



CARIBBEAN
HOTEL & TOURISM
ASSOCIATION

For Immediate Release

Source: Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA)

Contact: Greta Andzenge, Marketplace Excellence +1 201 861-2056
greta@marketplaceexcellence.com

CARIBBEAN TOURISM GROUP AND ENVIRONMENTAL LEADER PLEDGE CLIMATE ACTION COLLABORATION THIS EARTH DAY

MIAMI (April 21, 2020) – The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) joined together for Earth Day (April 22) to share their collaborative intent to emerge from the current Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) crisis and help rebuild a stronger, more resilient Caribbean for the environment and the people that depend on it.

Patricia Affonso-Dass, President of CHTA, the leading association of private sector tourism companies in the Caribbean, said the reopening of the region's shuttered tourism sector is an important opportunity to address head-on the challenges posed by climate change, which she described as "the biggest challenge to the future of the Caribbean and the life-support systems which make our region habitable for our people and so attractive for visitors from all over the world."

Affonso-Dass endorsed the call for action on climate change issued by the organizers to mark the 50th anniversary of Earth Day by noting the hospitality and tourism sectors' contributions to the climate problem as well as actions Caribbean destinations can take to neutralize climate changing damage. "Earth Day's message of 'climate action' is a reminder to us individually, as companies, organizations and governments of our need to act responsibly. There is ample opportunity to more than counter and reduce any negative environmental impact from travel," she said.

Caribbean islands are among the world's most vulnerable to impacts from climate change, with storm frequency and intensity, flooding, wind damage and sea level rise all predicted to worsen. This increases threats to islands' infrastructures and people who call the Caribbean home. TNC has long been working towards protecting the Caribbean from the impacts of climate change by promoting the protection and restoration of coastal habitats (such as mangroves and coral reefs) to reduce risks, and by helping governments, partners and communities implement sustainable development initiatives that prioritize nature.

Rob Brumbaugh, Executive Director for TNC's Caribbean Division, commented that this Earth Day presents an excellent opportunity for the two organizations to renew their commitments to produce actions which enable nature and people to thrive together. "The Caribbean region is



more dependent on tourism than anywhere else in the world, and the tourism industry relies on healthy, thriving natural ecosystems to sustain it. By working together, we can advance towards building a more climate-smart Caribbean and protecting the natural beauty the region is known for,” he said.

Affonso-Dass contended that dangerous carbon emissions, neglect of natural resources, and poverty were major contributors to environmental degradation and pointed out that sustainable tourism education and effective communications were powerful anti-poverty and conservation tools. These tools, she said, give communities the resources needed to improve their lives and their environments which, in turn, attract visitors and the revenue they bring.

“Our collaboration with TNC, and its impressive science-based conservation track-record, has enabled us to more strategically develop our approaches to ensure the natural resources of our Caribbean destinations can be enhanced – because we recognize that tourism, our region’s major earner, can only thrive if our coasts, our beaches, our seas, our forests, our fauna and flora, and our people, also thrive,” she said.

Brumbagh stated: “In order to create a climate-resilient Caribbean, we need to take steps to mitigate climate change both through better technology and business practices as well as through nature-based solutions. We need to better recognize the role that nature can play in absorbing excess carbon as well as helping communities adapt to a changing climate. Both of these are of prime importance for responsible tourism development.”

Affonso-Dass lamented that the emissions from air and sea travel were significant but was encouraged by the advances being made in the aviation industry to reduce emissions through more fuel-efficient aircraft and a diminished reliance on fossil fuels: “We in the hotel sector are making great strides in reducing our carbon footprint through efficiencies which are welcomed by our guests and by our members, who see how these measures, which mitigate climate change, can also increase efficiency and revenue.”

Both organizations concurred that Earth Day awareness in the Caribbean should extend far beyond April 22, and urged the taking of active roles in raising awareness of the need for climate action while there was still time.

The organizations declared: “We rejoice in the clean air, pristine waters and glistening forests so, together, we will do our part in conserving these natural jewels, on Earth Day, and beyond. Through our collaboration we are determined to ensure that our tourism-friendly Caribbean is also a climate-friendly Caribbean.”

About The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

The Nature Conservancy is a global conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground



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solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. We are tackling climate change, conserving lands, waters and oceans at an unprecedented scale, providing food and water sustainably and helping make cities more sustainable. Working in 79 countries and territories, we use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners. To learn more, visit www.nature.org/Caribbean or follow @CaribbeanTNC on Facebook.

About the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA)

The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) is the Caribbean's leading association representing the interests of national hotel and tourism associations. For more than 55 years, CHTA has been the backbone of the Caribbean hospitality industry. Working with some 1,000 hotel and allied members, and 33 National Hotel Associations, CHTA is shaping the Caribbean's future and helping members to grow their businesses. Whether helping to navigate critical issues in sales and marketing, sustainability, legislative issues, emerging technologies, climate change, data and intelligence or, looking for avenues and ideas to better market and manage businesses, CHTA is helping members on issues which matter most.

For further information, visit www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com.

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