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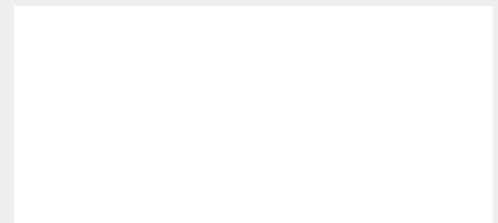
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ST. KITTS & NEVIS (Nov. 19, 2011) – Josef Fortsmayr, president of the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association (CHTA), delivered the keynote address at the St. Kitts & Nevis Tourism Awareness Month dinner where he announced the release of the new 36-page Caribbean Economic Impact Study, which was commissioned by CHTA in conjunction with the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTTC). For a copy of the report visit www.tourismiskey.com.

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TOURISM IS KEY SPEECH

JOSEF FORSTMAYR, PRESIDENT, CARIBBEAN HOTEL & TOURISM ASSOCIATION

ST. KITTS — NOVEMBER 19, 2011

Thank you for inviting me to speak in such a truly magnificent location. The fact that Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, bares testimony to the national pride and depth of character of the people of St. Kitts and Nevis; the country that produces such outstanding individuals as the great Kim Collins and boasts some of the finest 'quintessentially Caribbean' hotels in the region, such as Nisbet Plantation.

During this tourism awareness month, please allow me to spend a few minutes addressing the subject of the state of tourism in the Caribbean:

'Tourism is Key' – to economic recovery and sustainability in the Caribbean. The 'travel & tourism economy' in 2011 will account for significant 'double-digit' contributions to the region's GDP, its employment (2.2 million jobs), its exports and overall investment in the region. WTTTC forecasts Travel & Tourism's contribution to the Caribbean's GDP will be \$70 billion by the year 2021. (That's billion with a 'B').

Here in St. Kitts, travel and tourism's total contribution to the economy is substantial – in fact, vital – employing 6,000 people, almost 1 in 4 of the workforce, contributing 28% of the country's GDP and 44% of exports. Yes, tourism is an export.

In the past 20 years the structure of the Caribbean economy has changed almost beyond recognition. It has moved from one that was largely agriculture-dependent and preference based, requiring government's constant intervention, to one that now, to a significant extent, is being driven by tourism, an industry that is private sector led, largely without subsidies and dependent on the region's natural environment. Of the 10 countries in the world most dependent on tourism, 7 are in the Caribbean.

Many in the public and private sectors, as well as our people, still have great difficulty understanding this.

My first act as President of the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association was to launch the Tourism Is Key advocacy campaign underlining the importance of travel and tourism to our Caribbean economies. Using WTTTC's data, we have now run the Tourism Is Key advertising and PR campaign in eleven countries. It targets a broad audience from Caribbean Heads of State to its citizens and stakeholders, illustrating both regionally and in each destination: The impact of tourism on jobs, the impact of tourism on the wider economy, the impact of tourism on investments for the future and the value of foreign exchange generated by tourism.

The 4 pillars of the "Tourism is Key" campaign are:

- Advocacy with governments and citizens
- Linkages of tourism into local industry, agriculture and services
- Regional integration (improved airlift, less bureaucracy for regional travel)
- Regional marketing



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PHOTO OF THE DAY

There has to be a strong consensus of our leaders and the public so that travel and tourism will receive the full support it needs as the Caribbean's most vital export industry. It is the fastest way to create jobs, grow the economy and generate income for all. Every citizen needs to understand that, whether or not he or she works directly in the tourism areas, every tourist's dollar brings economic and social benefits to every level of our society.

I would like to take a moment to highlight some of the linkages between the hotel industry and the local economies in the Caribbean. I am using a Hotel Spend Study that was commissioned by CHTA in 2007:

- 74% of vegetables are sourced locally.
- 67% of dairy products are sourced locally.
- 63% of meat products are sourced locally.
- The hotel sector sources 50% of alcoholic beverages locally.

Regarding the all-important subject of airlift:

There are no 'drive-ins' in the Caribbean – most of our guests arrive by air. CHTA estimated that in 2010 the Caribbean governments collectively paid \$45 million to secure air-lift – only to find that our airlift is still inadequate and still very expensive for our visitors.

Furthermore intra-Caribbean tourism once represented 13% of the region's tourism; as much as Canada and 50% of Europe's arrivals. The combined population of Caribbean countries is 40 million. However, due to the lack of a competitive and truly regional airline, regional tourism has been suffocated by outrageous ticket prices and a cumbersome and ill-conceived network.

Caribbean nationals cannot travel freely between their countries without being subjected to visas, long immigration lines and other bureaucratic indulgences that stifle any sense of hospitality, the Caribbean's trade-mark.

On a more positive note, we are moving forward as a region on one issue. The Caribbean tourism industry's marketing and business development unit, CTDC, has taken an important step towards re-launching its vacation website, Caribbeantravel.com and has made a significant financial commitment to redesign and rebuild the site.

CTDC is a jointly owned and operated entity created in 2007 by the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) and the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA). Minister Skerritt is the current Chairman of CTDC and I fully commend and endorse his leadership that has led to this progress.

Caribbeantravel.com will be the focal point – the portal – that both draws awareness and generates bookings for potential vacationers from around the world and will be the centre of our public-private sector cooperative regional marketing programme.

During this tourism awareness month, the excellent initiatives that are in place St Kitts & Nevis to stimulate our vital industry must be recognized:

The government incentives that have welcomed investors to bring us the new developments of Christophe Harbour and Kittitian Hill.

The government's duty free program that has assisted many hotels and restaurants during these challenging economic times.

The government's support for supplying adequate airlift to lift occupancies.



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The St. Kitts and Nevis Hotel and Tourism Association must be commended for initiating the new Sugar Industry Diversification Fund loan for small hotels to refurbish their properties. – As a fellow hotelier, I can't emphasize enough how important is it to keep our product fresh, and I would urge you to take advantage of the very generous terms that are now available to you to ensure your hotels are of the highest standard.

However, I must also emphasize that government cannot do it all – the private sector must step up to the plate and bare its fair share of the responsibility of creating a vibrant and profitable tourism industry. The St. Kitts & Nevis government cannot be expected to fill every bed; the hotels and attractions must get out into the market and stimulate demand.

To that point, I am somewhat dismayed to see that, as of this week, only four hotels have signed up for the region's most important marketing event – Caribbean Marketplace, to be held at the Atlantis Resort, Paradise Island, January, 22-24. Over 300 qualified wholesaler and tour operator buyers from around the world attend this event, why would you not make the investment to be there? The government has already taken the initiative to attend once again and has bought a booth; but where is the private sector support?? Let's step up!!

In conclusion, and to recap:

The 4 pillars of CHTA's "Tourism is Key" campaign are:

- Advocacy with governments and citizens:

Let's ensure that the vital statistics of the tourism industry's contribution to our economies are known and appreciated by everyone.

- Linkages of tourism into local industry, agriculture and services:

Over 60% of meat, dairy and vegetable supplies being sourced locally, on-island – and over 50% of alcoholic beverages.

- Regional integration (improved airlift, less bureaucracy for regional travel):

Let's turn red tape into red carpet – an often-quoted phrase that unfortunately is not often put into practice.

- Regional marketing.

A rising tide lifts all ships. To quote Vincent Vanderpool Wallace, our Bahamian tourism guru: "The Caribbean brand is the best known 'un-owned' brand in the world". Let us work together to promote this great asset to the world.

One Love !



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