



# CARIBBEAN TOURISM AND HEALTH STAKEHOLDERS FORGE ALLIANCE TO SAFEGUARD VISITORS AND RESIDENTS FROM COVID-19

MIAMI, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, March 6, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The leaders of the Caribbean tourism and health sectors, who are working together to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus throughout the region, are implementing readiness and response measures to prevent and contain the virus.

While there has been no local spread of the virus in the Caribbean, community transmission is now reported in many other countries than China, some of which have nonstop flights to Caribbean States.

Therefore, due to the current increased risk of importation of COVID-19 to the region, the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) has upgraded the risk of Coronavirus disease transmission from "low" to "moderate to high".

In light of this, CARPHA Executive Director Dr. Joy St. John is urging health authorities of CARPHA Member States to shift their mindset from preparedness to readiness and rapid response and continue to do all that is necessary to strengthen their capacity to respond to possible importation of cases.

The recently established COVID-19 Caribbean Tourism Task Force comprises representatives from CARPHA, the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), and the Global Tourism Resilience & Crisis Management Centre (GTRCMC).

In a statement issued by the leaders of the task force member organizations, they indicated that a Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed upon by the organizations to foster closer collaboration.

"Recognizing the essential need to safeguard the health and safety of residents and visitors to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 threat to the Caribbean; and further recognizing the importance of building upon the collaborative efforts which are already underway, and the need to pool organizational resources to do so; we have agreed to formalize our efforts and messaging through the establishment of the COVID-19 Caribbean Tourism Task Force (CCTTF)," the MOU reads.

The organizations acknowledged concerns about the high level of misunderstanding about the virus which has elevated the panic at the global level and resulted in the dissemination of a high level of misinformation.

The CCTTF will focus on raising awareness and sharing accurate information; strengthening monitoring at airports, seaports, and hotels and accommodations; improving coordination among stakeholder organizations and locally between tourism and health officials; sharing best practices; training, education and capacity building; and conducting tourism impact research.

"Tourism is the lifeblood of the Caribbean so we've come together as organizations already engaged in readiness programs to pool resources so we can ensure the people of our region, and our visitors, remain safe from this viral threat," read the task force's statement, which adds "our ability to quickly contain any outbreak will be determined by how efficiently we can pool information and capacities - this agreement allows us to plan for an emergency and move our resources rapidly."

Dr. Lisa Indar, CARPHA's Assistant Director for the Surveillance, Disease Prevention & Control Division, explained that the organizations already collaborate, but in view of the spread of the virus in other regions, CARPHA and other task force organizations wanted to proactively solidify cooperation and ensure the task force had what it needed to keep COVID-19 from threatening the health of residents and visitors and the economies of the Caribbean.

The establishment of the Caribbean COVID-19 Tourism Task Force follows a Special Emergency Meeting of the CARICOM Heads of Government with health and tourism officials and cruise associations in Barbados last weekend, where they agreed to set up a regional protocol with the cruise industry.

As an immediate proactive measure to help fight the importation and spread of this novel viral illness, the CCTTF is urging hotel and tourism accommodation providers to register for CARPHA's Tourism Health Information System (THiS), which was developed several years ago to provide support information, and to help identify and confidentially manage early warning symptoms by employees and guests in a rapid manner.

Since January, over 50 additional hotels have joined THiS. To register, visit <http://this.carpha.org> or <https://tinyurl.com/txjo7al>. Visitors are also encouraged to self-report at <http://this.carpha.org>, and click on the self-reporting tab to the bottom left of the screen.

CARPHA advises residents and visitors that the best preventative measures are individual ones they can take by exercising hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, social distancing (staying one meter away from persons with flu) as well as avoiding eating raw and undercooked meats.

#### 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. For further information, visit [www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com](http://www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com).

#### About the Caribbean Public Health Agency

The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) is the new single regional public health agency for the Caribbean. It was legally established in July 2011 by an Intergovernmental Agreement signed by Caribbean Member States and began operation in January 2013. The Agency is the Caribbean region's collective response to strengthening and reorienting its health system approach so that it is equipped to address the changing nature of public health challenges. The approach is people-centered and evidence-informed. For more information visit [www.carpha.org](http://www.carpha.org).

#### About the Caribbean Tourism Organization

The Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), which is headquartered in Barbados, is the Caribbean's tourism development agency comprising membership of the region's finest countries and territories including Dutch, English, French and Spanish-speaking, as well as a myriad of private sector allied members. The CTO's vision is to position the Caribbean as the

most desirable, year-round, warm weather destination, and its purpose is Leading Sustainable Tourism - One Sea, One Voice, One Caribbean. Among the benefits to its members the organisation provides specialized support and technical assistance in sustainable tourism development, marketing, communications, advocacy, human resource development, event planning & execution and research & information technology. For more information, visit [www.OneCaribbean.org](http://www.OneCaribbean.org).

About the Global Tourism Resilience & Crisis Management Centre

The vision of the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre is to assist global tourism destinations with destination preparedness, management and recovery from disruptions and/or crises that impact tourism and threaten economies and livelihoods globally. For more information, visit [www.gtrcmc.org](http://www.gtrcmc.org).

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