

## **Statement by CTO Chairman Hon. Minister Dionisio D'Aguilar, Bahamas Minister of Tourism, on Hurricane Irma**

The thoughts and prayers of the people of The Bahamas are with all of those who are adversely impacted by Hurricane Irma, and we pray that Hurricane Jose does not add to the challenges of our neighbors.

This is a moment for the Caribbean region that is without equal. The impact of Hurricane Irma on a number of islands in our region, our neighbors, has been stunning. We are turning our attention to assessing impacts in our country, but are also mindful that the recovery necessary in our region will benefit all of us. The Bahamas will be seeking to assist in this recovery as we can.

The Caribbean Tourism Organization, which I chair, will work to support recovery of the Caribbean and to communicate effectively across our region and to our neighbors in this hemisphere.

We have weathered many storms, we are resilient and we will navigate the road to recovery together.

### **CTO Statement 2 on Hurricane Irma**

**BRIDGETOWN**, Barbados, 16 Sept. 2017 – It's been just over a week since the dangerous category 5 Hurricane Irma first made landfall, ravaging the once charming surrounds of the island of Barbuda and leaving behind the pummelled remains of homes, schools, village shops – 90 per cent of the buildings.

In the ensuing days we witnessed nature at its destructive, damaging and demolishing worst, as the monstrous storm battered a number of our member countries in the northern Leeward Islands and further north with its winds of 185 miles per hour, inflicting harm with various degrees of severity.

In the wake of the storm we have witnessed the pain of those who lost loved ones, the agony of so many who lost their homes and all their belongings, and the angst of an entire Caribbean concerned for the welfare of the affected.

But we have also witnessed the dogged determination that defines the people of the Caribbean who refuse to surrender even in the most difficult of times.

It is because of this remarkable resilience that so many of the affected countries are beginning to open again for business; that the worst affected have their airports functioning again, if only to receive relief supplies and get visitors out; and it is this remarkable resilience that drives the process of recovery, reconstruction and refurbishment. There is a commitment to emerge from this much stronger than before, and over the past week or so we have witnessed the will, determination and hard work that the local, regional and international teams are putting in to ensure the affected countries return to normality in the quickest possible time. Irma's destruction has strengthened the Caribbean's resolve to rebuild in a manner that is structurally sound, assures sustainability and demonstrates respect for the environment. This is an opportunity for the entire Caribbean to champion the message of sustainable development and help focus public attention on issues related to the dangers of climate change.

The Caribbean Tourism Organization expresses our heartfelt sympathy to the families of those who lost loved ones, and our unwavering support for everyone who has been affected by Hurricane Irma.

Working side by side with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, our private sector partners the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association, the cruise lines, airlines, other industry partners and the international community, we are encouraged by the outpouring of assistance. Support has also come from our many member countries that were spared the fury of this dangerous storm, and from those who were impacted but spared the worst. They, together with countless Caribbean nationals everywhere are offering assistance, or launching initiatives to raise funds for the relief effort. Some are sending manpower, some goods and some cash. The CTO thanks and applauds them all.

As our chairman, the minister of tourism for The Bahamas, Dionisio D'Aguilar said, we have weathered many storms, we are resilient and we will navigate the road to recovery together. We have activated our Hurricane Relief Fund to help our people and countries

rebuild after the storm. Please visit <https://www.gofundme.com/hurricane-relief-fund-cto> to donate to the fund. We appreciate your contribution and encourage you to be generous. The CTO continues to offer our support to the affected member countries. We also provide updates as they become available.

### **CTO Statement 1 on Hurricane Irma**

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados (5 Sept, 2017) – As Hurricane Irma churns its way towards the northern Leeward Islands and the northern Caribbean, including the Bahamas, Cuba and Haiti as a dangerous category 5 storm, the Caribbean Tourism Organization expresses concern for residents and visitors in the countries that are in the hurricane's projected path, and pray that the impact will be reduced.

We have been in contact with our members and they assure us that they have been taking all the necessary steps to ensure that they are in a state of readiness.

We take this storm seriously. The safety of the Caribbean's citizens and our visitors is the number one concern for the authorities and emergency response teams throughout the region.

The CTO is actively monitoring the hurricane and updates from our member countries will be posted to this page and our social media channels, as they become available.