



MINISTRY OF
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION,
TOURISM & TRANSPORT
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

**A message from Hon. Moses Kirkconnell
Deputy Premier
Minister for District Administration, Tourism & Transport**

In Celebration of World Tourism Day 2017

“Sustainable Tourism – a Tool for Development”

World Tourism Day provides a fitting opportunity for the Cayman Islands to join with nations across the world to pause and reflect on important role that tourism plays in our lives.

This year’s observance comes at a time when thousands of our Caribbean neighbours are reeling from unbelievable devastation caused by Hurricanes Irma, Jose and Maria. Having experienced the wrath of Hurricane Ivan in 2004, we in the Cayman Islands are familiar with the hardship that follows such natural disasters. Our thoughts and prayers extend across the miles to our regional brothers and sisters struggling to satisfy basic human needs. While so many are facing grave physical, economic and emotional hardship, turning our attention to sustainable tourism seems almost inconsequential. Yet it is precisely at such times of rebuilding and regrowth that issues of sustainability are most relevant.

This is a challenging time for our region and the Cayman Islands stands in support and solidarity with those countries that have been affected. I am pleased to confirm that the spirit of Caymankindness for which we are well known has been elevated to a new level, by providing personnel and technical support to other Caribbean destinations to assist with their hurricane relief efforts.

As a destination with tourism as one of the main pillars of our economy, the Cayman Islands is keenly aware that the concepts of sustainable tourism development are inseparable and complementary; much like the two sides of the same coin. Over the past four years in particular, stayover arrivals have surpassed expectations and we remain optimistic that by year end, air arrivals will exceed 400,000 visitors- the highest in our history; coupled with 1.7 million passengers arriving by sea.

Against this backdrop of unprecedented growth, this government remains committed to embracing developmental opportunities, while ensuring our natural resources are appropriately conserved.

Alongside collaboration and cooperation from stakeholders, significant steps are being taken to ensure that our tourism industry continues to advance in tandem with the economic, social, environmental and cultural requirements of sustainable development. To this end, substantial progress has been made in crafting programmes and policies to ensure the industry's growth remains economically viable over the long-term; is fair and equitable to its host communities; and takes due account of our physical environment and cultural heritage.

Accordingly, a National Tourism Plan to guide tourism development and destination management is currently being drafted, based on the established pillars of sustainability. In many ways this will complement the new National Conservation Law which was unanimously passed in our Legislative Assembly in 2016, marking a significant milestone for the protection of our marine and terrestrial environments.

Human Capital Development, also a key component of sustainability, is being addressed in part through the provision of scholarships for young Caymanians pursuing hospitality studies through Johnson and Wales University. At the same time, our School of Hospitality Studies here at home continues to successfully educate and train increasing numbers of young people, equipping them to pursue viable and rewarding careers in tourism.

Having been blessed with a uniquely beautiful landscape and some of the finest white sand beaches in the world, we in the Cayman Islands are justifiably proud to promote our natural and cultural resources and welcome over 2 million tourists who visit our shores annually. In so doing, this government, our Caymanian people and the wider tourism fraternity are mindful that truly embracing sustainable tourism development requires continued effort and forward momentum. Such as ongoing implementation of policies and programmes designed to grow, manage and preserve these beloved Cayman Islands for ourselves, our future generations and for the generations of visitors who will call upon our shores in future years.

I am incredibly proud to be the Minister of Tourism of such a vibrant, diverse and dynamic industry, particularly at such a pivotal time in the strategic development of tourism in the Cayman Islands.

Happy World Tourism day!

Hon. Moses I. Kirkconnell, JP

Deputy Premier

Minister for District Administration, Tourism and Transport