



**CARIBBEAN CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT - STC-2019**  
**AUGUST 26-29, 2019 | ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES**

*"Keeping the Right Balance: – Tourism Development in an Era of Diversification"*

## **STC-2019 COMMUNIQUE**

The Caribbean Tourism Organization in collaboration with the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines hosted the Caribbean Sustainable Tourism Conference from August 26-29, 2019 in Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The conference themed *"Keeping the Right Balance: – Tourism Development in an Era of Diversification"* included sessions on various topics as follows:

### **1. COMMUNITY BASED-TOURISM – DRIVING INNOVATION AND EXPERIENCES**

Through technical cooperation with regional partner the Compete Caribbean Partnership Facility (CCPF), the CTO has charted a path for the systematic development of Community Based Tourism as a viable niche market, backed by robust market research that encapsulates visitor willingness to pay for innovative tourism experiences across the region. In this session, the Community-Based Tourism toolkit developed through this partnership was presented in seeking to promote inclusive tourism development, and support product diversification and differentiation that enhance community participation and benefit.

### **2. INDIGENOUS CONVERSATIONS – CELEBRATING OUR PAST, EMBRACING OUR FUTURE**

This session looked at the changing composition of local livelihoods, and recognized that the region's indigenous people have a tangible role and stake in the tourism value chain. Presentations were delivered by representatives of indigenous communities across the region showcasing how they are accessing tourism markets and welcoming visitors to experience their culture and traditional ways of life. Through tourism, many are embracing expanded entrepreneurial opportunities, adding new dimensions to their sources of income, and creating niches that are increasingly sought after. Delegates gained a deeper understanding of indigenous tourism within the Caribbean.

### **3. THE CARING ECONOMY: PEOPLE, PLANET AND PROFITS**

This session explored tangible best practice initiatives which exemplify the 3 Ps of sustainability across local, regional and international dimensions. Presentations were delivered to expound on the need for an equitable balance between the needs of society, the environment and the economy; a relationship which must be honoured and respected if true Caribbean development is to be attained.

### **4. TRANSFORMATION FOR TOURISM EVOLUTION**

This session took a critical look at new opportunities to regenerate the regional tourism industry in the areas of market access, disaster recovery, and climate resilience as a means of increasing tourism competitiveness and sustainability. Presentations centered on adaptive innovations and the creative use of market disruptions. Notably, local tourism players are largely categorized as micro, small and medium enterprises, and their ability to harness transformative advances is an existential imperative for ensuring their sustained relevance in an ever-changing geo-political climate.

## **5. CONSERVATION MATTERS: NURTURING OUR NATURE**

This session demonstrated the viability of crafting alternative paths to realizing the Caribbean's tourism potential, without compromising value and benefits for future generations. The Caribbean is known for the diversity of its assets including pristine natural environments, a plethora of endemic flora, fauna and coral species and spectacular landscapes, which are the foundation for the continued appeal of Caribbean Tourism. Presentations emphasized the need to conserve these assets and ensure sustainable and responsible use.

### **STC 2019 - CONFERENCE DECLARATION**

We the delegates of the 2019 Caribbean Conference on Sustainable Tourism Development, hosted by the Caribbean Tourism Organization in collaboration with the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, having attended and participated in the discussions have identified several environmental, social and economic impacts and challenges affecting the sustainable development of Caribbean tourism, and reiterate our commitment to support regional tourism development as follows:

#### **Challenges and issues identified**

1. We have identified as the most pressing environmental challenges, climate change impacts; inadequate waste management; the threat of natural hazards and the degradation of the environment through human activities.
2. At the level of social impacts and challenges, these include the lack of basic infrastructure in rural communities to support and develop sustainable businesses; the lack of telecommunications and technology in remote areas; and the need for regulations to protect the interests of indigenous people who depend on the natural and cultural environment for their livelihoods.
3. Recognising also that various economic challenges hinder the development of regional tourism including, limited funding for product development; the lack of technical assistance and business intelligence particularly for SMEs; high-risk insecurity of money transfers; and lack of market knowledge and business development skills related to product pricing.

#### **Outcome and Recommendations**

4. Given these challenges, we acknowledge the need for Government policies that support tourism product development and conserve countries natural, cultural and heritage assets. This must be accompanied by adequate interventions and enforcement strategies, with provisions for monitoring the environmental, economic and social impacts of tourism. We also acknowledge the key role of the private sector, and the need to increase local stakeholder consultation and engagement to support tourism development.
5. We recommend as priority actions to address these challenges, the generation of a list of sustainable industry standards and certification; the building of capacity within communities to develop and manage Community-Based Tourism projects; conducting sustainability audits and market readiness assessments; educating local populations and tourists about the potential negative effects of tourism on the environment; and incorporating sustainable tourism in school's curriculum to create awareness of responsible tourism practices among children through various methods such as the arts.

6. We commit to preserve our culture and environment for a sustainable future; to share knowledge on sustainable tourism and best practices; to support and promote Community-Based Tourism; and encourage a multi-sectoral approach to tourism development. We also pledge to foster consultation and the active participation of various public and private stakeholders groups to develop tourism that is economically equitable, socially inclusive, environmentally responsible and generates employment opportunities and other benefits for members of the local community, while also ensuring a memorable and rewarding visitor experience.

Our collective actions can make a genuine difference in addressing our common challenges and advancing mutual benefits.