

ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)

25th MEETING OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
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**BRIEFING DOCUMENT ON THE PROGRAMME FOR THE PROMOTION OF
SAFETY AND SECURITY IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY**

INTRODUCTION

Visitor Safety and Security in Context

The Programme for the Promotion of Safety and Security in the Tourism Industry was designed to foster collaboration and dialogue between Tourism and Disaster Risk Management Policy makers of ACS Member and Associate Member States with the aim of facilitating the development of coordinated and integrated response mechanisms and strategies on issues related to crime and harassment against tourists and disaster and risk mitigation and management. The main objective is to maintain the image of the Caribbean as a safe haven and highly rated location for tourism and investment. In this regard efforts are focused on advocating for the better management of tourist safety at the national and regional levels and the development of a common and integrated policy approach to safety and security as it concerns the Regional Tourism Industry.

In the implementation of projects and activities, the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism seeks to promote synergies and cooperation in the large geopolitical space of the Greater Caribbean, based on the exchange of best practices and lessons learnt from past events, and the experiences and expertise of existing sub-regional technical institutions.

Under this programmatic area, the ACS aims to fulfill its mandate to promote and enhance co-operation among countries on tourist safety and security and secure mechanisms that guarantee a multi – dimensional approach to Safety and Security in the Tourism Sector of the Greater Caribbean.

Specific Objectives:

- Strengthen Regional commitment on the issue of Visitor Safety and Security;
- Provide policy makers with current information and best practices that can be used to build and/or enhance their national policies;
- Provide all parties with a platform from which the sharing of ideas and the discussion of issues relating to their respective experiences can be heard and solutions found;
- Demonstrate to external partners the Region's commitment to dealing with safety and security issues thereby opening up avenues for possible funding and collaboration;
- Project to potential visitors the Region's pro-active stance in ensuring that destinations are safe and well prepared should a crisis occur, thereby reducing fear and encouraging repeat visits.

BACKGROUND

The context within which this programmatic area has been developed reflects the fact that not only is the Caribbean the most tourism-dependent region in the world but it also recognises the importance in ensuring that there are reliable systems and processes established to secure the safety and security of human life and property to mitigate against hazardous events that may occur.

Generally, the countries of the Greater Caribbean are perceived as safe and idyllic destinations, and it is critical to the survival and growth of the tourism industry to maintain this positive image of the countries and the Region. However, threatening to tarnish this image are increasing levels of crime in a number of countries, including crime against tourists. Of the critical events that can negatively impact the Tourism industry, crime against tourists can be the most damaging. An increase in crimes targeting tourists can cause foreign governments to announce travel advisories, thereby inducing their nationals to alter their vacation plans, which would most often lead to them choosing alternative vacation destinations. Even isolated incidents can produce a ripple effect throughout a country when victims warn their friends and family and/or are encouraged to tell their stories to the media. Among the immediate impact of such decisions are loss of revenue for airlines, hotels and the industry as a whole. However, the longer-term impact may include fewer repeat visitors and permanent damage to the image of the destination as a place to visit and/or location for tourism investment. In reality crime/victimization against tourists are components of the broader issue of visitor safety and security. Among the other pertinent issues are the safety of borders and ports; adequacy of the infrastructure; food safety; environmental integrity; integrity of health and health care delivery systems; disaster preparedness, effectiveness of crisis response mechanisms and mitigation systems. Of importance also is the region's capacity to combat terrorism.

In light of the foregoing, of fundamental importance to investors and visitors alike are the nature and types of initiatives being implemented to address and manage crime and other critical events, which include inter-alia: the ways in which law enforcement responds to incidents; the measures, processes and procedures used by hotels to balance visitor safety and security with the needs of visitors to experience the local culture; the nature and level of recourse that visitors have after having become victims of crime; and the efficiency and efficacy of the court system in resolving crime and compensating visitors.

While some broad-based, regional probing into aspects of visitor safety and security has already been undertaken, there is need for more action-oriented, policy dialogue and action plans. Previous interventions of the ACS in this area has revealed that a proactive approach by the governments of the Region to establish agreements, procedures and best practices with respect to Visitor Safety and Security is necessary in ensuring the sustainability of the tourism product. Such actions will not only equip locals and tourists with the skills, knowledge and tools to utilize in the event of a crisis, but will also aid in propelling the marketing of the region as a safe and visitor-friendly haven.

THE PROCESS TO DEVELOP THE SAFETY AND SECURITY PROGRAMME

The issues that concern safety and security are broad in scope and traverse many sectors. For the ACS, the focus of interventions is to increase countries capacity to mitigate and manage

negative events that may occur, by having in place effective and reliable control and response mechanisms. The ACS has facilitated various fora to promote dialogue and increase awareness and importance of this issue at the Regional level. This includes hosting the Visitor Safety and Security Symposium in September 2003 which led to the development of a Policy Paper, ***Enhancing Tourist Destinations Policies and Strategies for Visitor Protection***, which was completed in March 2006.

The ACS also collaborated with the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association to implement the Tourist Safety & Security Project in 2007 which included a) **a physical safety gap analysis** of tourism establishments and tourism sites in five representative Caribbean tourism destinations; and b) **a personal safety gap analysis** of the mechanisms and modalities for managing and mitigating the level personal safety and security in five representative, Caribbean tourism destinations. At the conclusion of the project a 3 day Regional Policy Dialogue was held for key tourism stakeholders from the Public and Private sectors to examine the issues related to Tourist Safety and Security in general as well as those specific to the sub-sectors.

Among others, the recommendations emanating from the above-mentioned forum were as follows:

- Solicit funding from regional and international donors to support Tourism Safety and Security initiatives and continue research on visitor safety and security in the Caribbean;
- Secure agreements of individual Member States and Regional institutions in supporting research on visitor safety and security, and the hosting of symposia on visitor safety and security in order to bring national attention to VSS matters;
- Pursue collaboration with Member States to support the establishment of National and Regional Visitor Safety and Security Networks;
- Develop co-operation mechanisms with regional and international organizations, and pursue avenues to ensure private sector involvement in safety and security related issues.
- Establish more systematic and coordinated approaches to managing visitor safety and security issues throughout the tourism/hospitality and ancillary sector, including streamlined legislative/judicial protocols;
- Develop strategic and policy-making modalities for capacity building within national tourism agencies, including more uniform methods of data definition, collection, and management; and
- Implementation of industry best practices.

Additionally there was a consensus that the following five areas would be prioritized as the most important aspects for future interventions related to Tourism safety and security: **Industry Standards; Policy Development; Legislative Framework; Community Involvement and Communication.**

THE NEXT STEPS

- **PROPOSAL FOR CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS**

In an effort to facilitate the advancement of dialogue on Tourism Safety and Security within the Region, the Directorate proposes the convening of Tourism, National Security and Disaster Risk

Management policy makers of Member and Associate Member States once annually for a capacity-building workshop. It is believed that seminars/ workshops with a capacity building component, as opposed to a more policy related conference or symposium, will be in keeping with a more results-oriented and pro-active approach as it would encourage actions being taken and reinforce the urgency of these issues to Member and Associate Member States.

The workshop is being proposed to be held over a two-day period where, after some initial dialogue, case studies will be presented by invited regional and international organisations from which best practices will be extracted. Previous dialogues on the topic of Visitor Safety and Security identified the multi – dimensional nature of Safety and Security and indicated four components as needing attention, and **One Topic** and/or related issue will be selected as the main focus of each workshop as follows: **Physical Safety, Disaster Risk Preparedness, Food Safety and Security and Health/Pandemic Safety and Security.**

It is proposed that the proceedings follow the below format:

Plenary sessions: focussing on Tourism Safety and Security from different vantage points.

In keeping with the afore-mentioned prioritised identified, the five themes for each seminar will be centered on:

1. **Industry Standards** – Current Standards and Future Trends
2. **Policy Development** – Policy Recommendations and Implications
3. **Legislative Framework** – Regional and International benchmarks and Best practises
4. **Community Involvement** – The importance of Interdependencies and Collaboration, private sector engagement and local community roles and relations.
5. **Communication** – Strategies, Alternatives and Targeted approaches

➤ **Guided Discussions amongst Participants**

Participants will be grouped and will be coached by panellists and presenters on designing programmes best fitting to their needs. Best practices will be disseminated and the challenges and opportunities to applying them at National and Regional levels will be discussed.

➤ **Report Generation of Discussion Findings**

The panellists and participants will be asked to compile the information derived from each break-out session and will facilitate the preparation of a report, to be shared amongst all participants and ACS Member States as part of the seminar's final documents.

➤ **Post-Workshop Dialogue**

A post-workshop dialogue with the invited facilitators, presenters and panellists from the relevant regional and international organisations will be held to discuss the hosting of future capacity-building exercises.

The Directorate sees the above proposal for capacity-building seminars/workshops as a vehicle that will enhance national institutional strengthening initiatives as well as incorporate regional organisations pivotal to the advancement of dialogue, the formation of programmes, the execution of projects and the design of effective public policies pertaining to Visitor Safety and Security. It is expected that the proposed multi-stakeholder integrated approach will harmonize the interests of both the local communities and the tourists that they host.

- **TOURISM POLICING PROJECT PROPOSAL**

The Tourism Policing Project seeks to strengthen regional capacities in the area of promoting safety and security in the Tourism Industry with particular emphasis on creating employment opportunities for the youth. Specifically the project seeks to strengthen regional capacities in the area of tourism policing through:

- The transfer of knowledge, best-practices and experiences of countries with Tourism Police units utilising knowledge exchange mechanisms and south-south co-operation.
- Delivery of training, technical assistance and subsequently documentation to increase the competencies of law enforcement and tourism stakeholders in the Greater Caribbean Region, as it relates to visitor safety and security, and contribute to creating employment opportunities for the youth, while simultaneously contributing to safer tourism destinations.

The project is expected to be implemented in four phases as follows:

Phase 1 - Survey on Tourism Policing in the Greater Caribbean Region and hosting of Regional dialogue to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences among countries on best practise frameworks and models on Tourism Policing.

Phase 2 - Development of Regional Best-Practice Framework and Training Curriculum for Tourism Policing

Phase 3 – Implementation of Regional Training of Trainers Programme

Phase 4 – Conducting National Training Workshops

This project is designed as a proactive approach to produce documentation and establish agreements, strategies and procedures based on Regional and International best practices to strengthen Regional capacities as it relates to issues of Tourism Safety and Security in general and more specifically in the area of Tourism Policing. Considering the opportunities and linkages offered by the Tourism Industry to contribute to socio-economic development, and in particular youth entrepreneurship and employment, the Directorate considers this project very important in facilitating through horizontal cooperation and the sharing of best practices, the **establishment and standardisation of National Tourism Police Units**. It is expected that this project will result in not only result in transferring skills, knowledge and tools to manage and mitigate during incidents of crime and crisis, but will also aid in propelling the image of the region as a safe and visitor-friendly haven.