

## Caribbean Tourism Aims To Become Carbon Neutral

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Private and public sectors support a holistic approach with real solutions

Key players from the UK tourism industry had the opportunity to exchange views on climate change with the Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA), its environmental division the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST), and the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) at a meeting held in London last week.

The encounter, organized by the Caribbean Council for CHA and CTO, enabled representatives from tour operators, airlines, travel associations, and government officials to exchange views on how best the industry in the Caribbean might develop jointly a carbon-neutral approach.

CAST Director Deirdre Shurland set the stage by tabling two fundamental principles behind the Caribbean tourism industry's position as it relates to climate change.

œ Caribbean tourism depends heavily on the sustainability of its natural and environmental assets.

œ Caribbean countries must not be disadvantaged, or their development efforts curtailed, as a result of mitigation efforts by industrialized, developed countries acting to curtail their own negative impacts on the environment.

At the meeting, she made clear that the Caribbean hotel and tourism industry supports a strategy that is proportionate for developed and developing countries within carbon trading schemes.

According to the joint CHA/CTO position paper on climate change: The Caribbean 'should not be penalized as the world's major economic powers move towards curtailing their past, present, and future impacts on the global climate,' states the official position document, adding that every effort must be made to ensure that future consumer movements and government action do not deter potential European travelers from taking vacations in the Caribbean. Instead, '[they should] ensure that programs are established to demonstrate to consumers that they can balance the impacts of their travel to the Caribbean.'

The CHA and CTO joint position further concedes that while effective taxation plays a part in the widespread approach to reduce carbon monoxide emissions, there is a need to apply such schemes to all transport sectors, not just aviation. In their joint statement, CHA and CTO also pointed to the potential consequences of transport services passing on the cost of carbon credits to the passengers, which could discourage long-haul travel to the region.

The schemes being explored in London aimed at managing the carbon - emitting impact of the industry, while fostering the growth and development of Caribbean nations, include:

œ Creation of carbon trading programs - whereby polluting businesses in the travel trade (such as airlines flying to the Caribbean, for example) can buy permits to emit carbon dioxide from lower emitters (such as eco-resorts or hotels with energy saving practices).

œ The establishment of a carbon emission verification system in the Caribbean - a structure to oversee the issue and trading of certificates and permits.

œ Development of a carbon trading hub - Both private and public sectors have stressed their commitment to work towards the long-term vision of the Caribbean region functioning as a carbon trading hub, where funds for regional development are generated through the trading of carbon permits. Some portions of these funds can be ploughed back into sustainable tourism and regional climate change mitigation programs.

œ Carbon offsetting programs - A way for individuals and business to become 'carbon-neutral. Individuals would be able to pay to offset their proportion of the carbon emitted on a journey to the Caribbean and that money would go towards a carbon reduction scheme in the region.

Further, CHA and CTO support a holistic approach where household, road transport, agriculture, and other industries' practices are incorporated into efforts to minimize carbon dioxide emissions.

'It is our hope that the CHA and CTO Position Paper will serve as a template for replication in other Caribbean tourism markets, following the vision that the Caribbean comes to be seen as the travel industry leader in combating climate change,' concluded Deirdre Shurland.

The meeting was co-chaired by Senator the Honourable Allen Chastanet, Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation for St Lucia and Chairman of CTO, and Peter Odle, President of CHA. It also included presentations from Dimitri Zenghelis, Senior Economist, HM Treasury; and Andy Cooper, Director General, Federation of Tour Operators (FTO).

A copy of the CHA and CTO Position Paper on Climate Change is available at [www.caribbeanhotelassociation.com](http://www.caribbeanhotelassociation.com).

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