

**ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)
DIRECTORATE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

**WORKSHOP ON BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNT IN SUSTAINABLE
TOURISM**

La Antigua Guatemala, Guatemala, May 22, 2014

RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT

The Workshop on Best Practises and Lessons Learnt in Sustainable Tourism was held in La Antigua, Guatemala, Republic of Guatemala, May 22, 2014. This event was organised by the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) in collaboration with the Regional Council of Martinique and supported by the Guatemala Tourism Institute (INGUAT). The aim in this regard was to showcase ongoing destination management initiatives at the international, regional and national levels, and also to provide a platform for dialogue and the exchange of experiences on sustainable destination management among the countries of the Greater Caribbean, as part of the Regional Co-operation Mechanism of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean project, an initiative funded by the INTERREG IV Caribbean Space Programme and the Regional Council of Martinique. Attending the Workshop were delegations from fifteen (15) ACS Member and Associate Member States and representatives of leading Regional and International Organisations with a Sustainable Tourism Portfolio: the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), the Central American Tourism Integration Secretariat (SITCA for its acronym in Spanish), the Organisation of American States (OAS), and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) among others. The complete list of participants is attached to this Report as **Annex A**.

Opening Ceremony

In his opening remarks, **Mr. Pedro Pablo Duchez, Director, Guatemala Tourism Institute (INGUAT)**, reiterated that it was indeed an honour for Guatemala to host the Workshop, underscoring that the presentations to be shared can become a global model for best practices in the field of sustainable tourism, so that based on the lessons learnt, new tourism products could be created and replicated, thereby fostering awareness of the importance of sustainability and of these best practices that impart life lessons. As host country, he briefly shared Guatemala's best practise tourism initiative, "Mayatrek", which incorporates economic and social components, and promotes honest employment, protection for the environment and institutional strengthening. He further outlined the importance of working as a Regional bloc in order to bring to fruition the vision of a more humane and more responsible tourism industry that would help to make the world a better place. The Remarks are attached as **Annex B**.

In addressing the meeting, **Ambassador Alfonso Múnera, Secretary General of the ACS**, acknowledged the presence of the Executive Board and the participants, highlighting the benefit of convening and attending this Workshop, adding that this was one of the best ACS country represented Tourism Committee meetings in the history of the ACS. He called attention to the success of the ACS Summit held at the end of April 2014 in the city of Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico, when he had the opportunity to discuss with Caribbean Heads of State and Governments and their

representatives, the objectives of the ACS, with one of the salient aspects being the purpose of this meeting, to facilitate dialogue and cooperation among member countries in the area of Sustainable Tourism Development, more specifically, the initiative to establish the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean (STZC). The Secretary General applauded the convening of the first meeting of the STZC Steering Committee, which was held earlier that day. He also acknowledged the importance of tourism, not only as an economic activity for countries, but also as a tool for generating employment. Thus, he stressed the importance of the workshop in providing a platform so that the experiences of the representatives of ACS countries and the Organisations invited will be heard and shared.

Remarks were also offered by the **Chair of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism, Hon. Karine Roy-Camille**, President of the Martinique Tourism Committee, who made reference to the importance of sustainable tourism development, indicating that in order to attain a high level of sustainability it is necessary to have the commitment, solidarity and efforts of the entire region. She pointed out that the ACS provides a platform to come together and address common challenges through harmonised efforts, and in this regard, the workshop represented the first step toward sharing best practices which will contribute to realising the vision of a unified Greater Caribbean. Remarks are attached as **Annex C**.

Key Note Address

Mrs. Seleni Matus, Vice President for Latin America and the Caribbean, Sustainable Travel International (STI), was the first Key Note speaker and delivered a presentation entitled **"Fostering Sustainable Destinations"**. This presentation focussed on the Global and contextual framework for Sustainable Destination Management in Tourism. It was emphasised that the issue of sustainable tourism development is certainly a challenge and therefore, tremendous effort must be undertaken in local economies to improve opportunities generated by the sector, since tourism is a driving force behind economic development. She stressed that it is imperative that the cultural and natural assets of a destination on which tourism greatly depends remain viable, making an appeal for those participating in the workshop to join in the effort, with a view to guaranteeing the future not only of our generation but also of the generations to come. This presentation is attached as **Annex D**.

Mr. Miguel Peña, Senior Sustainability Programme Analyst, Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. (RCL), was the second Key Note speaker and delivered a presentation, "Destination Stewardship-Our framework for Sustainable Tourism", agreeing on the need to implement actions to support the sustainability of destinations visited. He underlined the importance of tourism, indicating that it is one of the areas that receive the most resource investments, given that it is a macro sector that involves both the public and private sectors. He made reference to the global context regarding the cruise ship industry in various regions around the world, highlighting the Caribbean is a destination with the highest percentage of visits. In closing, Mr. Peña extended an invitation to participate in the Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd Destination Stewardship programme and a video was presented not only on ways in which the expectations of sustainable tourism in the Caribbean could be strengthened, but also on how to ensure the sustainability of tourist destinations for years to come. This presentation is attached as **Annex E**.

Plenary Session I – The Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean and National Destination Management Initiatives

Mr. Julio Orozco, Director of Sustainable Tourism (DST) of the ACS, delivered a presentation on the political framework of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean (STZC), in which he summarised the work carried out from 2001 to the present, a period during which two pilot phases have been conducted for the implementation of the STZC, for which the efforts and support of the various entities and organisations belonging to ACS member countries have been essential. He also pointed out that the ACS was in the process of implementing the third phase, with a view to consolidating the STZC. He further emphasised that it was important for countries to readopt and accept those commitments assumed in establishing the STZC, and also work together to achieve the results expected within a short period of time. He encouraged the 37 member countries of the ACS to ratify the protocol and stressed the importance of liaising with the Ministries or Secretariats of Foreign Affairs of their countries in order to finalise this process. This presentation is attached as **Annex F**.

Ms. Judi Clarke, Regional Coordinator of the Caribbean, The CARIBSAVE Partnership, delivered a presentation on Phases I and II of the implementation of the STZC. Ms. Clarke highlighted the goals and accomplishments in each phase, which resulted in the development of specific criteria, indicators, parameters and methodologies for accessing sustainable tourism in destinations as part of the STZC. She further explained the process involved in each phase, as well as the strengths of the approaches used. She closed with a few recommendations on the application of the phases. This presentation is attached as **Annex G**.

COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS

Ms. Althea Heron, Senior Director of Strategic Planning and Evaluation, Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment of Jamaica, shared with the participants, her country's experience in implementing the STZC, as part of the First STZC Pilot Phase. Her presentation included a description of the "Ocho Ríos" destination, an overview of the evaluation process and results, outlining the rapid expansion of tourism in that area since its implementation. She also explained the challenges for "Ocho Ríos" related to data collection as well as budget and human resource limitations and also offered some recommendations, for next steps. This presentation is attached as **Annex H**.

Ms. Gillian Michelle Stanislaus, Environmental Officer II, of the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment of the Tobago Assembly, presented on the best practices and lessons learnt by Tobago, highlighting that Tobago's rainforest has been named the best eco-destination on four occasions by the World Travel Awards. She explained that Tobago participated in the second STZC Pilot Phase with the destination "Buccoo". Her presentation included an analysis of the destination selection process prior to evaluation and feedback and recommendations post-evaluation. Among the next steps she explained that there was a need to promote the STZC locally and outlined the improvements to date in the areas of construction and natural infrastructure. She pointed out that sustainable tourism has been incorporated as a policy on the island and outlined the important role played by education in creating awareness among the population of the area. This presentation is attached as **Annex I**.

Ms. Maru Acevedo, Sub-Director of the Guatemalan Tourism Institute and **Mr. Juan Rivera, Segment Manager of INGUAT**, delivered the presentation Guatemala - “Mayatrek”/ Trekking Circuit, Adventure tourism / Community management” National Initiative, as one of the examples and initiatives implemented and put into practice by Guatemala, for sustainable tourism. This initiative incorporates nature, archaeology, culture and contact with the community, and is an example of a best practice, promoting the conservation of the natural and cultural patrimony, with a view to developing and diversifying the tourist offer from the sustainable perspective. It was mentioned that this product, which lies at the heart of the Mayan world, relies on the implementation of community management in order to achieve greater sustainability. This presentation is attached as **Annex J**.

Plenary Session II – Round Table on the Sustainable Destinations Alliance for the Americas

Ms. Seleni Matus, Vice President for Latin America and the Caribbean, STI, opened the Round Table on the Sustainable Destinations Alliance for the Americas (SDAA), by providing details on its launch in March 2014, in Barbados. She indicated that this initiative was as a result of one year of discussions at the regional level, and provides a framework which bring together the following organisations: Royal Caribbean Cruises, the Organisation of American States (OAS), the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), the Central American Tourism Integration Secretariat (SITCA) and the United States Department of State, for the purpose of responding to a growing demand to provide destinations with the assistance needed to achieve sustainability. She also underscored the goal of the Alliance which is to improve the way tourism is managed and enhance the global competitiveness of the region, by embedding sustainability into the day-to-day management and marketing of destinations throughout the region. She explained that seven (7) destinations will be selected initially and Royal Caribbean Cruises and the OAS will provide financing so that more destinations could be included in the coming years. A video of Mr. Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) endorsing the SDAA initiative was shown to the participants. This presentation is attached as **Annex K**.

Mr. Miguel Peña, Senior Analyst, Sustainability Programmes, RCL, expressed his company's vision to have forty (40) destinations within a five (5) year period participating in some type of sustainability initiative, which would support having greater synergies among organisations and growth in the discussions held on destination sustainability beyond the Caribbean. He closed by underlining the importance of the alliance as a public-private partnership approach and invited other private sector organisations to join in this effort.

During his intervention, **Mr. Richard Campbell, Head of Culture and Tourism of the Organisation of American States (OAS)**, made reference to the multi-sectoral approach that must be used, as well as the importance of the agencies and partners being involved to advance the issue of sustainability, indicating that this workshop was an ideal platform for these discussions in order to share information and ensure greater collaboration. He was also of the view that discussions must be complemented by concrete actions. In its tourism and culture section, the OAS has had the opportunity to restart the discussions in the hemisphere through the hosting of the Inter-American Congress of Ministers and High Authorities of Tourism, which have been crucial for the issue of tourism sustainability. He further indicated that since the launch of the SDAA in March, promotional materials were sent via official channels, highlighting the criteria that must be met by the applicant countries. The deadline for receiving proposals will be May 31, 2014. He

repeated the invitation for applications to be sent so that the four (4) pilot destinations could be selected. Mr. Campbell also mentioned that the objective is for the alliance to grow and to be extended to other countries within the Americas, in keeping with the hemispheric nature of the OAS and to be able to obtain new and more allied resources.

The **Sustainable Tourism Product Specialist of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO)**, Gail Henry, highlighting other sustainability initiatives in which the CTO was engaged in and commented that the CTO has supported the issue of Tourism Sustainability from the very beginning. These include their annual conferences, as well as environmental programmes and projects on disaster management, climate change and others, with support from partner organisations. She further indicated that when the idea arose for the SDAA initiative, the CTO considered the best practices among ACS member countries and recognised those efforts and the need for all destinations to be involved, in order to make this alliance complement what has already been carried out. She explained that following the launch of the Alliance in Barbados, the CTO recognises the need to harmonise the existing initiatives so as to avoid any confusion while underway, to achieve consensus and clarity at the global, national and regional levels. She stressed the importance of having support for the initiative extending an invitation to join their efforts, and further underscored the desire to be able to obtain greater funds with a view to improving the results of this initiative.

Ms. Shantanny Anasha Campbell Lewis, **Secretary of the Central American Tourism Integration Secretariat (SITCA)**, pointed out that the issue of sustainability is gaining importance for all destinations. She outlined the role of Central America and the Caribbean regarding climate change and natural disasters, with efforts being undertaken with tourism companies, such as the Integrated Quality and Sustainability System, in which training had been provided to both the public and private sectors, for the purpose of creating a seal of quality. She indicated that SITCA has joined the SDAA since it brings together some of the main actors involved in tourism development in the Region. In this regard, the first seven destinations will be selected for a sustainability assessment, that is to say, two in Central America and five in the Caribbean. She stressed the importance of including more participants, reiterating the invitation to participants to join this Alliance, also extending an invitation to the ACS, since some destinations are not included in this first phase and the long term vision is to be able to increase the number of sustainable destinations in the Americas to more than thirty.

Following the presentations of the panellists, the representative of **Sint Maarten** thanked the ACS for its invitation and applauded the STZC initiative, which is the first of its kind, to establish the Greater Caribbean as the *First Sustainable Tourism Zone in the World*. During his intervention, he indicated that sustainability in the area of tourism should include equal aspects of sharing among countries and education of the local population. In that respect, the representative of Sint Maarten questioned the importance of community participation and what must be done to obtain it.

The **OAS representative, Mr. Richard Campbell** responded that the involvement of the community should be the first priority, which means that through such a process, it can be defined with the community, jointly, the projects to be implemented, who should lead them and to what extent, with a view to everyone feeling like beneficiaries of tourism. He noted that the realities are sometimes different, but the sector has tremendous potential and communities can benefit significantly if there is joint work between communities, political leaders and the private sector.

The **Jamaican** representative commented that some of the countries represented at the workshop already have sustainable destination programmes and requested clarity on the financing available and whether it would be used for any countries sustainability programmes. It was clarified that financing is available specifically for implementation of the SDAA initiative.

COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS

Mrs. Syntia Bennett Salomón, Advisor of the Honduran Tourism Institute, delivered a presentation on the Diagnosis and Plan of Action for Sustainability of the Tourism Destination of Roatan, Honduras, which she added was surrounded by the largest coral reef in the Americas, and was the main tourist destination in Honduras. In said presentation, she outlined the objectives of the Initiative for the Sustainability of the Roatán Tourist Destination, the evaluation tools, information on the assessment instrument, and provided an example of the sustainability report, making mention of the evaluation process, the results of the assessment and its priorities. She made reference to the implementation of the “Rapid Sustainable Destination Diagnostic” a tool developed by STI which led to the development of the draft action plan, in order to have three projects implemented in the short term based on priorities of the destination. She highlighted as a best practice the direct involvement of the private sector throughout the process. This presentation is attached as **Annex L**.

Ms. Diannille Taylor-Williams, **Assistant Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and International Transport of St. Kitts and Nevis**, shared with the participants the Best Practises and Lessons Learnt from St. Kitts & Nevis As a participant in the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Early Adopter Programme. She began by explaining the historical background and current data pertaining to the growth of the tourism sector in St. Kitts and Nevis, underscoring that from 2005, that country's Government decided to focus on tourism as a means to diversify the economy. She presented graphs illustrating statistics on passenger arrivals and expenditures, which showed an increase each year. She gave an overview of the process thanking Royal Caribbean Cruises Limited for the assistance provided and the support given by Sustainable Travel International. In outlining the process she indicated that this entailed a Desktop review, an onsite evaluation and a validation workshop using the ISEAL method. Subsequently, the first ever Sustainable Tourism Forum was held and four priority recommendations were identified. Among the main outcomes it was indicated that Sustainable Tourism training for destination management stakeholders started in 2013, a 10-point sustainability checklist for projects was developed, an Inter-Agency Sustainable Destination Management Committee was launched, and a destination sustainability marketing workshop was held and the issue of ‘sustainability’ has been included in marketing. This presentation is attached as **Annex M**.

Ms. Daniela Garza Ríos, representative of the Secretariat of Mexico, delivered a presentation on the best practices and lessons learnt of the Government of Quintana Roo, specifically in Riviera Maya and Cozumel, as well as the sustainability programmes and exercises carried out in these destinations. Her presentation began with a review of the evaluation of Riviera Maya as part of the Early Adopter Programme of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. She outlined the process which included a participatory planning exercise with various actors in the public, private sector and civil society organizations, and on-site assessment conducted by Sustainable Travel International which entailed consultations with local tourism leaders and an extensive review of the legal framework and policies for sustainable Tourism, among others. It

was indicated that the assessment was conducted in February 2014 and the next step would be to implement the recommendations generated from the evaluation. Cozumel was presented as a Global Best Practise and a leading destination in the implementation of actions to move towards sustainable tourism development, where approximately 90% of the coastline and just over 50% of the land are protected areas. She also stated that Cozumel is the number one destination in cruise ship arrivals. These presentations are attached as **Annex N** and **Annex O** respectively.

She also indicated that due to the above factors several regional and international organisations have selected Cozumel as a test site for sustainability initiatives. These include participation as a pilot destination in the ACS project related to the STZC, *Development and Implementation of Sustainability Indicators for the Greater Caribbean*. Secondly, there was a collaboration with UNESCO to create the Sustainable Tourism Development Plan of Cozumel Island (PETSIC) 2014-2034. Thirdly, implementation of a local Agenda 21 for Cozumel Island emphasized aspects of climate change and sustainable tourism. Fourthly, the Municipal Climate Action Plan (PACMUN), with the support of the Embassy of Great Britain in Mexico was developed. This initiative had as a ggeneral objective to integrate, coordinate and promote public policies in the Municipality of Cozumel in order to reduce the environmental, social and economic risks posed by climate change and to promote the welfare of the population through adaptation, reducing emissions and capturing greenhouse gases. Furthermore, to develop a climate change policy for Cozumel Island with future development oriented towards sustainability. Lastly, she outlined the Integral Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan for Cozumel, which was developed to address problems caused by uncontrolled growth in the urban area and resolve some of the residual negative impacts on tourism in Cozumel.

It was indicated that this initiative has resulted in upgrades to the public transport system and road network and has also focused heavily on raining awareness of the importance of tourism among the local residents by promoting cultural exchanges and interactions between residents and tourists. She concluded that all efforts undertaken have been joint efforts from all sectors: municipal, state and federal, with the support of the private sector and others.

Plenary Session 3 – Presentation of the preliminary results and discussion on the Regional Cooperation Mechanism (STZC-RCM) project

Mr. Marcel Clodion, Head Consultant, STZC-RCM Project, presented the preliminary results of the Regional Cooperation Mechanism (STZC-RCM) project, highlighting the operational framework proposed to fulfil the project's objectives. He presented the team responsible for implementation of the project and proceeded to outline the objectives, the activities, methodology and schedule. He further outlined the main observations garnered in relation to challenges foreseen and perspectives on the role of the STZC and projected outcomes of the project, in relation to information that is being sought through best practices and sustainable tourism management in the national and international domains.. He further expressed that included among the most important aspects of the project are the establishment of communication mechanisms such as brochures and a website and the development of strategies, using the indicators, in order to then create tools for their execution. This presentation is attached as **Annex P**.

Ms. Camila, member of the consulting team, outlined the importance of quality management in tourism which she explained was the basis for the STZC. She made reference to the tools developed in phases I and II, and gave a detailed explanation of the purpose and function of each

tool which she reiterated could assist destination managers improve the quality of their product, so that it could be sustainable for all interested stakeholder groups. She pointed out that the challenge is not gathering information, but rather working with the allies and with the culture of not sharing information, with cooperation being the key to achieving sustainability in order to conclude with the final objectives of the project. This presentation is attached as **Annex Q**.

To close the workshop **Mr. Julio Orozco, the ACS Director of Sustainable Tourism** delivered closing remarks, thanking the meeting delegates for their participation and attention, making note of the contribution of Guatemala as host of this important meeting.

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Annex C: Remarks by the Chairman of the SCST at the Opening Ceremony

Annex D: Presentation by the Sustainable Travel International (STI).

Annex E: Presentation by the Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. (RCL).

Annex F: Presentation of the Secretariat (Directorate of Sustainable Tourism)

Annex G: Presentation by CARIBSAVE

Annex H: Country Presentation by the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment of Jamaica

Annex I: Country Presentation by the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment of the Tobago Assembly, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

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Annex M: Country Presentation by the Ministry of Tourism and International Transport of St. Kitts and Nevis

Annex N: Country Presentation by the Secretariat of Tourism of Mexico

Annex O: Country Presentation by the Secretariat of Tourism of Mexico

Annex P: Presentation by the STZC Consultants on the preliminary results of the Regional Cooperation Mechanism (STZC-RCM) project

Annex Q: Presentation by the STZC Consultants on the Regional Cooperation Mechanism (STZC-RCM) project