

DRAFT REMARKS FOR THE CHAIRMAN
CARIBBEAN TOURISM ORGANIZATION
OCTOBER 10, 2010

Dr. Fraser, thank you for your kind remarks. I am honored to have been elected to serve as the new Chairman of the Caribbean Tourism Organization, and I look forward to working with all member countries and stakeholders to accomplish our goals over the course of my term in office. I take this opportunity to thank our outgoing Chairman, Minister John Maginley of Antigua & Barbuda, for his leadership over the past two years at a very challenging period in CTO's history. John has asked me to express his regrets for being unable to be with us this weekend. I also want to thank Minister Sealy and the Government and people of Barbados for being such gracious hosts of this conference, and for the wonderful hospitality we have been receiving here at the Hilton hotel.

To all of you who have put your busy schedules aside to be here, I want to say thank you for joining us for this vital gathering this morning. I am sure that many of you would normally be using such a Sunday morning as an opportunity to be worshipping at your community church, or spending some valuable family time at home or at the beach. Your presence here suggests to me that you value this inaugural regional leadership strategy conference as an important step in charting the way forward for our Caribbean economies during this most difficult time for our tourism industry.

It is no secret that the world has changed significantly over the past 2 years as a result of global economic conditions. While we have proven in the past that Caribbean tourism is resilient and that we, collectively, can rise to meet challenges and continue to be one of the world's leading tourism areas, we know it will take a well thought strategy to regain and surpass the arrival levels we were attracting in 2007 and 2008.

The good news is that stopover travel is beginning to rebound in our region, albeit more slowly than predicted from some markets. And fortunately for many of our destinations, cruise lines have continued to arrive at our shores with full cabins even at the height of the economic recession.

However, it is a different visitor who is arriving in the Caribbean now than in the past. This visitor is more demanding, expecting maximum value for money, and is more discerning, seeking a more spiritually fulfilling vacation experience that includes more interaction with local people and a deeper connection with our land and culture. Our visitor also has access to many more warm weather vacation options than ever before.

The Caribbean brand is well known throughout the world for pristine beaches, wonderful weather and our welcoming people. But we still must deliver service on a world class level if we are to compete effectively with world-wide

destinations. To be successful and competitive in this “new normal” environment requires a captivating and safe destination experience, convenient and affordable airlift, a more sophisticated tourism infrastructure, and a marketing strategy that is carefully targeted, cost-effective, and closely aligned with the authentic product offerings of each of our individual destinations.

This leadership conference will provide us with access to some of the top tourism industry’s thought leaders who will share their insights on the key issues and their ideas of how to adapt, change and grow our industry. We especially look forward to the keynote address from our special guest, BA CEO Willie Walsh, who has been a great supporter of our region since joining BA five years ago. I believe that it is not by accident that Willie carries the title of a former much loved great West Indies fast bowler, Courtney Walsh, who throughout his career was known for his exceptionally big heart and his unique blend of strategic cunningness and perseverance in the face of adversity. Perhaps one of

Courtney's ancestors was named Willie, hailed from Ireland, and was a great lover of Guinness.

In closing, please allow me to publicly express get well wishes from the entire CTO membership to the much respected Barbados Prime Minister, David Thompson, at this very difficult time for him and his family. I will hope and pray that in our continued quest to recover and expand our tourism

economies across our region, that the CTO leadership will be blessed with the same courage and faith that Prime Minister Thompson is showing in the face of such great adversity.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as the new Chairman of the Caribbean Tourism Organization, I pledge to learn from the best, and to do my best to help our organization lead our tourism industry and the Caribbean brand confidently forward to achieve the best tourism results for our region.

I thank you.