



CARIBBEAN  
HOTEL & TOURISM  
ASSOCIATION

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**CARIBBEAN HOTEL & TOURISM ASSOCIATION PRAISES CARICOM  
FOR VISIONARY REMARKS BY OUTGOING CHAIRMAN CHRISTIE,  
SEEKS PRIVATE, PUBLIC SECTOR DIALOGUE ON TOURISM**

***CHTA White Paper on U.S. Opening Cuba Draws Interest, Carnival Plans Cruises***

THE CARIBBEAN (July 16, 2015) – The Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association (CHTA) officials praised Bahamas Prime Minister Perry Christie, outgoing CARICOM Chairman, for his remarks at the Heads of Government meeting recently where he challenged his colleagues to embrace tourism as the quickest way to address youth unemployment and the high national debts facing many of the region’s countries. He referenced CHTA and its Cuba white paper and the Association’s call for regional collaboration with CARICOM, the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) and other stakeholders on tourism issues.

The CHTA white paper titled ***Cuba: The Great Disruption for the Good of the Caribbean***, has generated a huge amount of interest in newspapers and trade journals in the U.S. and across the Caribbean as the U.S. takes further steps towards normalizing diplomatic relations with Cuba which is expected to open tourism lanes to all American vacationers.

News coverage about Cuba and dialogue among tourism interests heated up as Carnival Cruises announced it had received approval from the U.S. government to begin cruises between the U.S. and Cuba next year. CHTA had predicted that cruise lines would soon be planning Cuba cruises (which may adversely impact some current cruise destinations), in its white paper which had been submitted to the U.S. International Trade Commission last month.

CHTA President Emil Lee, in a letter to Prime Minister Christie, said: “I wish to applaud you for your remarks as outgoing Chairman at the CARICOM Regional Heads of Government Meeting in Barbados. Your call for tourism to be given the necessary regional prominence

towards *'reducing youth unemployment and the debt burdens that terrifies upcoming generations'* clearly demonstrates that you share our belief that tourism has the ability to shape our economies in order to deliver the quality of life that our citizens desire and the social benefits that our communities require.

“CHTA believes that CARICOM and the region’s broader public and private sector stakeholders are presented with an unprecedented opportunity to advance a regional tourism-related agenda around the theme of a Caribbean Basin Tourism Initiative (CBTI).”

To new CARICOM Chairman Barbados Prime Minister Freundel Stuart, Lee wrote: “With our public sector counterpart, the Caribbean Tourism Organization, we look forward to the opportunity to work with you and the CARICOM Secretariat over the coming months to advance discussions as to how the region’s socio-economic development can be accelerated and further advanced through tourism.

“...tourism presents the fastest opportunity to help mitigate the challenges of unemployment and revenue generation which face many of the Caribbean’s countries. We concur fully with Prime Minister Christie and are pleased that his comments are part of the CARICOM record.”

Lee further reiterated Prime Minister Christie’s comments that tourism offers the best way to stimulate the Caribbean economies, provide jobs and new business opportunities for the Caribbean people.

CHTA has requested a meeting for CTO and CHTA with Prime Minister Stuart and CARICOM Secretary General His Excellency Irwin LaRocque to map out a regional tourism action agenda. CHTA is urging that the agenda include:

- Establishing a Caribbean Basin Tourism Initiative to help focus regional, United States and other stakeholder efforts on stimulating tourism and tourism development
- Investing in Our People through training, education and the recognition of best practices and individual achievements
- Stimulating Travel and Trade to and within the region through free trade and the removal of trade barriers
- Reducing the Cost of Travel to and within the region
- Reducing Energy Costs and dependency for residents and businesses
- Marketing the Caribbean Brand to drive arrivals, spending and employment
- Providing the World’s Most Authentic, Efficient and Hospitable Visitor Experiences
- Mitigating the impact of Rising Sea Levels and Climate Change
- Improving Capacity, Relevance and Return on Investment from Destination Marketing
- Advancing Open Government and Transparency Standards into the practices of regional Governments and the private sector

“We expect that CARICOM adopting an aggressive tourism platform would serve as an impetus for the greater Caribbean nations to embrace tourism as the key to employment for each nations’ citizens and the launch of cruise vacations between the U.S. and Cuba should serve as a catalyst to get our governments to finally fund a sustainable Regional Marketing Campaign to elevate the image of all countries in the Caribbean to compete globally,” said Lee.

In a recent *Miami Herald* article by Mimi Whitefield, CHTA CEO and Director General Frank Comito said: *“It’s a wake-up call, but also presents an opportunity for the Caribbean to begin working together on improving marketing, offering dual destination visits, easing barriers such as cost and ease of travel, sharing best practices, and using tourism more effectively as an economic development tool.*

*Over 70 percent of Caribbean visitors come from the United States, Comito said. “If we don’t make the pie larger, when we’ve inserted this big player, the pie gets smaller for all of us.”*

The *Miami Herald* article also quoted Emil Lee, President of CHTA stating in a letter to the U.S. International Trade Commission: *“While we recognize fully that the lifting of the U.S. trade and travel embargo with Cuba will present our industry and the region with considerable challenges, we are also of the view that it presents the region’s governments, private sector interests, Cuba, the U.S. and other stakeholders with tremendous opportunities to improve the region’s economies, reduce unemployment, control national debts, upgrade our industry’s tourism product, increase investments and tourism arrivals, and stimulate U.S. and intra-Caribbean trade in goods and services.”*

### **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, including the events staged by the association, is supported by Strategic Partners Cable & Wireless, HVS, Interval International, MasterCard, OBM International, Tambourine and TravelZoo.

**For more information, visit <http://www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com>. Follow CHTA on Facebook [Facebook.com/CaribbeanHotelandTourismAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/CaribbeanHotelandTourismAssociation) and Twitter [Twitter.com/CHTAFeeds](https://twitter.com/CHTAFeeds).**

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