



## **Disaster Risk Management Strategy for the Tourism Sector Workshop, Turks and Caicos Islands**

### **Opening Remarks**

**By**

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Chairman, Your Excellency, Deputy Governor, Ms. Mahala Wynns, partners in disaster management:

It is a pleasure for me to be here in the Turks and Caicos Islands and to deliver remarks at today's workshop on behalf of the CDERA Coordinator. Incidentally, this is my first visit to the Turks and Caicos Islands and as I drove in from the airport yesterday, I was struck not only by the extent of the existing accommodation plant but also by the clear evidence of rapid expansion.

Based on these observations and in view of the diversity of hazards which affect us in the region and in the Turks and Caicos in particular, its clear that a correct choice was made in the selection of the Turks and Caicos Islands as a beneficiary state under this Inter-American Development Bank funded Disaster Risk Management Strategy for the Tourism Sector initiative.

Based on the debrief from the CDERA Coordinating Unit team on yesterday's national team meeting, I am even more confident that the Turks and Caicos Islands are poised to maximize the benefits of this opportunity. Already we have seen the benefits derived through the undertaking of a baseline study of the existing interface between disaster risk management and the tourism sector.

Today is the first of a series of five workshops to be held as a part of the process in the development of a Disaster Risk Management Strategy for the Tourism Sector. A process which reflects the focus of Priority Outcome Three (3) of the Enhanced Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy. This Strategy was endorsed by the CARICOM Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) April 17 – 18, 2008. This project is the first major initiative being undertaken by the CDERA Coordinating Unit to mainstream Comprehensive Disaster Management at the sector level. The selection of the tourism sector was

very strategic since this is, for the Turks and Caicos Islands and for many of our CDERA Participating States the key economic contributor to GDP.

We encourage your full participation as we view each workshop as an opportunity to get the collective input of you the stakeholders on the ground who really know the industry.

As we undertake discussions today, we ask that consideration be given at this early stage to two areas with respect to sustainability of the process.

Firstly, formalization of the institutional arrangements which facilitate dialogue between key partners and implementation of the strategy. The CDERA Coordinating Unit team has advised me of the Ministry of Tourism's agreement to co-chair the national implementation team along with the Airport's Authority. We are aware of the support of the Turks and Caicos Tourist Board. It is key that this multi-sectoral mechanism is formally adopted to facilitate teeth to its decision making. We wish at this time to acknowledge the efforts to date and thank you for the demonstrated commitment.

Secondly, implications of this work for planning and budgetary processes. We view the strategy development process as a start only. As such, an ongoing commitment will be required to ensure that the strategy adaptation and implementation takes place. This out of necessity will require financial and other resources.

In closing, let me express thanks to the Inter American Development Bank, specifically the Regional Public Goods Facility for their funding support to this process. We also wish to thank our implementation partners, the Caribbean Tourism Organization, CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality and the University of the West Indies for their commitment and support. Thanks also to the Consultant Team and the CDERA CU Project Implementation Team who have worked tirelessly to make this initiative a reality. Last but by no means least, I wish to thank you the participants for making the time to be here today to engage in this process of information sharing and discussions.

I anticipate a successful outcome.