

High Level Meeting of Tourism Authorities



The Association of Caribbean States under the leadership of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela successfully hosted the first day of a two-day High Level Meeting of Tourism Authorities on Wednesday 16th of March, 2022. These sessions provided a platform for high level tourism authorities across the Greater Caribbean to delve into discussions that identified and explored key pillars for tourism industry recovery. It brought together leading experts in all facets of the tourism industry that presented on nuances in tourism recovery.

The meeting opened with greetings from the Chair of the ACS Special Committee for Sustainable Tourism, Ambassador Raul Li Causi, Mrs. Safiya Horne-Bique, Director, Trade and Sustainable Development, H.E. Rodolfo Sabonge, ACS Secretary General and Mrs Leticia Gomez, Vice-Minister of International Tourism and President of Venezuelan Tourism VENETUR, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Echoing the importance of convening this meeting, they each highlighted the critical material that would be interrogated and benefits of this platform presents.

During this first session, participants engaged in discussions centred on strategies for recovery in the tourism industry. Underlining each presentation was the consequential focus on sustainability for recovery. In keeping with this, the meeting heard from Ms. Virginia Messina, Senior Vice President of Advocacy & Communications at WTTC, who delivered the keynote address looking at stabilizing and revitalizing the industry for sustainable tourism recovery. Through her presentation, Ms. Messina set the tone for the recovery discussion facilitated for the first session.

Key note address was complemented by recovery discussions, starting with the discussion on rebuilding visitor confidence, as a first recovery strategy. The session was led by Rob Holmes, Founder GLP Films, Callixtus Joseph, Regional Crime and Security Strategy Coordinator, CARICOM IMPACS, Maria del Pilar Macias Rutes, Director General of Operations and Quality, Republic of Cuba. Mr. Holmes focused on marketing and storytelling for sustainable tourism. Mr. Joseph discussed safety and security as an indispensable tool for travel and tourism. And Ms. Macias Rutes demonstrated the effectiveness of the Cuban COVID-19 response plan.

Following this, Mr. Jamie Sweeting President, Planeterra Foundation, and Ms. Lisa Valmond, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Tourism International Transport and Maritimes Initiatives Dominica; led the discussion on investing in tourism value chains. Mr. Sweeting explored measures that provide long term support for MSMEs, while Ms. Valmond presented on community-based tourism as the core of destination asset using the case of the Kalinago community in Dominica.

The day culminated with the strategic discussion centred on encouraging sustainability leadership, which was guided by Ms. Kathleen Pittman Program Director- Caribbean and Special Projects GSTC and Mr. Alberto Lopez Chaves, General Manager of the Costa Rican Institute of Tourism Republic of Costa Rica. Ms. Pittman demonstrated the benefits of destination sustainability, assessment and certifications whereas Mr. Lopez provided an overview of the GSTC certification in practice using the case of Costa Rica.

The meeting continues with the second day's sessions on Thursday 17th March to furthering the discussion on tourism recovery and cooperation.

For more information please contact the Directorate of Trade and Sustainable Development: dtsddirect@acs-aec.org.