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For Immediate Release

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CHTA'S FRANK COMITO SAYS CARIBBEAN DISASTER COORDINATION EXPERIENCE HELPING TO FIGHT PANDEMIC

MIAMI (June 5, 2020) – A tourism leader has lauded the coordination between many of the region's governments, the tourism industry and public health authorities, which used their experiences with natural and man-made disasters to minimize the effects of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and to strengthen Caribbean resilience.

However, Frank Comito, CEO and Director General of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), asserted that until a vaccine is developed, the Caribbean, with its tourism dependent economies, has to face facts: "First, our economies depend on visitors, and second, COVID-19 is not going away soon, so we have to do everything possible to minimize risk to both our residents and visitors while slowly reopening tourism."

Comito, whose association is a member of the COVID-19 Caribbean Tourism Task Force, stated the Caribbean had effectively minimized the spread of the disease because Caribbean health authorities, governments and tourism industry stakeholders were able to adjust and apply health safety protocols used to effectively manage risks in the past.

He said the Caribbean tourism sector was able to rebound strongly from adversity after developing resilience from experiences such as hurricanes, 9/11, Zika, chikungunya, volcano eruptions and earthquakes.

The CHTA leader said traveler confidence in the region would be strengthened by building upon such experiences: "We are seeing an unprecedented level of collaboration and resolve to manage the risks from this new virus. Health safety protocols and guidelines are being put in place, mirroring the international standards which have been recommended, and adding more stringent measures. Training is underway and significant training and protocols will continue to come on stream. The process has not been easy as we are all treading uncharted waters, but we are all working from the common position of minimizing risks to our residents and travelers."

Notwithstanding the diversity of the region's countries and territories, the tourism chief was encouraged that "both the governments and the industry have been taking advantage of the



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lockdown by preparing for the contingencies, such as health and safety plans and preparing for social distancing, quarantine, isolation and treatment.”

He expressed encouragement in the work being undertaken by many jurisdictions, pointing to destinations like the U.S. Virgin Islands, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Barbados, Puerto Rico, The Bahamas, St. Maarten, Aruba, Curaçao and many others which have been working with tourism and health officials, local hotel and tourism associations, individual hotels, resorts and the business community to draw up guidelines. “These are foundational to new operational changes, employee training, and heightened traveler awareness to help provide the health safety assurances we all need,” he added.

Comito declared there is no better place in the world for the traveler to escape, refresh and recover from the challenges the pandemic has wrought: “ The Caribbean’s unmatched natural beauty, our varied and rich experiences, the incredible hospitality of our people – these are our gifts to the world as it seeks to heal.”

CHTA is a member of the COVID-19 Caribbean Tourism Task Force, established early in March and comprising CHTA, the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), and the Global Tourism Resilience & Crisis Management Centre

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.

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