

Jamaica Tourism Minister speaks at US President and Secretary of State Clintons' Global Initiative

ST. THOMAS, US VIRGIN ISLANDS, June 4, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- "I will begin this keynote address by saying that if we could use one word to best describe the global tourism industry that one word would be 'resilient'." This is how Jamaica Tourism Minister Hon. Edmund Bartlett opened his speech at the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) Action Network on Post-Disaster Recovery event being held in St. Thomas in the US Virgin Islands.

Alongside former US President Bill Clinton and his wife, former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the Hon. Edmund Bartlett spoke today at the University of the Virgin Islands, introducing the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre (<https://www.eturbonews.com/253964/bartlett-announces-the-establishment-of-four-new-global-tourism-resilience-and-crisis-management-centres/>).



Former US President Bill Clinton and Jamaica Tourism Minister Hon. Edmund Bartlett

Excerpted transcript of his keynote speech:

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We have to protect our tourism market.”

*Hon. Edmund Bartlett,
Jamaica Tourism Minister*

The sector has historically faced a wide range of threats but has always shown an uncanny ability to recover and soar to higher heights. Notwithstanding, the global tourism sector now faces an unprecedented degree of uncertainty and volatility that policymakers must respond to in an aggressive, consistent manner. We have to protect our tourism market, particularly our indigenous stakeholders, who have helped to bring the world to our shores. A

number of locally-operated and owned service providers have added significant value to the Caribbean economy. One company, in particular, Sandals, has helped to put the Caribbean on the map.

The urgency being ascribed to enhancing the resilience of global tourism destinations is based on the intensification of traditional threats to global tourism such as natural disasters linked to climate change and global warming and the emergence of new dynamic threats such as pandemics, terrorism and cybercrimes linked to the changing nature of global travel, human

interaction, commercial exchange and global politics.

As a minister of tourism from one of the most disaster-prone regions of the world, I dare say that, I have a firsthand perspective of the importance of building resilience in the tourism sector. Not only is the Caribbean the most disaster-prone region of the world on account of the fact that most islands are situated within the Atlantic hurricane belt where storm cells are produced and the region sits along three active seismic fault lines, it is also the most tourism-dependent region in the world.

The most recent economic data indicate that the livelihood of one in every four Caribbean residents is linked to tourism while travel and tourism contribute to 15.2 % of the region's GDP in general and over 25% of the GDP of more than half of the countries. In the case of the British Virgin Islands, tourism contributes to 98.5% of GDP. These figures clearly demonstrate the enormous economic contribution of the sector to the Caribbean and its people. They also underscore the importance of developing strategies for mitigating potential hazards that can destabilize tourism services in the region and cause long term setback to growth and development.

Most notably, a recent report indicated that the Caribbean region is likely to lose 22 percent of GDP by 2100 if the current pace of climate change is not reversed with some individual countries expecting to suffer GDP losses between 75 and 100 percent. The report described the main long-term impact of climate change on the region's economy as loss of tourism revenues. As most of us are aware the region has faced intense natural hazards in recent times. The hurricane season resulted in an estimated loss in 2017 of 826,100 visitors to the Caribbean, compared to pre-hurricane forecasts. These visitors would have generated US\$741 million and supported 11,005 jobs. Research suggests that recovery to previous levels could take up to four years in which case the region will miss out on over US\$3 billion over this timeframe.

Beyond the obviously growing threat of climate change, tourism stakeholders cannot remain oblivious to the other concerns that are rapidly emerging within the broader context of globalization. Take for example, the threat of terrorism. The conventional wisdom was that most non-western countries were generally insulated from the threat of terrorism. However recent terror attacks in tourist regions such as Bali in Indonesia and Bohol in the Philippines have sought to discredit this assumption.

Then there is also the challenge of preventing and containing epidemics and pandemics in tourist regions. The danger of epidemics and pandemics has been an ever-present reality due to the nature of international travel and tourism which is based on close contact and interaction between millions of people from all across the world on a daily basis. This danger has however heightened in recent years.

The world today is hyperconnected with the current volume, speed, and reach of travel being unprecedented. Almost 4 billion trips were taken by air just last year alone. A 2008 Worldbank report indicated that a pandemic that lasts for a year could trigger an economic collapse resulting from efforts to avoid infection such as reducing air travel, avoiding travel to infected destinations, and reducing consumption of services such as restaurant dining, tourism, mass transport, and nonessential retail shopping.

Read the full transcript at eturbonews.com: <https://www.eturbonews.com/254167/jamaica-tourism-minister-bartlett-new-cooperation-with-president-clinton-on-tourism-resilience/>

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