions Available to CHTA Members*



With an MOU formalized earlier this year between CHTA/CAST and the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) to support training, awareness-building and information-sharing with the industry on implementing and maintaining sound sustainable practices, the organizations are planning to launch research and training activities in the coming months.

Established in 1981, the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) is one of the world's largest environmental education organizations, with over 100 member organizations in 81 countries. FEE manages the eco-tourism programs Blue Flag and Green Key worldwide. With 40 years of impactful experience in Environmental Sustainable Development (ESD), FEE's new strategic plan - GAIA 20:30 - prioritizes climate action across all five programs to address the urgent threats of climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental pollution.

Its training resources, tools and information are being used by tourism-related businesses and organizations throughout the world. Members of CHTA will be able to access some of FEE's resources at no cost as they consider building towards achieving recognitions through the Blue Flag and Green Key

signature programs and look to how they might find ways to help shape environmental awareness programs within their local schools.

A roll-out of FEE-CHTA/CAST related initiatives is planned. To learn more about FEE and its programs, go to: <https://www.fee.global/programmes>

CHTA/CAST Calls for Regional Collaboration to Address Sargassum



Citing the growing threat sargassum is having on the Caribbean, CHTA has called for a regional approach towards addressing the problem. In a letter to CARICOM's Secretariat earlier this year, CHTA asked that the matter be tabled for discussion at its Heads of Government meeting. CARICOM and the Association of Caribbean States have formed a working group with CHTA and the World Bank, and are in the process of developing a concept note with a proposed action plan, to advance to Governments and multilateral

donor organizations. This and other sargassum-related problems will hopefully be advanced at an upcoming regional meeting in the Dominican Republic.

CHTA's research points to a considerable economic impact on the tourism industry and a growing threat to traveler confidence resulting from sargassum outbreaks in 2022, which was one of the biggest in recent years. Scientists are forecasting a large outbreak this year which, as in 2022, began to surface in March, months before the proliferation seen in previous years.

Mitigation efforts by Caribbean governments and the tourism industry have been difficult, expensive and with mixed results. Since 2015, when CHTA released a report about the looming threat and then-known mitigation efforts, the tourism industry has invested millions of dollars on mitigation and has suffered losses due to cancellations, lost potential business, and compensation to aggrieved guests.

Contributing to the problem is the misperception that on any given day most of the Caribbean is impacted, when in reality, like hurricanes, large parts of the region are unaffected.

CHTA/CAST has conducted training for the industry on the sargassum matter since 2015 and provides extensive information and tools through our online knowledge center to help support local and company efforts to plan for and manage this threat. We have stepped up our efforts in this regard, and will continue to do so, but believe that ***long-term solutions require policy-level solutions which get to the primary source of the sargassum problem. This necessitates greater government-to-government coordination.***

Scientists say more research is needed to determine why sargassum levels in the region exist and continue to grow, but the United Nations' Caribbean Environment Program says possible factors include a rise in water temperatures as a result of climate change and nitrogen-laden fertilizers and sewage waste fueling algae blooms, the latter due to practices in Brazil's Amazon basin, and basin runoff from South America, the Gulf of Mexico, and Western Africa.

In its communication to CARICOM, CHTA advised that we fully support and seek the CARICOM Heads support for a region-wide advocacy effort, with the engagement and support of multilateral institutions, directed to the source countries to:

- Support the region in reducing the causal effects
- Undertake solutions-based research to identify and promote best practices
- Manage the situation in a cost effective and environmentally sensitive manner
- Identify and promote practical alternative uses and technologies
- Collectively collaborate towards solutions

There have been efforts to address the matter in a regionally coordinated way and to look at various sargassum management, containment and reuse solutions, but these have not yet addressed the causal effect.

CAST Trustee Kendra Hopkin Provides Hotelier's Perspective

We invited Kendra Hopkin, Deputy Managing Director, Blue Horizons Garden Resort in Grenada and President of the Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association, to share her thoughts about sustainability in its broadest sense ...

"To pursue sustainability is to understand its environmental, social, economic and human impacts. In 2010, Blue Horizons had the opportunity to conduct an energy audit which further validated the importance of following a greener path. As a local stakeholder, our journey continued with several eco-conscious initiatives guided by our 'small efforts, big impact' mantra.



The Tourism industry is ever-evolving and constantly calls on us to be forward thinking. As it grows, we must take into consideration the decisions made today and its effects on the future. Thinking sustainably preserves tomorrow. The environment must play a considerable role in the growth and development of the Caribbean Tourism product.

Travelers seek a safe haven with a focus on wellness and cultural immersion. Living healthier lifestyles, seeking adventure with a greater interest to give back to the communities in which they vacation. Niche markets for travelers who want more than sun, sea and sand expand our opportunities.

We have seen great returns on investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy sources, rain water harvesting and water conservation and technological innovation. Human capital development, community involvement and creating green spaces continues to be a core focus.

Preserving the future of Tourism for generations to come starts today. The power of working together as an industry is our strength and mitigating our carbon footprint is a priority. There is no denying the current and anticipated impacts on climate change."

Jamaica and Eleuthera, Bahamas Receive Destination Resilience Awards

Affirming its commitment to advancing the sustainability of the Caribbean tourism industry, the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) announced the winners of its 2023 Destination Resilience Awards in Barbados at the second annual Caribbean Travel Forum.

Jamaica and Eleuthera in the Bahamas took home the top awards, while Bonaire, St. Maarten and St. Lucia were recognized with honorable mentions.



L-R: Nicola Madden-Greig, President, CHTA; Anthony A. Stuart, Senior Director, Emerging Markets, Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, Investments & Aviation; Marc Melville, Owner, Chukka Caribbean; Vanessa Ledesma, Acting CEO and Director General, CHTA

The second annual awards recognize the extent to which public-private sector partnerships drove the successful tourism recovery of the region.

Announcing the winners during the second annual Caribbean Travel Forum, held at Sandals Royal Barbados, Vanessa Ledesma, Acting CEO and Director General of CHTA, said that this year's submissions "all exemplified a high level of stakeholder collaboration, something which we wanted to advance."

The awards, presented by CHTA in collaboration with the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST), were conceived during the COVID-19 pandemic

and are aimed at recognizing destinations with a deliberate focus on resilience and sustainability.

Judges assessed destinations' commitment to addressing some or all of the World Tourism Organization's sustainable development goals, recognizing destinations that subscribe to a collaborative approach and engage public and private sector stakeholders in innovative, needs-driven strategies. The awards recognize efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change and the broader challenges impacting sustainable development.

A panel of tourism experts chose the winners based on the following criteria:

- Commitments to partnership and collaboration
- Sustainable/resiliency-related activities undertaken
- Innovation and technology
- Linkages and external engagement (i.e., other sectors, community)
- Contribution of initiative(s) to tourism

CHTA and Global Resilience Center Commit to Collaborate



The Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre (GTRCMC) and the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) have partnered to help build tourism resilience in the region. Both entities forged this partnership with the official signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) during Caribbean Travel Marketplace held in Barbados earlier this year.

This groundbreaking partnership aims to strengthen resilience within the tourism industry, fostering a united front against potential crises and challenges that may arise. The two organizations identified eight areas of collaboration, deemed as key to helping to shape a more resilient industry while mitigating the impacts of crisis situations on Caribbean economies and restoring economic and social stability to the region as quickly as possible.

“Resilience must be at the core of tourism operations if we are to ensure the viability of this great industry. We are still one of the most vulnerable industries susceptible to many disruptions and so building capacity to plan and respond to these disruptions effectively,” said Co-founder of the GTRCMC and Minister of Tourism, Hon Edmund Bartlett

Together, the GTRCMC and CHTA will work hand in hand to promote sustainable practices, enhance disaster preparedness, and facilitate effective crisis management within the vibrant tourism sector.

“The COVID-19 pandemic and our longstanding experiences in planning for and quickly rebounding from hurricanes, recessions and other disruptions has shown us that partnership and collaboration are key to our rapid recovery and having this added support in the form of the GTRCMC will assist the CHTA in our crisis management strategy,” said CHTA President, Mrs. Nicola Madden-Greig.

“By sharing knowledge and expertise, we will build a more resilient future that can withstand any hurdle and ensure the continued growth and prosperity of the Caribbean's tourism industry,” said Executive Director of the GTRCMC, Professor Lloyd Waller.

The eight focus areas which will drive the new collaboration include: communications, knowledge and information sharing, advocacy, training and capacity building, fundraising, networking, research and sustainable financing.

CIMH Quarterly Climatic Bulletin – Supporting Your Planning



Through a collaboration with the industry, led by the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology with CHTA and the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), the industry is provided with a quarterly bulletin - [Overview and Outlook for Key Caribbean Climatic Activities](#). This valuable planning tool provides scientific forecasts, geographically broken down into Caribbean sub-regions on the outlook for rainfall, drought, sargassum, hurricanes, health and vector illnesses to help guide strategic and operational decisions by companies and jurisdictions. Thank you to CAST Trustee Loreto Duffy Mayers for being the CHTA/CAST liaison with CIMH for the quarterly production of the bulletin.

CTO Sustainable Tourism Roundup



[This newsletter](#) features information and updates from the Caribbean Tourism Organization and its tourism development partners relevant to sustainable tourism product development.

More Information and Tools You Can Use ...

To learn more about CAST and to access the range of information, resources and tools which are available to CHTA members go to the Environment and Knowledge Center sections of [CHTA's website](#). Partner and like-minded resources are also accessible through the links below:

Resources you can tap into to help support your sustainability efforts:

- [CHTA/CAST Resources](#)
- [Center for Responsible Travel \(CREST\)](#)
- [United Nations World Tourism Organization Sustainable Development Resources](#)
- [World Travel and Tourism Council Sustainable Growth Resources](#)
- [The Nature Conservancy](#)
- [Caribbean Tourism Organization](#)
- [Foundation for Environmental Education](#)
- [Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Center](#)

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