

CHTA PRESIDENT HAILS CARIBBEAN DIVERSITY, BEAUTY AND STRENGTH OF ITS PEOPLE

MONTEGO BAY, JAMAICA, January 31, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- MONTEGO BAY, Jamaica (January 30, 2019) - President of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) Patricia Affonso-Dass hailed the diversity of the region, its incredible natural beauty and people as core strengths as she called for the Caribbean to be better known as the most welcoming region in the world.

Kicking off the 37th annual Caribbean Travel Marketplace, the Caribbean's largest tourism marketing event, in Montego Bay, Jamaica yesterday evening, the Barbados-based hotelier said it was time to change the way the world references the region, "from the most tourism-dependent in the world to the world's most desirable, most tolerant and inclusive, most welcoming, most hospitable, most facilitative and investment-friendly, and most environmentally sensitive region in the world."

Speaking on behalf of the region's preeminent private sector trade association and its 33 national hotel and tourism associations, the president warmly welcomed delegates to the conference.

Caribbean Travel Marketplace is hosting the largest group of buyers in its history from the widest number of countries. Sixty new buyer companies out of about 145 have joined the conference this year and CHTA is welcoming the largest contingent of Chinese travel buyers to date along with new buyer companies from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, India, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Poland, Puerto Rico, St. Vincent & The Grenadines, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

"Our relationship with you, our buyer partners, and your active engagement in promoting and selling our region is integral to the sustainability of our economies and, by extension, the livelihood of our people, and I would like to encourage you to get more actively engaged with the association," she implored. "The diversity of buyers attending Marketplace from around the world ironically reflects the diversity of our Caribbean offerings - a united region with an



CHTA President Patricia Affonso-Dass addressing Caribbean Travel Marketplace delegates yesterday. At left is CHTA's Director General and CEO Frank Comito.

incredible array of offerings with their own distinct natural beauty, history and culture. This is one of our core strengths," she added.

Pointing to the region's people, she wants the Caribbean to be known as a region where genuine service is delivered by "regionally proud, highly trained professionals who understand the critical importance of their role and their importance to the success, sustainability and economic viability of the region."

Affonso-Dass, who has championed the theme of "people development" even prior to assuming the role of president last year, asserted that the people of the region are "our most important asset and our most marketable commodity."

In a world that often appears dominated by divisiveness, fear and uncertainty, the CHTA president's dream is for the Caribbean region "to continue to stand strong and united, to be synonymous with a genuine welcome, an authentic experience and excellent service delivered with soul and pride."

She told the 1,000 delegates attending the opening reception that "more and more of our customers are telling us that what they are seeking is a personal connection with our people, a genuine experience, and an opportunity to feel that their being here makes a positive difference. Our responsibility is to ensure that our people have the right training, real opportunities for development and a chance to derive the greatest value for themselves and their families from the industry in which they work."

The CHTA president thanked those in attendance who are supporting the CHTA Education Foundation, calling on more of the delegates to invest in the region's people. To date the foundation has awarded scholarships to more than 400 Caribbean nationals and in 2018 provided certificate training to several hundred employees.

Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2019 is produced by CHTA in collaboration with co-hosts the Jamaica Hotel & Tourist Association, the Jamaica Tourist Board and the Jamaica Ministry of Tourism. It is the leading event in the Caribbean tourism industry where delegates from Caribbean countries meet with buyers from more than 20 markets.

This year's host sponsors are Appleton Estate Rum Experience, Interval International, Jamaica Hotel & Tourist Association, Jamaica Tourist Board, Jamaica Ministry of Tourism, JetBlue Vacations, MasterCard, Sandals and Scotiabank, while Platinum sponsors include 7 Pillars: Marketing on Demand, Adara, AMResorts, Figment Design, Marketplace Excellence, OBMI, Sojern, STR, TravelClick, Travelzoo, and the United States Virgin Islands.

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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 50 years, CHTA has been the backbone of the Caribbean hospitality industry. Working with some 1,000 hotel and allied members, and 32 National Hotel Associations, CHTA is shaping the Caribbean's future and helping members to grow their businesses. Whether navigating new worlds like social media, 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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