

# CHA-CTO POSITION PAPER ON GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE CARIBBEAN TOURISM INDUSTRY

For the EU Travel Trade

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## Executive Summary

This paper presents to the European travel trade the position of the Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA) and the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) on the issues of global climate change and proposed carbon emission trading schemes.

We highlight the extensive action already undertaken and currently underway by individual tourism stakeholders and regional governments to prepare for and combat the recognised negative environmental, social and economic impacts of climate change.

We confirm our commitment to ensuring that the Caribbean tourism industry is not jeopardised by emerging carbon emissions trading schemes. Rather, as a low carbon emitting industry, Caribbean tourism should play an integral role in global carbon trading programmes. As such the industry



Caribbean Beauty

is to be fostered, not only from the environmental preservation perspective, but with regards to avoiding further detrimental impacts on the developing economies and societies of the small and vulnerable Caribbean nations.

## Caribbean Action on Climate Change

The Caribbean has long recognised the negative implications of global climate change and indeed participated in early international initiatives to address climate change, including the establishment of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the [Kyoto Protocol](#).

The Caribbean has also launched a series of Caribbean specific adaptation and mitigation projects

focused on preparing for and mitigating against climate change:

**1997 to 2001 Caribbean Planning for Adaptation to Climate Change (CPACC) project** - built capacity in the Caribbean region for adaptation to climate change impacts, particularly sea level rise, through the completion of vulnerability assessments, adaptation planning, and capacity building activities.



Sea turtle egg nest

*Sea-level rise and accelerated beach erosion, degradation of coral reefs (including bleaching), and the loss of cultural heritage on the coasts through inundation and flooding will most likely reduce the attractiveness of small island states to tourists. Increases in the frequency or intensity of hurricanes and cyclones will also strongly affect the tourism industry.*

(Attzs 2002)

Round Rock,  
Bathsheba,  
Barbados



## Caribbean Action cont...

**2001 to 2004 Adaptation to Climate Change in the Caribbean (ACCC) Project** - Designed to sustain activities initiated under CPACC and to address further issues of adaptation and capacity building.

**2004 to 2007 Mainstreaming Adaptation to Climate Change (MACC) project** - Currently in the implementation stage the project's main objective is to mainstream climate change adaptation strategies into the sustainable development agendas of the small islands and low-lying states of CARICOM.

<http://www.caricom.org>

In 2004 CARICOM established the **Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre**, which aims to "support the people of the Caribbean as they address the impact of climate variability and change on all aspects of economic development through the provision of timely forecasts and analyses of potentially hazardous impacts of both natural and man-induced climatic changes on the environment, and the development of special programmes which create opportunities for sustainable development." The CTO has a seat on the CCCCC Board of Governors.

## Why Caribbean Action?

This recognition of the negative implications of climate change and the Caribbean's active participation in preparatory and mitigation initiatives was accepted as imperative since it was immediately evident that climate change would not only **directly impact our physical environment and the natural beauty** of Caribbean nations, but that by extension, posed potentially devastating **risks to the tourism industry** upon which many regional

countries are economically dependent.

Notwithstanding the region's ongoing efforts regarding preparing for and combating climate change, the **threats facing us now extend far beyond those we initially sought to battle** such as temperature increases, sea level rising, destruction of coral reefs and coastal habitats which are the lifeblood of the regionally pivotal tourism industry.

The immediate current threats are emerging as our major **tourism markets seek to take urgent and decisive action to curb their own contributions to climate change**. In so doing these developed nations risk curtailing the Caribbean region's efforts to develop its societies and economies through its participation in the global tourism industry.

# Current Emerging Threats of Climate Change



Sunrise  
on the  
beach

The publication last year of the Stern Report followed earlier this year by the IPCC fourth assessment report, **raised industry and public awareness of the economic implications of climate change**. Also within the last several months the EU announced its intention to include all international flights that arrive at or depart from an EU airport in its carbon trading scheme from 2012 (one year later than the introduction of domestic flights into the scheme).

Given this scenario the CHA and CTO believe that measures should be **proportionate to industries' and countries' overall contribution to climatic changes** and support a **holistic approach** where household, road transport, agriculture and other industries' practices are incorporated into efforts to minimize carbon dioxide emissions. We note also that improvements in fuel efficiency, alternative energy sources and technology each have their part to play in limiting emissions growth.

The proposed inclusion of air travel in the carbon trading scheme is projected to increase the cost of every transatlantic flight by around £25 a passenger, depending on how much individual airlines would have to pay for extra carbon allowances.

The CHA and the CTO recognize the **importance of air transport services** for the growth and development of not only the tourism industry in the Caribbean, but for the growth of other sectors in the global trading arena. We support initiatives in **all transport segments**, not only aviation, that are incorporated into a global policy framework that achieves reductions in carbon dioxide emissions that would reduce negative impacts on the climate system. The CHA and CTO believe that effective taxation and trading schemes are not alternatives but have their part to play in a widespread approach to reduce carbon dioxide

emissions. Where taxes are imposed, they should bring **"real" benefits to the environment**. While we continue to maximize intra-regional travel, we ask that stakeholders note that airlines are likely to pass on the costs of carbon credits to passengers, increasing the **cost of tickets** and potentially **decreasing demand for long-haul travel to destinations such as the Caribbean**. This could **jeopardize the sustainable livelihood** of one third of the region's population.

Aside from Government imposed taxation schemes, consumers are being encouraged to frequent hotels and destinations that are more energy efficient and indeed the imposition of taxes on less efficient tourism establishments has been proposed. Further there is a movement to encourage consumer preference for and even incentivise domestic vacationing so as to curtail air travel.

These programmes and **consumer movements** have the potential to both directly and indirectly **deter the interest of European holiday makers in travelling to the Caribbean** if they are persuaded that by so doing they contribute detrimentally to climate change, and/or are not provided with opportunities to balance their perceived negative effects with a positive mitigation effort.

The Caribbean tourism industry firmly believes that it is overall a **low carbon emitting industry that contributes actively to combating the negative effects of climate change** and that therefore it **should not be penalised** as the world's major economic powers move towards curtailing their past, present and future impacts on the global climate. As such, we propose that every effort must be made to ensure that future consumer movements and government action in the EU to address climate change, including carbon emission schemes and consumer movements, **do not deter potential European travellers from taking vacations in the Caribbean**, but rather recognize the ongoing efforts of the region in this regard and ensure that programmes are established to demonstrate to consumers that they can balance the impacts of their travel to the Caribbean region.

Estimates of the aviation industry's contribution to global greenhouse gases vary between about 2 and 4%. Stern (2006) for example reports that the aviation industry accounts for less than 2% of global greenhouse gas emissions and proposes that this would rise to less than 3% by 2050 under business as usual predictions.

## Caribbean Tourism Action to Address Climate Change



Harrismith,  
Barbados

**The Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST)** - a not-for-profit subsidiary of the CHA - promotes responsible environmental and social management of natural and heritage resources within the hotel and tourism sector. Through its programs and services, CAST provides guidance and expertise in awareness raising programs, environmental management systems (EMS) and best practices in accordance with the goals of Agenda 21. In the area of combating climate change, CAST leads the following initiatives:

**Energy Conservation Workshops** - CAST has delivered awareness raising seminars and energy efficiency workshops to industry in partnership with specialized consultants.

**Sustainable tourism certification systems** such as Green Globe 21. The Caribbean, with 57 Certified Properties in the region, leads the world in the number of Green Globe certified properties. Green Globe certification addresses climate change issues by focusing in part on the reduction in greenhouse (carbon dioxide) emissions by the hotel, as well as reduction in overall energy consumption. CAST also encourages and promotes sound environmental management through the use of certification instruments such as the Green Globe *Company* Standard. This Standard requires properties to systematically address and mitigate the potential impacts of operations and to achieve continuous improvement through year-on-year reduction of resource consumption. The main

areas targeted are energy and water consumption. Caribbean hotels have achieved an admirable environmental record of performance and high consumption efficiencies when compared with other businesses in the world involved in the program.

**Toolkits** to assist tourism stakeholders in key operational areas including energy conservation.

**Quality Tourism for the Caribbean (QTC) Standards** - Through support from the IADB-MIF, CAST and its regional health sector partner, the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC) based in Trinidad (a specialized agency of PAHO/WHO) developed a food safety and six environmental standards including an energy efficiency standard. A second project sponsored by the MIF is under development and will seek to revise and update these standards for Caribbean-wide implementation.

CHA and CAST have proposed a **Caribbean Hotel Energy Savings Program** (to be funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and other donors). The project seeks a strategic approach to build on efficiency gains from typical conservation programs previously implemented in the region (e.g. energy-saving light bulbs, linen re-use programs, training programs etc.), in order to achieve even higher gains through technology upgrades and design, construction and operation of high performance 'green' buildings, among other strategies. The IADB will assist with assessing the availability of other donor funds to finance activities related to the preparation of a regional programmatic clean development mechanism (CDM) in energy efficiency.

The CHA, under the **Caribbean Regional Sustainable Tourism Development Programme** funded by the European Union, is developing electronic training tools for Environmental Management Systems and Energy Management to assist both trainers as well as individuals responsible for environmental management in the tourism industry.

**The CHA and CTO are committed to continuing to working in partnership to address regional and global issues of this nature. The anticipated impacts of climate change are likely to be devastating to small Caribbean island states and this partnership approach is essential in adequately preparing the sector and in responding to events.**

The pristine  
Caribbean Sea



## Caribbean Tourism Action cont'd....

The CTO commenced a **carbon-off setting programme** in 2006 as part of its annual sustainable tourism conference. The host country works with a carbon-off setting service provider to calculate carbon dioxide emissions for air travel to the conference and uses the contributions for, among others, reforestation programmes, and alternative and low energy resources. CTO sees this an important investment in carbon reduction and at the same time calls for the development of trade standards relating to offsets.

The CTO, under the **Caribbean Regional Sustainable Tourism Development Programme** funded by the European Union, is developing a Regional Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework, which identifies the environment as a key area including issues related to climate change.

The number of and interest in **eco-tourism resorts and attractions** in the Caribbean has grown in recent times. The CHA is in the process of seeking funding support to create a database of such establishments to service frequent enquiries from potential visitors.

One component of any eco-resort or attractions' activities will be efforts to **reduce energy consumption** and even replace the use of fossil fuels with **alternative sources of energy** which will achieve reductions in green house gas emissions. Eco-resorts are also generally nature-based areas with extensive vegetation, the enhancement and maintenance of which improves the **carbon sink capacity of the region**.

For resorts around the region, whether or not touted as "eco" establishments, landscaping with abundant vegetation and the use of solar energy for water heating are widespread and common practices.

Some islands of the Caribbean are

Caribbean tourism depends on the preservation of the natural environment



also involved in the **Global Sustainable Energy Islands Initiative (GSEII)**, a consortium of international

non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and multi-lateral institutions that have been working with Alliance Of Small Island States (AOSIS) nations to mitigate barriers and transform their energy systems from fossil-fuel-based to sustainable energy systems. Several projects and programs have been under taken to address significant barriers to renewable energy development. For example, interventions, with support from Rockefeller Brothers Fund, US Agency for International Development, US Department of Energy and the Organization of American States, have proven successful in catalyzing projects in the Caribbean, such as an Energy Efficient Lighting Project in St. Lucia, an Earth Home project in Grenada, and an Energy Efficiency project for Dominica's electricity distribution system.

**This approach to doing business, along with the other efforts by tourism stakeholders across the region to implement environmental management systems and energy conservation programmes, contribute to making the Caribbean tourism industry one that removes more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than it adds, in contrast to industries that are the main economic engine in more advanced global economies.**

### Windsurfers



# Caribbean Tourism Industry Positions & Action



## Island scenery

The CHA and CTO firmly believe that Caribbean countries cannot be disadvantaged, and their development efforts cannot be curtailed, as a result of climate change mitigation efforts by industrialized, developed countries' efforts to curtail their own negative impacts on the global climate.

This is not to say that industrialized countries should not curb their carbon emissions and take action to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Rather, it is to say that while developed countries are responsible for addressing the impacts they have already had on the global climate, the efforts of developing countries to improve their own economies and societies cannot be jeopardized in the process. This is especially so in regard to the Caribbean's emphasis on the tourism sector as the latter's impact on climate change is so minimal compared to the impacts of various heavy industries which developed countries have exploited in their own efforts to advance their economic positions.

As such, **differential treatment for developed and developing countries within carbon trading schemes** is supported and carbon trading platforms that **benefit low carbon emitters** like the Caribbean should be constructed.

The CHA and CTO believe that the European travel trade should give **recognition to the extensive efforts** already made in the region, in particular within the tourism sector, to develop the "environmentally friendly" aspects of destinations and properties, and acknowledge these efforts as action towards combating climate change.

CHA and CTO commit to improving public awareness efforts to better disseminate information in this regard to industry partners.

The CHA and CTO have committed to convening a conference for the European travel trade to advise on action being taken by Caribbean Governments and the private sector to combat climate change while defending the region's tourism product. This will take place on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007 in London.

Environmental issues including environmental security are at the top of the agenda for the **June 2007 Second UK Caribbean Business Forum** with the agenda delving into such topics as:

- New opportunities for tourism as a low carbon emitting industry and participating in individual's efforts to balance the carbon impact of their lives;
- Developing carbon trading platforms and certification systems in the Caribbean;
- Risk insurance issues arising from climate change;

Investment opportunities taking advantage of carbon status and emissions trading schemes.

The CHA and CTO are committed to working with the appropriate partners to develop and partake in appropriate schemes to manage the carbon emitting impact of the industry while also fostering the growth and development of Caribbean nations through advancement of their tourism industries.

Schemes currently being explored for their feasibility include:

**Carbon trading programmes** whereby polluting businesses in the travel trade (airlines flying to the Caribbean for example) can buy permits to emit carbon dioxide from lesser emitters (such as eco-resorts or hotels with energy saving schemes).

## Cane fields



## Caribbean Tourism Industry Positions & Action cont...



Sea Turtle

For such a mechanism to exist the Caribbean first needs to establish mechanisms for carbon emission verification so that the appropriate certificates and permits can be issued and traded. Carbon permit auditing and banking schemes will also need to be established. The CHA and CTO are committed to playing an active role in pursuing these objectives.

**Carbon trading hub** – The CHA and CTO envisage a time when the Region functions as a carbon trading hub and funds for regional development are generated through the trading of carbon permits. It is expected that some portion of these funds will be ploughed back into sustainable tourism and regional climate change mitigation projects.

**Carbon offsetting projects** offering a way for individuals and businesses to become 'carbon neutral'. Individuals making a return trip from Europe to the Caribbean by plane for example would be able to pay to offset their proportion of the carbon emitted on that journey and the money would go towards a carbon reduction scheme in the region. Possible carbon offset schemes/projects may include:

- Renewable energy programmes to replace the use of non-renewable fossil fuels
- Energy efficiency programmes to reduce the amount of fossil fuel used
- Forest restoration programmes (and programmes to prevent further deforestation) to increase the absorption of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as the trees grow

Offsetting programmes combat climate change by:

- Making real reductions in amounts of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere which would not have happened otherwise;
- Providing funds for renewable technologies and efficient appliances; and
- Raising awareness of the impact that our lifestyles have on the climate.

While there is some debate over whether carbon offset schemes offer long-term solutions to climate change, trees for example only lock up carbon dioxide over their lifetimes and release it again when they die and rot away, they are recognized as an option until there is a way to cut the original emissions (from aircraft engine exhausts for example).

CHA and CTO are therefore committed to investigating and participating in appropriate regional carbon offset schemes so that European travellers to the Caribbean can be confident that the emissions generated by their trip to the region are offset by suitable initiatives.

This position paper on climate change fits the CHA's wider objective of having an overarching **policy position/strategy on the environment**. This is in recognition of the fact that the regions' tourism industry depends so heavily on the sustainability of our natural environmental assets, and CHA's commitment to fostering an industry that develops within a sustainability ethos.

**This position paper and the strategies articulated herein are to serve as a template for replication in other Caribbean tourism markets and it is our vision that the Caribbean comes to be seen as *the* travel industry leader in combating climate change.**



Fishing Boats

# Contact details for further information...



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ASSOCIATION

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Stunning  
beach  
scenery

