

An Explorer's Guide to Honoring Our Legacy, Defining Our Future

Adam Stewart Keynote Address

CTO State of the Industry Conference – September 15, 2016 – Barbados

THANK YOU HUGH FOR THAT WARM WELCOME...

GOOD MORNING... IT IS MY SINCERE PLEASURE TO BE HERE AND TO SHARE MY THOUGHTS ON WHERE, TOGETHER, WE HAVE BEEN - AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHERE, TOGETHER - WE MIGHT GO...

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, ON THE TOPIC OF LEGACY AND FUTURE, IT SEEMS AS THOUGH MY LINEAGE HAS MADE ME UNIQUELY QUALIFIED TO ADDRESS THIS TOPIC... NOT SO... THE TRUTH IS, WE ALL FIND OURSELVES AT THE SAME CROSS ROADS... I MAY BE AN OBVIOUS EMBODIMENT OF PAST AND POSSIBILITY, BUT EACH OF US CARRIES THE BURDEN AND BENEFIT OF ALL THAT CAME BEFORE AND EACH OF US IS OBLIGATED TO THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE FUTURE...

I THOUGHT A LOT ABOUT THESE TWO MOMENTS IN TIME, PAST AND PRESENT, LEGACY AND FUTURE - AND WHAT THEY HAVE TO TEACH US AND I KEPT COMING BACK TO AN IDEA I LEARNED ABOUT FROM BUSINESS GURU KNUT HAANAES, BASED ON RESEARCH FROM STANFORD UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR JIM MARCH THAT CONSIDERS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXPLORATION AND EXPLOITATION...

ACCORDING TO THE GOOD PROFESSOR, EXPLORATION IS THE RELENTLESS PURSUIT OF NEW POSSIBILITIES... EXPLORERS ARE ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THE NEXT BIG IDEA... THEY ARE OUR HEROES, OUR INNOVATORS... EXPLORATION IS THE STUFF OF DREAMS AND IS NATURALLY EXCITING BECAUSE EXPLORERS ALWAYS GO FIRST...

EXPLOITATION, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS ABOUT TAKING WHAT WE HAVE AND MAKING IT BETTER... HAANAES SAYS IT'S THE VITAL WORK OF MAKING SURE TRAINS RUN ON TIME... THIS IS REALLY IMPORTANT STUFF... REMEMBER, MOST SUCCESSFUL COMPANIES IN THE WORLD DON'T NECESSARILY INVENT THINGS – SOME DO, OF COURSE AND THEY LEAP FROG, BUT MOST LOOK TO THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY DOING SOMETHING GREAT AND EITHER PLAGORIZE THE IDEA ENTIRELY OR FIND WAYS TO MAKE A GOOD IDEA EVEN BETTER...

AT ITS CORE, EXPLOITATION IS ABOUT STICKING WITH WHAT HAS WORKED... IT'S RELIANCE UPON OLD CERTAINTIES AND STAYING WITHIN ONE'S COMFORT ZONE - LIKE FOR US IN THE CARIBBEAN, THE EASE OF SELLING A TRADITIONAL SUN SAND AND SEA EXPERIENCE, WARM VACATIONS THAT PEOPLE KNOW...

IN CONTEMPLATING OUR FUTURE AND THE FACTORS AFFECTING IT - FROM ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY TO EMERGING MARKETS AND FROM HEALTH CONCERNS TO FLUCTUATING WORLD ECONOMIES, FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN EXPLORATION AND EXPLOITATION WILL BE THE SECRET TO OUR SUCCESS IN FACING OUR ONE AND ONLY CERTAINTY: CHANGE...

CONSTANT CHANGE MAKES FOR CHALLENGING TIMES BECAUSE IT PUTS THIS BALANCING ACT BETWEEN EXPLORATION AND EXPLOITATION TO THE TEST...

FACING A NEW SET OF DATA, DOES IT MAKE SENSE TO KEEP DOING THINGS THE WAY WE ALWAYS HAVE? DO WE HAVE THE COURAGE TO STEP INTO THE DARKNESS OF UNCERTAINTY? TO RISK THE UNKNOWN? WE ALL WANT TO SHINE BRIGHT AND NOT HAVE FAILURES UNDER OUR BELT BECAUSE LET'S FACE IT, IT'S NOT JUST REPUTATIONS AT STAKE – IT'S OFTEN MONEY... WITH SO MUCH ON THE LINE, IT'S EASY JUST TO KEEP ON KEEPING ON...

OF COURSE, THAT'S NOT HOW THEY ROLE IN BARBADOS... HERE IN RI-RI'S HOUSE, TEN HEROES ILLUMINATE EVERY ASPECT OF THE CULTURE, FROM BUSSA WHO FOUGHT TO FREE HIS ENSLAVED PEOPLE TO SIR GARFIELD SOBERS, CRICKET'S GREATEST ALL-ROUNDER... BAJANS, THEY KNOW HOW TO LEAD...

AND SO DO THE BAHAMIANS AND ST. LUCIANS AND GRENADIANS AND HAITIANS AND ALL OF THE COUNTRIES GATHERED HERE THIS MORNING WHO ARE COMMITTED TO A BETTER, STRONGER CARRIBBEAN COMMUNITY...

I BELIEVE – NO, I KNOW, THAT WE ARE ON THE BRINK OF GREAT OPPORTUNITY AND THAT THIS MOMENT, RIGHT NOW, REQUIRES A BOLD, PERHAPS EVEN AUDACIOUS RESPONSE.

IT REQUIRES ORIGINAL THINKERS AND IT DEMANDS COURAGE.

OPPORTUNITY IS ALL AROUND FOR THOSE WHO SEE IT... THESE ARE THE HEROES WHO WILL BRING FRESH PERSPECTIVE TO THE WAY WE'RE ADDRESSING OUR SELLING PROPOSITION NOW - AND THE DREAMERS, WHO CAN IMAGINE AN EVEN BETTER TOMORROW...

FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN EXPLOITATION AND EXPLORATION IS KEY, BUT RIGHT NOW – I THINK THE SCALES ARE TIPPED TOWARD BUSINESS AS USUAL, WHICH IS WHY I AM HERE TO MAKE A CASE FOR THE VISIONARIES, FOR THOSE WHO THINK THEY HAVE A BETTER PLAN AND TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO BE BOLD ENOUGH TO BRING VOICE TO THEIR IDEAS...

I AM HERE TO SAY THAT AS WE MOVE TOWARD A BETTER FUTURE, WE NEED TO EMBRACE AND MAKE WAY FOR THE EXPLORERS...

CARIBBEAN PEOPLE UNDERSTAND EXPLORATION... AFTER ALL, SO MUCH OF OUR SHARED LEGACY WAS BUILT UPON A FOUNDATION OF JUST THAT, THE IDEA THAT A NEW WAY IS NECESSARY TO MEET A NEW SET OF CHALLENGES... IT'S WHAT POWERED THE MOVE TO INDEPENDENCE ACROSS THE REGION AND WHEN POLITICAL INSTABILITY STIFLED EXPLORERS IN PLACES LIKE MY OWN JAMAICA, GRENADA, CUBA AND HAITI, CARIBBEAN PEOPLE SOUGHT OPPORTUNITY OVERSEAS...

WE LOST SO MUCH OF OUR MIDDLE CLASS, TOO MANY OF OUR THINKING CLASS... WE LOST OUR EXPLORERS...

BUT NOT MY DAD... BUTCH STAYED...

HE CHOSE A DIFFERENT, BUT NO LESS REVOLUTIONARY PATH: HE DECIDED TO SELL AIR CONDITIONERS...

BUTCH STEWART'S APPROACH WAS A MODEL OF INNOVATIVE SERVICE STANDARDS THAT DISTINGUISHED HIS COMPANIES, WHETHER HE WAS SELLING APPLIANCES OR HOTEL ROOMS... HE, HIS EXECUTIVES AND EMPLOYEES WERE CHARGED TO SIMPLY EXCEED EXPECTATIONS... WE ARE STILL CHALLENGED TO DO THAT EVERY DAY OF LIFE; TO SURPRISE AND DELIGHT, TO BE CREATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVERS WITH THE CONFIDENCE AND COMPETENCE TO LEAD...

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS INFORMS THE WAY WE HIRE, THE WAY WE TRAIN, THE WAY WE PARTNER AND THE WAY WE PREPARE...

IT IS A PHILOSOPHY AN EXPLORER CAN APPRECIATE BECAUSE IT IS ROOTED IN THE INDIVIDUAL...

AT SANDALS, FOR EXAMPLE, WE HIRE FOR ENTHUSIASM AND TEACH THE SKILL... CAREER PATHS ARE DETERMINED AT THE GET-GO AND LEAD TO INCREASED RESPONSIBILITY AND OPPORTUNITY. AND SANDALS CORPORATE UNIVERSITY - OF WHICH WE ARE EXTREMELY PROUD, IS ALL ABOUT MAKING MORE PEOPLE, MORE COMPETITIVE, WHETHER THEY ULTIMATELY CHOOSE TO STAY WITH US OR FORGE A NEW WAY FORWARD, TO EXPLORE...

IT'S ABOUT MAKING IT POSSIBLE FOR CARIBBEAN PEOPLE TO LOOK OVER THE FENCE TO GLIMPSE WHAT MIGHT BE AND WHY I CONTINUE TO BE HUMBLLED BY THE WORK OF THE CTO SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION AND THE HUNDREDS OF OTHER EXAMPLES ACROSS OUR REGION LIKE THE CARIBBEAN COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, THE HEALTHY CARIBBEAN COALITION AND MY FAMILY'S OWN SANDALS FOUNDATION, THAT OFFER NOT JUST OPPORTUNITY, BUT THE PRIDE AND PLEASURE OF HOPE...

WE NEED VISIONARIES, AND THROUGH EDUCATION AND EXPOSURE WE CAN HELP OPEN UP A WORLD OF POSSIBILITY TO OUR CITIZENS... AFTER ALL, ONE CANNOT BEGIN TO EXPLORE IF THEY DON'T KNOW A WORLD EXISTS BEYOND THE CONFINES OF THEIR PRESENT SITUATION...

THAT IS THE LESSON OF MY FATHER'S LEGACY AND THE PAST THAT WE AS CARIBBEAN PEOPLE SHARE... IT'S A STORY OF INVESTMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP, THE POWER OF FREE ENTERPRISE TO LIFT PEOPLE UP, TO CREATE THEIR OWN DESTINY...

IT IS ABOUT CELEBRATING THE CARIBBEAN AND ITS MANY JOYS, FINDING INSPIRATION IN THAT AND KNOWING WE ARE WORKING TOWARD A FUTURE MADE BY CARIBBEAN PEOPLE FOR CARIBBEAN PEOPLE...

IT'S ABOUT HAVING THE COURAGE TO DREAM BIG, TO EXPLORE WITH A FIERCE DETERMINATION WHAT IS POSSIBLE AND THEN MAKING IT SO...

IT'S THE PATHWAY TO OUR FUTURE. WE MUST BELIEVE IN THE EXPLORERS...

FOR FAR TOO LONG, HOWEVER, THIS HAS NOT BEEN THE CASE... WITH EVERY GOOD INTENTION, WE HAVE OVERWHELMINGLY PURSUED BUSINESS AS USUAL...

WE'VE ADDED MORE HOTEL ROOMS ALONG OUR FULL SHORES AND BROUGHT IN MORE LIFT... WE'VE REDUCED RATES IN THE SHOULDER SEASON AND RENOVATED... WE'VE PUSHED WIDE, WHITE SANDY BEACHES, BLUE WATERS AND WARM DAYS... AND YOU KNOW WHAT? OVER THESE LAST DECADES, WE'VE DONE A HELL OF A JOB...

BEYOND THE CURRENT IMPLICATIONS OF ZIKA, THE BREXIT, CANADIAN STAGNATION, A US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, AND THE RECENT LOSS OF THE TRAVEL DOLLAR TO THE RIO GAMES, THE MACRO OUTLOOK FOR TRAVEL TO THE CARIBBEAN REMAINS STRONG... AND SO IT IS EASY TO BECOME COMPLACENT, TO CONTINUE TO EXPLOIT WHAT HAS WORKED SO WELL FOR SO LONG...

THIS IS WHAT GOT US HERE, BUT THE EXPLOSION OF TECHNOLOGY HAS MADE THE WORLD A VERY SMALL PLACE... EXPOSURE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA IS REVEALING A TRUTH WE CAN'T IGNORE: THERE ARE MANY BEAUTIFUL BEACHES IN THE WORLD, AND NOT ALL OF THEM ARE IN THE CARIBBEAN... WE'VE GOT TO GET CREATIVE... COMPLACENCY IN A NEW MEDIA WORLD IS NOT SUSTAINABLE...

THINGS ARE MOVING RAPIDLY... WE CANNOT REMAIN CONTENT WHEN OUR CUSTOMERS ARE NOT. THEY ARE CHANGING; I KNOW IT AND YOU KNOW IT...

WHILE THE UNITED STATES CONTINUES TO BE THE BREAD BASKET FOR MANY OF OUR REGIONS, THE AMERICAN TRAVELER IS EVOLVING.... THEY HAVE MORE OPTIONS... THEY ARE MORE SOPHISTICATED TRAVEL CONSUMERS, WHO ACROSS AGE AND WAGE, YEARN FOR AUTHENTICITY OF EXPERIENCE... AND BABY BOOMERS, THE GENERATION WITH THE TIME AND MONEY TO GO WHERE AND WHEN THEY WISH, ARE BEING COURTED BY DESTINATIONS ALL AROUND THE WORLD. AND MAKE NO MISTAKE, OUR COMPETITION IS MAKING AN IMPACT.

VIRTUOSO SAYS ITALY TOPS ITS LIST OF INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS TRAVELERS ARE BOOKING THIS FALL.... THIS IS FOLLOWED BY FRANCE, THE UK, SOUTH AFRICA, SPAIN, MEXICO, CHINA, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND ISRAEL... AMERICAN EXPRESS TRAVEL REPORTS THAT YEAR OVER YEAR TRAVEL BY AMERICANS TO JAPAN HAS GROWN A WHOPPING 60%. I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I FOR ONE WOULD LOVE TO SAY KON'NICHIIWA TO THOSE DOLLARS!

AND LOOK, IT'S NOT JUST OUR CUSTOMER THAT IS CHANGING... GLOBAL CONSOLIDATION IN ALL SECTORS, BUT MOST CERTAINLY IN THE HOTEL AND LODGING SECTORS, BURDENSOME TAXATION AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE HERE-TO-STAY SHARED ECONOMY - ARE BUT A FEW OF THE CURRENT ISSUES AFFECTING THE WAY WE DO BUSINESS...

THERE IS AN IRREVERSIBLE SHIFT TAKING PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE AND WHILE I KNOW IT'S A LITTLE BIT, OKAY MAYBE A LOT – SCARY, IT'S ALSO TREMENDOUSLY EXCITING AND I'VE NEVER BEEN MORE OPTIMISTIC THAN I AM RIGHT NOW ABOUT THE FUTURE OF CARIBBEAN TOURISM... THERE IS A RESOLVE IN THE AIR AND A SPIRIT OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS THAT IS SPARKING NEW IDEAS AND NEW SOLUTIONS...

OVER THE YEARS, THIS PLATFORM HAS BEEN USED TO TALK ABOUT THE URGENT NEED FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES AND THAT IS CERTAINLY NECESSARY, BUT I THINK THE REAL ROLL-UP-YOUR-SLEEVES TEAMWORK HAS TO TAKE PLACE BETWEEN THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS AND I'M HERE TO SAY, IT'S HAPPENING...

WITH RENEWED ENERGY AND ROBUST DIALOGUE, PRIVATE PUBLIC PARTNERSHIPS ARE THE NEW PHENOMENON THAT IS FOSTERING THE VERY TRADITIONAL VALUES OF TRUST AND MUTUAL RESPECT THAT MAKE LASTING DEVELOPMENT POSSIBLE... WE HAVE MORE TO DO, BUT THESE PARTNERSHIPS ARE MAKING REAL PROGRESS IN ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESS, UNDERSTANDING THAT PRIVATE SECTOR WILL ASSUME THE RISKS THAT ARE REQUIRED FOR REWARD AND THAT GOVERNMENT WILL BE A COMMITTED, TRUSTED AND LONG-TERM PARTNER IN THE PROCESS...

IN JAMAICA, WHERE I AM BOTH A PRIVATE BUSINESSMAN AND WHERE I ALSO HAVE THE HONOR OF CHAIRING THE TOURISM 'LINKAGES' COUNCIL, I SEE FIRST-HAND AND FROM BOTH SIDES, HOW EFFECTIVE AN ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS CAN BE...

COLLABORATION AT THIS LEVEL WORKS BY CREATING TOURISM SUPPORT SERVICES, QUITE LITERALLY 'LINKAGES' THAT FOSTER ENTREPRENEURSHIP, SUPPORT LOCAL TOURISM AND CREATE LOCAL OPPORTUNITY... I SEE WHAT IT TAKES TO DEVELOP THE ENTREPRENEUR AND GIVE THEM THE RESPECT OF OPPORTUNITY SO THAT THEY CAN PROVIDE FOR THEIR FAMILIES AND THEIR LOVED ONES... AS WE SAY IN JAMAICA, ONE, ONE COCO FULL BASKET... STEP BY STEP, INCREMENTALLY, WHEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS WORK TOGETHER SUCCESSFULLY, THERE WILL BE NO EMPTY BASKETS...

AND I THINK AS COLLABORATORS, BOTH BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT MUST EQUALLY VALUE WHAT IS UNIQUELY CARIBBEAN, BECAUSE IF WE DON'T, THE MARKET WILL SURELY MOVE TO THE DESTINATIONS THAT DO... RESEARCH CONFIRMS THIS... ACCORDING TO A RECENT EXPEDIA SURVEY, 76% OF BABY BOOMERS RATE EXPERIENCING AUTHENTIC LOCAL CULTURE AS "THE MOST IMPORTANT" ASPECT OF THEIR DECISION MAKING...

PEOPLE ARE SEARCHING TO FIND TRAVEL PRODUCTS THAT OFFER DEEPER, MORE AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES. THIS IS WHAT LED ME TO CREATE ISLAND ROUTES CARIBBEAN ADVENTURES, WHICH TAKES VISITORS BEYOND THE GATES OF THEIR RESORTS TO EXPERIENCE PLACES AND PEOPLE IN THE CARIBBEAN THEY MAY HAVE MISSED OR DID NOT KNOW EXISTED.

AS A MATTER OF FACT, JUST YESTERDAY IN MY HOME COUNTRY OF JAMAICA, THE HON. ED BARTLETT AND I HOSTED 53 CERTIFIED ISLAND ROUTES PARTNERS FROM 8 DESTINATIONS AROUND THE REGION ON A 3-DAY SUMMIT TO FIND THE NEXT FRONTIER OF CARIBBEAN EXCURSIONS...

SITTING ON A BEACH, SIPPING A PINA COLADA IS NICE BUT IT NO LONGER SATISFIES... THERE IS MORE TO OUR CARIBBEAN AND OUR VISITORS WANT TO SEE IT, EXPERIENCE IT...

SOCIAL MEDIA IS FILLED WITH IMAGES OF PEOPLE SWIMMING WITH THE PIGS IN EXUMA, DANCING AT MOONSPLASH IN ANGUILLA AND HIKING ST. LUCIA'S PITONS... IT'S WHY GOING TO OISTEN'S FISH FRY

HERE IN BARBADOS IS A MUST-DO AND WHY UNASSUMING ACCOUNTANTS ARE MUSTERING THE COURAGE TO JUMP IN TRINIDAD... AS THEY SAY, WHEN IN ROME...

THE TRUTH IS WE KNOW THAT PEOPLE DO COME TO THE CARIBBEAN FOR ITS NATURAL RESOURCES... SUN, SAND AND SEA ARE THE REGION'S HALLMARK AND THEY SELL, BUT WHEN TREATED AS A COMMODITY, CONSUMERS WILL GO WHERE THEY CAN GET THOSE RESOURCES MORE CONVENIENTLY AND LESS EXPENSIVELY... TO ENCOURAGE VISITORS, WE MUST HIGHLIGHT THE ELEMENTS AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE PEOPLE, THAT DISTINGUISH OUR REGION FROM ANYWHERE ELSE ON EARTH... WE MUST, WHILE FIERCELY PROTECTING OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, MONETIZE OUR UNIQUENESS AND EXPERTISE AND SHARE IT...

TO THE CONNOISSEUR, THERE IS ONLY ONE JAMAICA BLUE MOUNTAIN COFFEE...

TO THE BIRD WATCHER, ONLY DOMINICA OFFERS A SEA BIRD SO RARE IT WAS THOUGHT TO BE EXTINCT...

TO THE ADVENTURER, WE'RE RENOWNED FOR DIVING IN PLACES LIKE CAYMAN, TURKS AND BONAIRE, BUT HOW MANY THRILL SEEKERS KNOW ABOUT OUR CANYONEERING, MOUNTAIN BIKING, RIVER RAFTING AND SO MUCH MORE...

TO THE MEDICAL TOURIST, FACILITIES SUCH AS CAYMAN'S HEALTH CITY OFFER WORLD-CLASS SERVICES WITH RECOVERY IN A RESORT TOWN... WE NEED SO MUCH MORE OF THESE... CAYMAN, HATS OFF TO YOU FOR BEING AT THE CUSP OF THIS FRONTIER!

TO THE HISTORY BUFF, CURAÇAO'S HISTORIC WILLEMSTAD IS A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE WITH MONUMENTS AND BUILDINGS THAT ARE OVER 700 YEARS OLD...

I COULD GO ON AND YOU'LL BE HAPPY TO KNOW THAT I WON'T, BUT YOU SEE MY POINT: WE MUST THINK BEYOND WHAT WE HAVE TRADITIONALLY VALUED, TO GO BEYOND THE COAST AND TO LOOK INWARD, BOTH LITERALLY AND FIGURATIVELY... WE MUST BECAUSE THE FACT IS, WE ARE ON A COURSE TO OUTGROW OUR REAL ESTATE... PRIZED BEACHFRONT LANDS ARE GOING OR GONE... WHERE WILL DEVELOPMENT TAKE PLACE NEXT? WHAT WILL BE THE NEXT FRONTIER OF THE CARIBBEAN EXPERIENCE?

I THINK PART OF OUR RELUCTANCE TO CHAMPION AND EXPLORE WITHIN OUR OWN REGION IS THIS PERCEPTION AMONG CARIBBEAN PEOPLE THAT WHAT COMES FROM BEYOND OUR BORDERS IS BETTER... IN JAMAICA, WE SAY – "WE TOO FOREIGN MIND." I SAY, THIS IS A BIAS BORN AT HOME AND IT'S SIMPLY NOT TRUE... AS A MATTER OF FACT, THERE IS A MOVEMENT AFOOT TO CLAIM WHAT IS INTRINSICALLY OURS... WE MUST RESPECT WHAT WE PRODUCE...

THERE IS A BEAUTY TO THE LIFE WE LIVE IN THE CARIBBEAN, MY HOME, OUR HOME, AND I AM PROUD OF IT AND I WANT TO SHARE IT...

THE WARMTH OF OUR PEOPLE, THEIR TRADITION OF HARD WORK AND THEIR COMMITMENT TO FAMILY AND THEIR COMMUNITIES – THIS IS WHAT MAKES US EXTRAORDINARY AND IS THE MEANS BY WHICH WEALTH WILL STAY WHERE IT IS EARNED. FOREIGN INVESTMENT IS NECESSARY AND MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, IS GOOD FOR THE REGION, HOWEVER LOCAL KNOW-HOW AND HUMAN CAPITAL IS WHAT HUMANIZES ALL THIS CONCRETE AND INVESTMENT.

BUT EVERYDAY, IT'S BECOMING MORE AND MORE DIFFICULT FOR A SMALL PLAYERS TO PARTICIPATE... GLOBAL CONSOLIDATION AND VERTICAL INTEGRATION IS A REALITY BUT AROUND THE REGION, SERIOUS PEOPLE ARE PAYING SERIOUS ATTENTION. CHANGE IS COMING...

IN JAMAICA, GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR HAVE COME TOGETHER TO FORM THE ECONOMIC GROWTH COUNCIL, WHERE I SERVE AS A MEMBER... THIS REFLECTIVE PANEL CONSULTS AND ADVISES WITH TRUST, RESPECT AND PATRIOTISM AT THE FOREFRONT...

ON MONDAY, THE ECG ANNOUNCED A COLLECTION OF BROAD PLATFORM POLICIES AND REFORMS THAT HAVE THE PROSPECT OF FACILITATING ECONOMIC GROWTH, INTENDED TO SHAKE THE “TRUNK OF THE TREE” WITH THE POTENTIAL TO POSITIVELY IMPACT THOUSANDS OF BUSINESSES AND MILLIONS OF JAMAICANS...

NEVER BEFORE HAS AN APPROACH AS COMPREHENSIVE BEEN MOUNTED TO ADVISE ON THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY OF JAMAICA...

THESE ARE THE 8 KEY POINTS THAT WERE RECOMMENDED AND EACH HAS RESONANCE FOR THIS DISCUSSION:

- (1) MAINTAIN MACRO-ECONOMIC STABILITY AND PURSUE DEBT REDUCTION STRATEGIES
- (2) IMPROVE CITIZEN SECURITY
- (3) IMPROVE ACCESS TO FINANCE
- (4) PURSUE BUREAUCRATIC REFORM TO IMPROVE THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT
- (5) STIMULATE GREATER ASSET UTILISATION
- (6) BUILD HUMAN CAPITAL
- (7) HARNESS THE POWER OF THE DIASPORA
- (8) CATALYSE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PROJECTS

AT THE END OF THE DAY, WE MUST ASK OURSELVES: DO WE SEE VALUE IN WHAT IS OUR OWN? WHAT WE MAKE, HOW WE SERVE, THE THINGS WE BUILD? ARE WE WILLING TO DO WHAT IT TAKES TO MEET AND EXCEED INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS IN PREPARING FOR A BETTER FUTURE?

I BELIEVE WE CAN AND I THINK GOVERNMENT CAN HELP... THE WAY I SEE IT, THAT IS THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT - TO SET THE STAGE FOR GROWTH SO THAT EXPLORERS MIGHT DO WHAT EXPLORERS DO BEST: GET ON WITH THE BUSINESS OF DISCOVERY...

FIRST, GOVERNMENTS MUST ACCEPT THAT BUSINESS REQUIRES A STRONG, STEADY AND UNWAVERING PLATFORM ON WHICH IT MAY BUILD AND GROW...

PRIORITY MUST BE GIVEN TO ADDRESSING THE REAL ISSUE OF CRIME THAT HAUNTS TOO MANY OF OUR COUNTRIES... LAW & ORDER IS PARAMOUNT...

INFRASTRUCTURE, FROM ROADS AND WIRELESS NETWORKS TO ACCESS TO MEDICAL FACILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION THAT MOVES WORKERS AS WELL AS VISITORS SAFELY AND EFFICIENTLY MUST BE MET WITH PRIMACY AND PERHAPS NO ISSUE IS MORE IMPORTANT TO BUILDING A SOLID PLATFORM FOR BUSINESS THAN ACCESS TO AN EDUCATED WORK FORCE...

SECOND, GOVERNMENTS MUST ACCEPT THAT BUSINESS REQUIRES CONSISTENCY AND PREDICTABILITY ACROSS THE REGION AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN COUNTRIES TO ENSURE THAT EXPLORERS ARE MET WITH AN EVEN PLAYING FIELD THAT WILL FOSTER THE NECESSARY CONFIDENCE THAT IS CRITICAL TO SUCCESS...

EACH OF OUR TERRITORIES PRIDES ITSELF ON OUR INDIVIDUAL CULTURES AND HISTORY... THIS OF COURSE, IS THE ESSENCE OF WHO WE ARE BUT WE DO OURSELVES A TREMENDOUS DISERVICE WHEN THE LANDSCAPE FOR DOING BUSINESS VARIES SO GREATLY FROM ONE COUNTRY TO THE NEXT... BUSINESS BETWEEN CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES CAN BE AS FOREIGN AS OPERATING ON TWO SEPARATE SIDES OF THE WORLD...

FINALLY, WHILE BUSINESS MUST APPRECIATE THE VERY REAL FACT THAT GOVERNMENT IS NOT A FOR PROFIT ENTERPRISE, GOVERNMENTS MUST ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT BUSINESS THRIVES ON INNOVATION AND EFFICIENCY... OVERREGULATION, SYSTEMIC BUREAUCRACY AND COMPLACENCY OF ATTITUDE SHOULD BE MADE REMNANTS OF AN IRRELEVANT PAST. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, HOW MANY OF YOU ACTUALLY HAVE AN ACTIVE PROGRAM OF ERRADICATING BUREAUCRACY OR OBSTACLES IN YOUR ENTERPRISE? ANY ORGANISM THAT DOES NOT EVOLVE IS DESTINED TO DIE... WE NEED TO EVOLVE...

I AM NOT HERE TO TELL ANYONE THE SECRET SAUCE OF THE FUTURE... IF ONLY I COULD... BUT I KNOW THIS: WHETHER YOU'RE AN EXPLORER, LIKE ME, SEARCHING FOR WHAT'S NEW OR A KEEPER OF CONSISTENCY, FOCUSED ON MAKING WHAT WE HAVE BETTER, WE MUST VALUE EACH OTHER'S CONTRIBUTIONS AND IDEAS... WE'VE GOT TO FIND THE BALANCE...

I DEEPLY BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF INNOVATION, BUT I ALSO KNOW IN THE DAILY SCHEME OF THINGS, FEW THINGS FEEL AS GOOD AS AN ON-TIME ARRIVAL...

WE NEED TO WORK TOGETHER... TO FIND THE BALANCE BETWEEN EXPLORATION AND EXPLOITATION, THE DREAM OF WHAT COULD BE WITH THE WORK AT HAND... TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE WORLD'S MARKETS THAT WE ARE WORTHY OF INVESTMENT BECAUSE WE ARE UNIQUE ON THE PLANET, BLESSED WITH NATURAL RESOURCES THAT GO FAR BEYOND SUN, SAND AND SEA...

THAT TOGETHER, PRIVATE AND PUBLIC, WE ARE PREPARING A WAY FOR OPPORTUNITY TO FLOURISH...

THIS IS THE MOMENT OUR PAST HAS PREPARED US FOR. NOW, LET'S GET TO WORK...