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Report on the

2022

HIGH LEVEL POLICY FORUM

for

Building the Resilience of Small Tourism Enterprises in the Caribbean to Disasters

MINISTRY OF TOURISM
JAMAICA

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

60 Years

CARIBBEAN HOTEL & TOURISM ASSOCIATION

CARIBBEAN TOURISM ORGANIZATION

CDEMA
CARIBBEAN DISASTER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
30 years
Promoting Safer Resilient States

Building the Resilience of Small Tourism Enterprises in the Caribbean to Disasters

High Level Policy Forum

Montego Bay, Jamaica
20 - 21 July, 2022

An Organization of American States (OAS) Initiative organised in conjunction with the Inter-American Committee on Tourism (CITUR) through its Chair, the Honourable Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism of Jamaica and in collaboration with the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), the University of the West Indies (UWI), the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA).

Prepared by the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association
September 30, 2022

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INTRODUCTION

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BACKGROUND

With financial support from the U.S. Department of State, the OAS initiative to build the resilience of small tourism enterprises (STEs) in the Caribbean has been in **execution since October 2020**. The initiative recognises the significant role, diversity and range of STEs in the Caribbean regional economy. It also acknowledges the **increasing involvement of STEs in the shared economy**, which provides a viable platform for the tourism sector to promote non-traditional scales of operations and which has allowed owners and operators of STEs with well below 25 employees to flourish.

Today, it is now established that STEs are not only a significant part of the tourism value and supply chain, but they are **high users of local raw material inputs** and services and enable positive backward and forward economic linkages in destinations across the region. Most importantly, they are **key sources of employment for women, youth and the rural poor** and remain critical to the economic structures of communities and to the livelihood of families regionally.

Notwithstanding their significance and growth, STEs are **prone to vulnerabilities and to operational discontinuity** after any form of natural or anthropogenic disruptors. Storms and hurricanes, floods, droughts, landslides and diseases along with earthquakes and volcanic eruptions that impact the community in which these, often home-based headquartered operations take place, mean that any negative impact upon the community affect STE businesses.

The initiative, therefore, seeks to assist STEs in the Caribbean to **overcome the macro (national) and micro (corporate) level challenges** that affect the business continuity during and after catastrophic events. It is designed to build on the capacity of STEs to prepare, execute, test and update business continuity/multi-hazard and contingency plans; **to adopt a whole-of-community approach to disaster resilience**; and to create a network of trained, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) that can be readily deployed before, during and after disasters.

FORUM OVERVIEW

The high-level policy forum (HLPF) is a culmination of the OAS initiative's program implementation and research that involved the input of a stakeholder base of over **600 STEs, and 118 supporting value and supply chain agencies and country officials** across the Caribbean. Critical results of the initiative were the development of a Policy Recommendation Paper to address the **challenges to post-disaster business continuity of STEs** in the Caribbean and **procedures for crisis communications and business continuity planning** for STEs.

The HLPF aimed to provide these critical results for the consideration of Tourism Ministers and high-level government officials and authorities with the overall expected outcome of **forging the enhancement of public and institutional policy for building the resilience of STE**. Towards this end, the HLPF was structured in **three plenary sessions**. At the **first session**, the research

findings and recommendations, as described in the document **"Challenges to Post-Disaster Business Continuity of Small Tourism Enterprises in the Caribbean,"** prepared by the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), were presented.

During the **second session**, the University of the West Indies (UWI) presented a "**Model Post-Disaster 'Open for Business' Crisis Communication Strategy and Procedural Guide for STEs**" designed for building STE resilience. In the **third session**, the UWI presented on **"Business Continuity Planning, Business Impact Assessment and Recovery relative to STEs**. (Agenda attached at **Annex 1.** Presentations may be access **here**). Considerations on all presentations were provided by a **panel of STE** representatives and by a **panel of Ministerial/ Government Agencies**. Forum delegates (in-person and on-line, were also able to contribute to the discussions).

THE REPORT

This report summarizes the **discussions and outcomes of the HLPF** and, specifically, the **resulting recommendations from the plenary sessions**. Additional recommendations and/or adjustments to those presented by CHTA and UWI at each of the three plenary sessions are facilitated

culminating in **a single revised/updated strategy and recommendations** for the considerations of public sector policy makers (**macro level**), private sector STE supporting associations and education and training institutions (**intermediary level**) and by STEs (**micro level**)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HLPF PROGRAMMESUMMARY

HLPG Plenary Sessions

The High-Level Policy Forum (HLPF) spanned two days of deliberations centred on three plenary sessions each focusing on a specific activity of the OAS Initiative to Build the Resilience of Small Tourism Enterprises to Disasters. The first two of the following three plenary sessions were held on Day One (20 July, 2022) and the third on Day Two (21 July, 2022):

(i)   Plenary Session #1:   The Holistic/Integrated Assessment of Barriers to STE Resilience: Findings & Policy Recommendations;

(ii) Plenary Session #2:   The Development of a Model Post Disaster "Open for Business" Crisis Communication Strategy & Procedural Guide for STEs, and

(iii) Plenary Session #3:   Business Continuity Planning, Business Impact Assessment and Recovery- Procedures and Tools for STE Resilience.

Each session opened with a presentation on the respective topic followed by considerations, input and discussions from:

- A moderated STE/Stakeholder Panel;
- A moderated Ministerial and Policy Makers' Panel, and
- Other participating delegates.

Special Meeting of Small Tourism Enterprises

In preparation for the plenaries, a session dedicated to STEs was held on Day One to provide a debriefing on the presentations planned for the plenaries and to allow STEs to provide additional thoughts and reactions to further guide the thinking in the plenary discussions. This session also provided a platform for STEs to meet directly with officials from the OAS and its collaborating partners to discuss mutual matters and priorities to advance STE resilience to disasters.

Opening Session

Also facilitated at the HLPF were formal remarks from the:

(i)   OAS Executive Secretary for Integral Development, Kim Osborne

(ii) Honourable Matthew Samuda, Minister without portfolio in the Office of the Prime Minister- Environment, Climate Change and Water, Jamaica; and

(iii) Honourable Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism, Jamaica and Host Minister.

These remarks set the stage for the deliberations at the forum with presenters emphasizing not only the size and importance of STEs in the region's economy but the urgency with which policy makers must address STE resilience given, among other, factors, "the continued intensity of natural disasters with climate change that threaten the lives and livelihoods of the people of the region".

Closing Session

The deliberations at the HLPF ended with a closing session that facilitated remarks from:

(i)   Tom Lersten, Acting Deputy Permanent Representative for the US Permanent Mission to the OAS;

(ii) Jennifer Griffith, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Jamaica, and

(iii) Kim Osborne, Executive Secretary for Integral Development, OAS General Secretariat;
      and with

(iv) Pablo Gonzales, Principal Specialist and Chief, Sustainable Communities, Resilience and Risk Management & Director (a.i.) Department of Sustainable Development, Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, OAS providing delegates with words on the "Next Step" following the HLPF.

Other HLPF Activities

Compliment of the Ministry of Tourism, Jamaica, delegates participated in a special cultural experience field trip to Bunkers Hill, Trelawny, which allowed interactions with STEs working together at the community-based tourism level. Delegates were also treated to the hospitality of the host Minister of Tourism, the Honourable Edmund Bartlett, at a HLPF Cocktail Reception where delegates further networked and interacted while enjoying the ambiance of the site and the entertainment of the cultural performance.

(HLPF Agenda at **Annex 1**).

The HLPF facilitated both in-person and virtual participation by STEs and stakeholders across the Caribbean region, with high participation rate from both groups of participants. Overall, a total participation of 229 was recorded of which 159 were by-virtual log-ons over the 2-day period and 70 in-person. Combined, (virtual/in-person), registrants/participants represented 27 countries (see **table**).

Overall, there was representation at the HLPF from each of the thirteen (13) OAS participating States involved in the initiative to "Build the Resilience of Small Tourism Enterprises to Disasters" – 12 countries represented in-person and one virtually (Honourable Denise Charles, Minister of Tourism, Dominica presented virtually).

#	Country of HLPF Registrant/Participant	#	Country of HLPF Registrant/Participant
Participating States		**Non-Participating States**	
1	The Bahamas	14	Antigua & Barbuda
2	Barbados	15	Bermuda
3	Belize	16	British Virgin Islands
4	Dominica	17	Curacao
5	Dominican Republic	18	France
6	Grenada	19	India
7	Guyana	20	Martinique
8	Haiti	21	Mexico
9	Jamaica	22	Portugal
10	Saint Lucia	23	Sint Maarten
11	St. Kitts & Nevis	24	St Martin
12	Suriname	25	St. Vincent & the Grenadines
13	Trinidad & Tobago	26	USA
		27	US Virgin Islands

Opening Session

The opening session set the stage for the deliberations with presenters emphasizing not only the size and importance of STEs in the region's economy but the urgency with which policy makers must address STE resilience given, among other factors, "the continued intensity of natural disasters with climate change that threaten the lives and livelihoods of the people of the region". The opening keynote speaker, the Honourable Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism, Jamaica, urged fellow policy makers for their assistance by way of "thought leadership" in building the capacity of STEs to manage, mitigate, recover quickly and thrive after disruptions. Towards this end, and given the experience of Jamaica, the Honourable Minister Bartlett called on his colleagues across the region to focus government STE policies in the following three (3) areas:

(i)   building the knowledge and training capacity of STEs,

(ii)   supporting their adjustments to meeting the financial challenges they face, and

(iii)   supporting them in the area of marketing.

Plenary #1: Holistic STE Assessment

The HLPF not only validated the findings and policy recommendations presented in Plenary Session #1 (key findings in boxes), but also brought out further policy clarity and expansion while drawing out additional areas for policy focus in advancing STE resilience to disasters. Policies and strategies were recommended for:

(i)   government action;

(ii)   the action of associations that support STEs; and

(iii)   the action of STEs themselves.

1. **Lack of Critical Business Tools to Support Continuity:**
   - Low Levels of Business Continuity Plan
   - Limited Use of Crisis Management Plans
   - Liability Insurance Not Fully in Place (*"Expensive necessity that requires innovation and personal approaches to get around it"*)

2. **Marketing/PR Limitations:**
   - Limited Marketing/Communication Ability to Inform Market of Reopened Status

3. **Low Business Digitization:**
   - Weak levels of digitization and technology adoption
   - Low ability levels to take payments digitally

4. **Certification of Compliance**
   - Limited Guidelines for Reopening with lack of technical support
   - Limited or no technical support and advice on accessing local or regional compliance certification or recognition stamp (e.g. CARPHA, TTTC)

5. **Unequal Focus of STEs in Business Recovery/Continuity:**
   - Larger enterprises and mainly **accommodation** establishments are the focus of national recovery efforts
   - Recognition of **Non-Accommodation STEs** in the recovery/continuity process is **limited**

6. Lack of Recognition of STEs in all areas of the Tourism Value chain

Among the key recommendations validated were:

(i)   the need to formally recognize STEs as a valid and critical part of the tourism industry by placing them firmly on the national tourism agenda;

(ii)   the need for capacity building, training and other support including stimulus/incentive measures; and

(iii)   the need for a dedicated STE engagement strategy by relevant agencies, networks and associations.
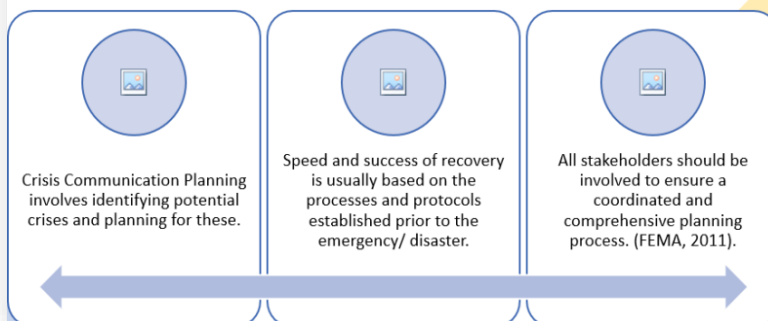
Plenary #2: Crisis Communication

The HLPF considered the Crisis Communication Strategy presented, which allows STEs to identify potential crisis and to implement strategies to plan, manage and respond accordingly in order to quickly recover. The scope is represented in the box - Pre/Post Impact Procedural Strategies with key practices involving:

(i)   Considerations for messages to "influence information flows and content"

(ii)   The establishment of a Crisis Management Team, and

(iii)   Selecting Communication Channel

Pre and Post Impact Procedural Strategies
Planning, Managing, Responding and Recovery

Crisis Communication Planning involves identifying potential crises and planning for these.

Speed and success of recovery is usually based on the processes and protocols established prior to the emergency/ disaster.

All stakeholders should be involved to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive planning process. (FEMA, 2011).

Among others, delegates considered recommendations for establishing a social media policy as a critical guiding tool in today's global environment, and a media engagement plan to ensure that the information communicated to staff, visitors, their friends and family at home and abroad, and the local community is honest, factual and neutral.

Plenary #3: Continuity Planning

This session exposed delegates to the elements of the continuity planning tool developed for the use of STEs. The tool contains five (5) critical elements (noted in The Guidance Tool box), i.e.:

(i)   Readiness Checklist;

(ii)   Vulnerability Assessment Tool;

(iii)   Resources Form;

(iv)   Business Impact Analysis, and

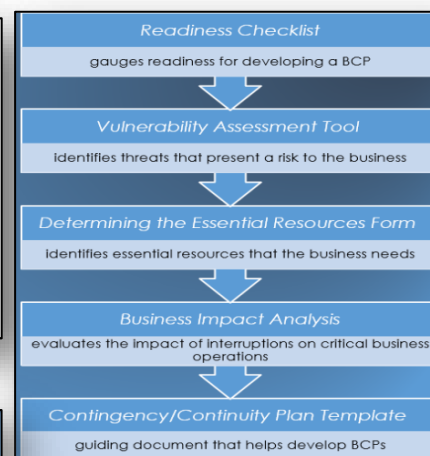(v)   A Contingency/ Continuity Plan

The Guidance Tool

Structured as a go-to document where with collated resources and links to relevant resources. It consists of:

- PowerPoint presentation content
- Checklists and templates
- 5 adaptable Business Continuity and Resilience Tools

PowerPoint presentation styled content makes the Guidance Tool useful for conducting training on contingency and continuity of operations planning

BCP TOOLS

Readiness Checklist — gauges readiness for developing a BCP

Vulnerability Assessment Tool — identifies threats that present a risk to the business

Determining the Essential Resources Form — identifies essential resources that the business needs

Business Impact Analysis — evaluates the impact of interruptions on critical business operations

Contingency/Continuity Plan Template — guiding document that helps develop BCPs

The HLPF validated the usefulness of the tool and called for additional training to ensure that STE capacity is developed in its use.

Closing Session

As a close off, the HLPF was reassured that the OAS stands ready to support governments to formulate and implement policy for STE resilience and the communities whose livelihood depends on them. For STEs, OAS confirmed their plan to continue with them to build their resilience to multi-hazards, external and internal shocks. OAS stressed, however, that what is next, depended on the policy makers, STEs and stakeholders.

> *What's next? What's next is really up to you.*
> *Pablo Gonzales, Principal Specialist and Chief, Sustainable Communities, Resilience and Risk Management & Director (a.i.) Department of Sustainable Development, Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, OAS*

HLPF SUMMARY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The resulting policy recommendations as validated, clarified and further established at the HLPF are sectionized under the following ten (10) categories (in no specific order of priority or importance) (expanded in **Table 6** within the full report):

(i)	National Policy & Government Leadership	(vi)	Resilience Leadership
(ii)	Knowledge, Awareness & Training Capacity	(vii)	Advocacy & Support
(iii)	Marketing & Operations	(viii)	Networking
(iv)	Supply Chain & Linkages	(ix)	Public Private Partnership, and
(v)	Communications	(x)	Other

STEs were pleased to be part of the proceedings, to provide their views, to network and to share and learn from each other. Policy makers and STE supporting associations considered the outcomes for further action as led and encouraged by the host Minister of Tourism, the Honourable Edmund Bartlett, to provide the "thought leadership" necessary to contribute toward building STE resilience.

Sample of "Thank You" comments of delegates are noted in the following boxes:

> *"I want to pay gratitude to the whole process to have our involvement in changing the landscape when it comes to not only resiliency, but also sustainability. I am very confident that STEs in the region are going to benefit."*
> John Mathurin, Owner, Serenity Vacations & Tours, Saint Lucia

> *"I wish to **thank the OAS and CHTA teams** for this wonderful experience and opportunity. I do hope that the resulting **policies at this forum are accepted** by all and that **STEs will see the benefits**. Looking forward to **continue networking"** Deepa Gidiri, Ministry of Tourism, Investment, Culture & Creative Industries, Saint Lucia*

> *"I would like to thank OAS and CHTA for **a wonderful planned event**. The presentations and discussions were **stimulating** - a great call to action. I truly hope that we **continue to strengthen partnerships** with you so that we can **take full advantage of these tools** and capacities available to us so that we can **support and further engage STES meaningfully**. I had an incredible time and hope to see you all in the near future to not only **share experiences** but to discuss results."*
> Judene Tingling Linares, Deputy Director, National Biodiversity Office, Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management in Belize

- The HLPF ascertained that STE resilience building required the **political will** and policy direction of government to drive its success particularly at this time as the region recovers and advances in sustainable, resilience and inclusive tourism development and growth.

Other conclusions based on validation and consensus at the HLPF include the following:

- **Capacity development** remains a at the **core of STE resilience** and sustainability.

- **Public private partnership (PPP)** is necessary in advancing STE resilience.

- Governments and other agencies that support STEs must **review their current agenda** to **ensure that STEs are fully integrated** as a specific area of focus in their policies, plans and forward strategies.

- While the support of government and intermediary private sector associations are critical, the **role of STEs themselves** cannot be overlooked.

- STEs must **lead their resilience** by networking and involvement in relevant national associations and by ensuring that they have a "seat at the table" for decision making that impacts their resilience and sustainability.

- Closely linked to STE resilience is the need to **engage the communities** in which STEs operate.

- Close attention must be paid to **supply chain issues,** which must be addressed as part of STE resilience strategies.

The HLPF achieved its **goal to engage policy makers** in the discussions on the importance of tourism in the region, the critical role and importance of STE and the need to ensure their resilience through strategic policy leadership.

STEs at the HLPF called on OAS and its collaborating partners to **support a Regional STE Networking Forum** in which experiences and best practices can be shared, networking and collaborations can be further established, synergies can be leveraged and additional learning and development can take place. This is seen as an immediate, "low hanging fruit" action that will yield great results in advancing the recommendations of the HLPF in advancing STE resilience.

The consensus among participating STEs is that this forum will allow the collection of **"unimaginable data"** that will **"guide intentions and efforts"** to support STEs in resilience building and in **advancing their ability to thrive. STEs concur that this must be immediately placed on the OAS post HLPF agenda.**

This is the next step as agreed and requested by STEs.

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LIST OF ANNEXES

2022 High Level Policy Forum Agenda

LIST OF TABLES

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ACRONYMS

BETA	Barbados Entrepreneurship and Tourism Association
BCM	Business Continuity Management (BCM)
BCP	Business Continuity Plan(s)/Program(s)
CARICOM	The Caribbean Community
CDEMA	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
CERT	Community Emergency Response Teams
CHTA	Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association
CITUR	InterAmerican Committee on Tourism
CTO	Caribbean Tourism Organization
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FQAs	Frequently Asked Questions

\HLPF	High-Level Policy Forum (OAS)
ICT	Information Communication Technologies
MSME	Micro, Small & Medium Enterprise
MSMTEs	Micro, Small & Medium Tourism Enterprises
NEMOs	National Emergency Management Offices
OAS	Organization of American States
OTAs	Online Travel Agencies
PPP	Public, Private Partnerships
PS	Permanent Secretary
STE(s)	Small Tourism Enterprise(s)
UWI	University of the West Indies

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

OAS and its collaborating partners, UWI, CHTA, CTO, CDEMA express appreciation to the host partner, The Honourable Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism Jamaica and his team at the Ministry of Tourism led by Tyesha Turner, Director, Tourism Trade and International Relations for their coordination, and facilitation of the HLPF and field trip and for the hospitality extended to delegates. Linked acknowledgement goes to Ms Fionna Fennell, Media Personality and Tourism PR Specialist, Jamaica for successfully facilitating the opening session of the HLPF and Paige Gordon, Junior Advisor to the Honorable Minister of Tourism, Jamaica who facilitated the opening prayer.

Appreciation further goes to the Honourable Denise Charles, Minister of Tourism, Dominica and the Honourable Lisa Cummins, Minister of Tourism, Barbados for their willingness to participate virtually as a Ministerial Panellist and to the Honourable Lennox John Andrews, Minister responsible for tourism, Grenada for his in-person contribution. Specific acknowledgement is also extended to the following individuals for providing considerations as panellists:

- The Honourable John Pinder II, Parliamentary Secretary, The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, Investment and Aviation
- The Honourable Tashia Burris, Secretary for Tourism, Culture, Antiquities and Transportation, Tobago House of Assembly
- Rabinderdath Boeddha, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Suriname
- John Hanley, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Nevis, St. Kitts and Nevis
- Carl Smith, Permanent Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister Disaster Coordination Unit, The Bahamas
- Nicola Madden-Greg, President, CHTA
- Gavin Bovell, Vice President, Barbados Entrepreneurship and Tourism Association
- John Mathurin, Owner, Serenity Vacations & Tours, Saint Lucia
- Major Loring Benons, Director General, Civil Defense Commission, Guyana
- Carlos Manuel Paulino Cardenas, Sub-Technical Director, Planning Center National Emergency Commission, Dominican Republic
- Judene Tingling Linares, Deputy Director, National Biodiversity Office, Belize
- Maria Medard, Deputy Director, National Emergency Management Office, Saint Lucia
- David Smith, Coordinator for the Institute for Sustainable Development at the University of the West Indies
- Roland Haye, Regional Coordinator, Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management, Jamaica
- Deepa Girdari, Senior Tourism Office, Sustainable Tourism, Climate Change & Disaster, Ministry of Tourism, Saint Lucia

Also acknowledged are the following persons that made special remarks and/or acted as panel moderators:

- Senator, The Honorable Matthew Samuda, Minister without Portfolio, Environment, Climate Change and Water, Jamaica
- Kim Osborne, Executive Secretary for Integral Development, OAS
- Tom Lersten, Ag Deputy Permanent Representative for the US Permanent Mission to the OAS
- Jennifer Griffith, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Jamaica
- Vanessa Ledesma-Berrios, CEO and Director General Ag, CHTA
- Frank J. Comito, Special Advisor and Former Chief Executive Officer and Director General, CHTA
- Jeremy Collymore, International Advisor/Consultant Disaster Risk Management, Resilience and Honorary Research Fellow, Institute for Sustainable Development, UWI
- Amanda Charles, Sustainable Tourism Specialist, Caribbean Tourism Organization
- Pablo González, Principal Specialist and Chief, Sustainable Communities, Resilience and Risk Management, & Director (a.i.) Department of Sustainable Development, Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, OAS
- Richard Campbell, Section Chief of Culture & Tourism, Department of Economic Development, OAS
- Dr Evangeline Inniss-Springer PhD, Director, Disaster Risk Reduction Centre, UWI
- Andria Grosvenor, Deputy Executive Director (Ag), Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
- Professor Dr Lloyd Waller PhD, Executive Director, Global Crisis Management and Resilience Centre, Jamaica

Recognition also goes to the over 150 delegates that participated by-remote, the other in-person delegates. Special mention is attributed to the OAS HLPF Team Leader, Charlene Solozano and the other supporting technical team members from CHTA including Petra E. Lezama and Dr T. Jennifer Edwards PhD and from the Jamaica Ministry of Tourism, including Shakinah A. Morgan.

1. INTRODUCTION

The High-Level Policy Forum (HLPF) spanned two days of activities centred on three plenary sessions each focusing on a specific activity included as part of the OAS Initiative to build the resilience of small tourism enterprises to disasters. The first two of the following three plenary sessions were held on Day One (20 July, 2022) with the third held on Day Two (21 July, 2022), i.e.:

(i) The first on the Holistic/Integrated Assessment of Barriers to STE Resilience: Findings & Policy Recommendations, and

(ii) The second on the Development of a Model Post Disaster "Open for Business" Crisis Communication Strategy & Procedural Guide for STEs, and

(iii) The third on Business Continuity Planning, Business Impact Assessment and Recovery- Procedures and Tools for STE Resilience

In preparation for the plenaries, a session dedicated to STEs was held on Day One to provide a debriefing on the presentations planned for the plenaries and to allow STEs to provide additional thoughts and reactions that should also guide the thinking in the plenary discussions. This session also provided a platform for STEs to meet directly with officials from the OAS and its collaborating partners to discuss mutual matters and priorities in the advancement of STE resilience to disasters.

Also facilitated at the HLPF was a formal opening session and a field trip to allow interactions with STEs working together at the community tourism level. Delegates at the forum were also treated to the hospitality of the host Minister of Tourism, the Honourable Edmund Bartlett and his team at a HLPF Cocktail Reception where delegates were further able to network and interact (HLPF Agenda at **Annex 1**).

The forum saw a high participation rate from both in-person delegates and by-remote participation. A total **participation of 229** was recorded of which **159 were by-virtual log-ons** over the 2-day period and **70 in-person.** When combined, (virtual/in-person), registrants/participants represented 27 countries. Overall, there was representation at the HLPF from **each of the thirteen (13) OAS participating States** involved in the initiative to "Build the Resilience of Small Tourism Enterprises to Disasters" – 12 countries represented in-person and one virtually (Honourable Denise Charles, Minister of Tourism, Dominica presented virtually) (see **Table 1** below).

Table 1:HLPF Countries Registered/Participated

#	Country of HLPF Registrant/Participant	#	Country of HLPF Registrant/Participant
Participating States		**Non-Participating States**	
1	The Bahamas	14	Antigua & Barbuda
2	Barbados	15	Bermuda
3	Belize	16	British Virgin Islands
4	Dominica	17	Curacao
5	Dominican Republic	18	France
6	Grenada	19	India
7	Guyana	20	Martinique
8	Haiti	21	Mexico
9	Jamaica	22	Portugal
10	Saint Lucia	23	Sint Maarten
11	St. Kitts & Nevis	24	St Martin
12	Suriname	25	St. Vincent & the Grenadines
13	Trinidad & Tobago	26	USA
		27	US Virgin Islands

Both Day One and Day Two were deemed a success by delegates with policy makers considering the outcomes and willing to provide the "thought leadership" necessary to contribute toward building STE resilience. Comments of delegates are noted in **Figure 1** below:

Figure 1: Summary Commendations of Delegates/Participants at the 2022 HLPF

> "I want to pay gratitude to the whole process to have our involvement in changing the landscape when it comes to not only resiliency, but also sustainability. I am very confident that STEs in the region are going to benefit." John Mathurin, Owner, Serenity Vacations & Tours, Saint Lucia

> "I wish to **thank the OAS and CHTA teams** for this wonderful experience and opportunity. I do hope that the resulting **policies at this forum are accepted** by all and that **STEs will see the benefits**. Looking forward to **continue networking**" Deepa Gidiri, Ministry of Tourism, Investment, Culture & Creative Industries, Saint Lucia

> Day One Sessions provided **"a rich dialogue, and it was undertaken in the spirit of cooperation for the growth and resilience of this sector that provides livelihoods for so many of us"**. R. Campbell, Sector Chief of Culture & Tourism, Depart of Economic Development OAS

> "I would like to thank OAS and CHTA for **a wonderful planned event**. The presentations and discussions were **stimulating** - a great call to action. I truly hope that we **continue to strengthen partnerships** with you so that we can **take full advantage of these tools** and capacities available to us so that we can **support and further engage STES meaningfully**. I had an incredible time and hope to see you all in the near future to not only **share experiences** but to discuss results." Judene Tingling Linares, Deputy Director, National Biodiversity Office, Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management in Belize

A significant outcome directly due to the HLPF is the agreed call of participating STEs for OAS and its collaborating partners to **support an STE Networking Forum** in which experiences and best practices can be shared, networking and collaborations can be further established, synergies can be leveraged and additional learning and development can take place. The consensus is that this forum will allow the collection of "unimaginable data" that will **"guide intentions and efforts"** to support STEs in resilience building and in **advancing their ability to thrive.**

2.   SPECIAL SESSION: MEETING OF SMALL TOURISM ENTERPRISES

This special session allowed both in-person and virtual participation by STEs and enabled additional views of STEs to be captured prior to the start of the formal plenary sessions.

STEs confirmed the finding and recommendations of the OAS commissioned research done by CHTA on the "Challenges to Post-Disaster Business Continuity of Small Tourism Enterprises in the Caribbean" and provided additional input and expanded views and comments. The comments supported the process leading up to the HLPF that ensured the input of STEs with STEs now looking at policy makers "sitting down with us to make the changes necessary." STE representatives called on fellow STEs to fully participate at the forum and to embrace the products and policy recommendations created by the OAS initiative to ensure "our survival."

Overall, STEs recognised the opportunity provided by the HLPF to allow presentation of their challenges and recommendations directly to policy makers who can make the necessary changes with a clear message throughout the HLPF on the core role of STEs in the tourism economy in the Caribbean and the need for their resiliency.

Highlights of STE comments and input during this session are noted in **Figure 2** followed by a summary of the key comments and expanded recommendation made in **Table 1**

Figure 2: Highlights of STE Comments during the STE Session on Day One of the HLPF

> "The initiative was not only executed with the generous contribution of the US Department of State but it was driven by the OAS Member States of CARICOM as actually a challenge that the Member States Governments presented to us." Pablo Gonzales, Principal Specialist and Chief, Sustainable Communities, Resilience and Risk Management & Director (a.i.) of the Department of Sustainable Development, Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, OAS.

> We (STEs) are in an advantageous position to provide the **"bespoke, unique experiences and tourism products"** in demand from visitors. Policy makers acknowledgement of our role especially in the shared economy and providing the policy and other support we need are, therefore, critical. G. Bovell, Vice President, Barbados Entrepreneurship and Tourism Association

> "It will be fruitful to ensure we employ communication systems and platforms that will reach the widest of STE audiences and at the soonest. There are time sensitive issues and low hanging fruits that are crucial to the collective cause."

> We look forward to accessing the knowledge and tools that are required to allow us to effectively not only compete but to thrive in this global space that we are operating in so I look forward to this forum

> The entrepreneurial spirit of the Caribbean people has always been present and we are now able to leverage this entrepreneurial spirit more and more with the growth of the shared economy so we have to create a space and environment where this is fostered and even further developed.

> Linked is the need for policy makers to understand that STEs **do not operate in a vacuum** and, as such, supply chain and other related matters must be considered and addressed as part of resilience building for STEs.

Table 2: Special STE Session - Expanded Views on Barriers to STE Resilience

Theme	Issues & Barrier to STE Resilience/Comment	Key Recommendation
Liability Insurance and Sharing of Risk	An STE invested $32,000 to specifically cater to a cruise company but at the last minute the ship could not call in-port due to an outbreak (sickness) and the ship's arrival was cancelled. The STE suffered the full loss of this investment, which ended up being detrimental to the operation of the STE. This is an example of daily challenges that are faced that prohibits STEs longevity in business but it is related in part to a lack of business and negotiation knowledge and proper risk insurance – areas that must be included in any support provided to STEs so that they can navigate effectively in the tourism industry It is noted that some established national Hotel and Tourism Associations that are part of the CHTA's network do have group insurance that are utilised by their STE members	• STEs must be exposed to the potential risk of their investments and provided with mitigation strategies accordingly • STEs must share their experiences and learn from each other. A **regional network of STEs for this purpose should be established**. Peer networking is essential • Contractual arrangements with clients must be factored into STE training and knowledge transfer. STEs must be aware that there should be a mutual risk • An effective approach to help STEs with liability/risk insurance must be considered • STES should consider being part of a the regional/national hotel and tourism association for the benefits and exposure afforded. STEs must be willing to participate
Associations' Support	Traditional hotel and tourism associations are viewed as not effectively and specifically catering to the needs of STEs	• Associations should do a better job to engage/reach out to STEs and build greater awareness of their existing services that will be beneficial to STEs • Trade association should provide specific training programs and services for STEs accordingly
Association Membership Fees	The annual membership fee of some associations is prohibitive for small homestay/bed and breakfast accommodations to pay to become members and effectively become members of CHTA.	• Reduce membership fees for small accommodations with less than 5 rooms. • Set up a separate but affiliated Association for licensed homestay/AirBnB with reasonably set membership fees so that these accommodations can become members of CHTA and enjoy the benefits of CHTA
Digitisation	Electronic mechanism to accept financial transactions is a barrier to STEs resilience and sustainability because of the bank charges for the facilities.	• Support policies to better enable the digitisation of the STE sector • Put direct booking channels in place to reduce the fees and costs • Work with credit card companies, issuing banks, and OTAs to increase usage of digital transaction technologies
Marketing Reach	STEs are not able to reach the global market as effectively as larger establishments with the required institutional arrangements and structures in place. Resilience and sustainability are, therefore, challenged	• STEs should be equipped with the knowledge and strategy to easily and effectively reach the market in both pre- and post-disasters and as part of normal operations
Community Tourism	Community tourism can help with the development and sustainability of STEs and if not properly developed is a barrier to STEs resilience. STE clients like interacting with the community.	• Community Tourism should be an established policy to support STE resilience and sustainability • Targeted marketing to promote STE offerings should be embedded in destination marketing strategies
Capacity Building	Capacity building is the single most important factor for STE. STEs can benefit from the experience of the larger and well-established tourism enterprises.	• **Pricing methodology** must be included as part of the capacity development of STEs • Provide mechanisms for STEs to benefit from the knowledge of large tourism enterprises • Training and education programs should be available to address the multiple operational, marketing and contingency planning needs of STEs

Theme	Issues/Barrier to STE Resilience/Comment	Key Recommendation
Knowledge based capacity	STEs do not have the level of investment capability of larger investors in the region so begin at a disadvantage in several operational areas. STEs are a diverse and dynamic group and business continuity services must be applicable for each STE group	• Ensure that STEs have access to the knowledge and tools they need to thrive in the global space in which they operate
Supply Chain	The supply chain cannot be overlooked as this is critical in the resilience of STEs	• The supply chain must be considered and policies to support holistic and inclusive recovery are needed
Fiscal Concessions & Incentives	The length of time given for fiscal incentives is usually shorter for STEs – about 5 years, while larger tourism businesses get at least 10 years	• Longer terms should be given to STES for fiscal concessions to allow STEs to establish themselves

3.   OPENING SESSION

The formal proceedings began with an opening session with remarks from the OAS Executive Secretary for Integral Development, Kim Osborne, the Honourable Matthew Samuda, Minister without portfolio in the Office of the Prime Minister- Environment, Climate Change and Water, and The Honourable Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism, Jamaica and Host Minister. These remarks set the stage for the deliberations at the forum with presenters emphasizing not only the size and importance of STEs in the region's economy but the urgency with which policy makers must address STE resilience given, among other factors, "the continued intensity of natural disasters with climate change that threaten the lives and livelihoods of the people of the region".

Figure 3 provide points from the remarks made at the Opening Session.

Figure 3: Points from the Remarks of Presenters at the Opening Sessions

The focus on building economic, environmental, social and citizen resilience cannot be overstated." Kim Osborne, Executive Secretary, Integral Development, OAS

"The core of it all is people. Resilience is all about people and the way we (as policy makers) will ensure that benefits accrue to our people is by ensuring that economic activity is robust and resilient to the threats faced." Honourable Matthew Samuda, Minister without portfolio, Office of the Prime Minister, Jamaica

"We (ministerial colleagues/policy makers) must assist by way of thought leadership to enable our MSTEs to manage, mitigate, recover, recover, recover quickly and thrive after disruptions." The Honourable Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism, Jamaica

The concept of resilience and business continuity, the two underlying core concepts of the OAS initiative were defined during this session by the Kim Osborne, OAS Executive Secretary, Integral Development and the aim expanded upon by the Honourable Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism, Jamaica. These concepts are captured in **Figure 4**:

Figure 4: Key Concepts Clarified- Resilience & Business Continuity

Resilience refers to *"the ability of STEs, when exposed to hazards, to resist, absorbed, accommodate, and adapt to transform and recover in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic services and to risk management.*

Business Continuity *"involves planning and related activities which support the maintenance of core business functions despite being impacted by crises or minimizing disruptions and ensures a return to an operational state within a reasonably short period."* **The aim is for STEs to continue to thrive.**

The Honourable Minister Edmund Bartlett closed off the session with a critical recommendation for the consideration of his fellow ministerial colleagues and policy makers and urged for their assistance by way of "thought leadership" in building the capacity of STEs to manage, mitigate, recover quickly and thrive after disruptions. The recommendation and urge are based on the recognition that:

- Tourism has been the economic backbone of the Caribbean for at least the past 40 years

- The Caribbean is even more so driven by STEs as a high part of its economic fabric (over 80% of tourism enterprises are in the micro, small and medium size category), and

- There are specific issues that are inherent in the very nature of their size of STEs that must be recognised.

Based on the experience of Jamaica it was noted that STEs were proven to be the least financially resilient. This was compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic in which micro, small and medium sized tourism enterprises were the hardest hit and struggled to achieve business continuity in the new period characterized by changed consumption patterns, demand, product distribution and consumer behaviours. Micro, Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises (MSMTEs) were also challenged to adapt to the restrictive measures imposed by governments impacted in part by their:

- Lower rate of ICT diffusion and digital readiness and their limited capacity for innovation

- Lack of sufficient savings and reserves

- Limited ability to access both new and existing markets

- Associated disadvantages of their elevated level of informality

- Lack of sustained government finance support, and

- Adjustment needed due to rising inflation.

With this recognition The Honourable Minister Bartlett called on policy makers as leaders, to provide the framework needed to support STE resilience and to allow them to thrive. This framework recommended must identify and forecast future disruptions, streamline actions to mitigate these disruptions and provide the tools to manage the disruptions when they come. For the further consideration of fellow ministerial and policy makers, The Honourable Minister Bartlett provided three (3) essential policy platforms within this framework that are necessary to support STES considerations, i.e., policies, program focus:

(i) to build the **knowledge and training capacity** of STEs

(ii) to adjust the **financial challenges** faced by STES, and

(iii) to support the **marketing needs** of STEs

Additional highlights from the Open Session are summarized in **Table 2**.

Table 3: Highlights from the Remarks of the Opening Session

Theme	Highlight for the considerations of Policy Makers
Coordinated Actions	The need for coordinated, concerted actions between national, regional and international agencies and policy makers is essential
Strengthening of Supporting Systems	With over 95% on enterprises in this hemisphere falling within the small and medium size category, the need to strengthen systems, processes and policies to build the resilience of STEs in the most critical sector is even more pronounced
People Centred	Tourism is about people. Policy makers must ensure that people are the centre of plans by making citizen resilience the cornerstone of our efforts – employers, entrepreneurs, employees, communities, supply chain – farmers, artisans, fishermen, rural communities/STEs

Theme	Highlight for the considerations of Policy Makers
Share Solutions	In an interconnected world we cannot afford to work in silos. Examples of Jamaica Solution/Strategy Shared: Jamaica developed a **"Jamaica Systemic Assessment Tool"** designed by Oxford University. It provides a system using 100 data points to allow investors and private sector businesses to determine what the risks are for their investments in support of predictability, resilience and sustainability. This is accessible to STEs and Jamaica has trained STEs in the use of this tool. **"A Bush Fire Predictor Tool"** was also developed that can help tour guides know where they should or should not take tours during the bush fire season.
Government/Policy Makers Leadership	Governments must invest in the information and mechanisms needed to "de-risk" STE investments and to create the space where information and tools are available to all of players as a means of sustaining the economy. The aim is to ensure that small players have the same information and tools as large players so that they are able to become resilient businesses. Government/policy makers leadership is not just from a moral perspective but it must ensure economic survival of businesses
Policy Platform for STE Resilience (Macro)	Policy makers should focus on an STE resilience building platform that: • build the knowledge and training capacity of STEs • establishes policies and strategies to adjust the financial challenges faced by STES and enable capital access to improve the quality of their production, improve efficiencies, better position their product, and create consistency in high quality and competitive pricing., and • supports the marketing needs of STEs to present their products and do so in a market acceptable way, reach the market and become conversant with the technologies that enable market access
STEs Resilience (Micro)	Develop Capacity to: • Identify and forecast disruption by acting within the frame of understanding that disruptions are coming • Mitigate against disruptions • Manage disruption when they come • Make suitable decisions relative to the products and services provided • Recover and to do so quickly • Thrive

4.   PLENARY ONE: ASSESSMENT OF BARRIERS TO STE RESILIENCE

The first plenary session kicked off with a presentation by Frank Comito, Special Advisor and Former Chief Executive Officer and Director General, CHTA on the **findings and recommendations of the Holistic/Integrated Assessment of Barriers to STEs resilience** in the Caribbean that was commissioned by the OAS and undertaken by CHTA in 2021*. (The presentation can be accessed here).* This was followed by considerations and discussions from:

(i)   An STE/Stakeholder Panel moderated by Vanessa Ledesma-Berrios, CEO & Director General Ag, CHTA

(ii)   A Ministerial and Policy Makers' panel moderated by Kim Osborne, Executive Secretary for Integral Development, General Secretariat of the OAS, and

(iii)   The general delegates on the floor and those participating virtually.

4.1   STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN THE ASSESSMENT

In setting the stage for the findings and recommendations, Frank Comito provided insights into stakeholders' participation in the assessment. The assessment saw the involvement of over 600 STEs in a regional survey and 118 public sector and other stakeholders who participated at two multi-stakeholder forums in which additional

input and validation of the findings and recommendations were also facilitated. Specifically, feedback and input were received from STEs and officials in all of the thirteen (13) OAS participating Members States involved in the OAS STE Resilience Building initiative, i.e.:

(i)	Bahamas (The)	(vi)	Grenada	(xi)	St Kitts & Nevis
(ii)	Barbados	(vii)	Guyana	(xii)	Suriname
(iii)	Belize	(viii)	Haiti	(xiii)	Trinidad and Tobago
(iv)	Dominica	(ix)	Jamaica		
(v)	Dominican Republic	(x)	Saint Lucia		

STEs involved were in the formal and informal sectors in the following broad tourism sub-sector categories:

(i)	Accommodation	(iv)	Food & Beverage
(ii)	Tourism Services	(v)	Recreation/Entertainment
(iii)	Transportation	(vi)	Other (STEs in the supply Chain)

4.2   KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.2.1   Critical Issues

As summarized in **Figure 5**, the assessment found issues at the micro level (corporate) in four areas, i.e., (i) Lack of business tools to support continuity; (ii) Marketing/PR Limitations; (iii) Low Levels of Business Digitalization; and (iv) Issues related to meeting reopening compliance in the face of COVID-19. These are consistent with the findings and recommendations of The Honourable Edmund Bartlett for STEs in Jamaica.

STEs also expressed that the unequal focus often placed on STEs in the business recovery/continuity framework of government further compounded by focus on accommodations and not on all the sub-sectors of tourism in which STEs operate.

Figure 5: Critical Issues

4.2.2   Summary of Key Findings

Frank Comito's presentation summarized the assessment findings under the following twelve (12) areas:

(i)	Unequal Focus on STEs in Business Recovery	(ii)	Main Disruptors due to Flood and Hurricane Damages and COVID-19 impact

(iii)   Lack of Working Capital to Support Recovery

(iv)   Impact:
- Damages and Access to Supplies for Repairs
- Infrastructure/Utility Reinstatement Delays
- Staff Return

(v)   Low Levels of Digitization

(vi)   Limited Uptake of Liability Insurance

(vii)   Low Use of Crisis Management & Continuity Plans

(viii)   Limited Ability for Marketing/Market Communication on Reopened Status

(ix)   Inability to Access Compliance Certification

(x)   Low Membership in Network/Associations

(xi)   Low Government Relief for Continuity Efforts

(xii)   Fluctuating Air Access

4.2.3   Summary of Key Recommendations

Among some of the key recommendations was the need to formally recognize STEs as a **valid and critical part of the tourism industry** by placing them **firmly on the national tourism agenda**; the need for capacity building, training and other support including stimulus measures, and the need for a dedicated STE engagement strategy by relevant agencies, networks and associations. These are summarized in **Table 3**.

Table 4: Summarized Recommendations from the Assessment of Barriers to STE Resilience

Level	Recommendation
Regional/National	Recognize STEs as a valid & critical part of Tourism Industry by formally and specifically placing STEs on the policy and program agenda regionally and nationally
Micro (operational/corporate)	• STEs must include capacity development and training as part of their corporate existence • STEs must place importance on and seek to incorporate business tools such as business continuity plans and crisis management strategies into their operational program
Association (intermediary)	• Establish and implement a specific STE engagement strategy • Development specific schemes/membership packages for STEs
Macro Level	• Establish a fully comprehensive Policy & Strategy Framework for STEs to guide their resilience and continuity post-disaster • Include Technical Assistant/Capacity Development and Training as a critical element of the strategy to support STEs • Develop a specific Fiscal/Tax Incentive Schemes for STEs growth and resilience

Further insights into the summarized recommendations were presented by Frank Comito. These are indicated in the following sections below:

4.2.4   Specific Intermediary Level Recommendations

At this level, the recommendation is for Networks/Associations in a position to support STEs to:

> *Refocus on STEs by implementation of a Revised Drive and Policy specifically to encourage greater levels of STE involvement in formal Networks/Associations*

Specifically, the following are recommended:

- Focus on **STEs engagement** including those in the informal sector

- Build awareness/promote the **importance and benefits** of involvement in formal groupings

- Develop and promote **specific membership schemes** for STEs

- Recognize the **role and nature of women owed STEs** and **provide targeted benefits**/capacity development for these enterprises

- Increase engagement of **STEs in leadership roles** to guide their **advocacy** and other **specific business continuity** and sustainability needs

- Place as much importance on **STEs in all areas of the Tourism Value Chain as valid members** (as opposed to allied members)

- Increase collaborative efforts with the public sector and other regional/ international agencies **to support the engagement and business continuity capacity** of STEs

4.2.5 Specific Macro Level Recommendations

At this level, the recommendation is for governments to place STEs firmly on their national development agenda. IN this regard the recommendation is to:

> *Expand and refocus on STEs by developing/updating National Tourism Policies to support programs to advance and guide the business continuity, sustainability and competitiveness of STEs*

Specifically, the following are recommended:

- **Importance of All STEs:** Place as much importance on **STEs in all areas of the Tourism Value Chain**

- **Technical Assistance & Training:** Specific support for **capacity building** for business continuity and resilience

- **Working Capital/Contingency Emergency Funds:** Consider the development of an appropriate scheme to support emergency recovery and repair funding for STEs

- **Tax Incentive Scheme for STEs**: To support post disaster continuity business supplies

- **Marketing & PR:** Consider the marketing limitation of STEs and provide needed support.   Work collaboration with STEs and private sector.

4.3 CONSIDERATIONS BY PANEL MEMBERS & FORUM DELEGATES

Panel members and delegates sought to respond to two overarching questions:

(i)   Are the findings consistent with what obtains in the sector in their respective countries/tourism sector?

(ii)   Are there gaps in the findings that must be included

Panellists also had the opportunity to share practices relative to STE resilience and sustainability that is obtained in their jurisdiction and to provide further views or comments as appropriate.

Generally, while additional explanations, clarifications and experiences were shared, and priorities pointed out, the feedback and input further supported and validated the findings and recommendations of the assessment but added different angles for strategy and policy consideration.

4.3.1 Panellist: Intermediary/Regional Association Level

STE Association representatives agreed that, while they do engage STEs, they can play an even greater role in further STE engagement and in providing support to STEs. This includes:

- Supporting more tourism cluster development for STEs

- Set specific goals as part of the planning to support STE development

- Specific advocacy in support of STEs

- The provision of more tailored technical support to STEs

- Support in the area of social media and digital marketing

- Mentorship Programs development (between larger/experienced tourism enterprises and STEs), and

- Provision of a less "intimidating" environment in which STEs can transition from any fear or resistance to being at the table with larger enterprises, e.g., by having "an STE Committee" and a policy for STE owner/operators to assume more leadership roles within associations
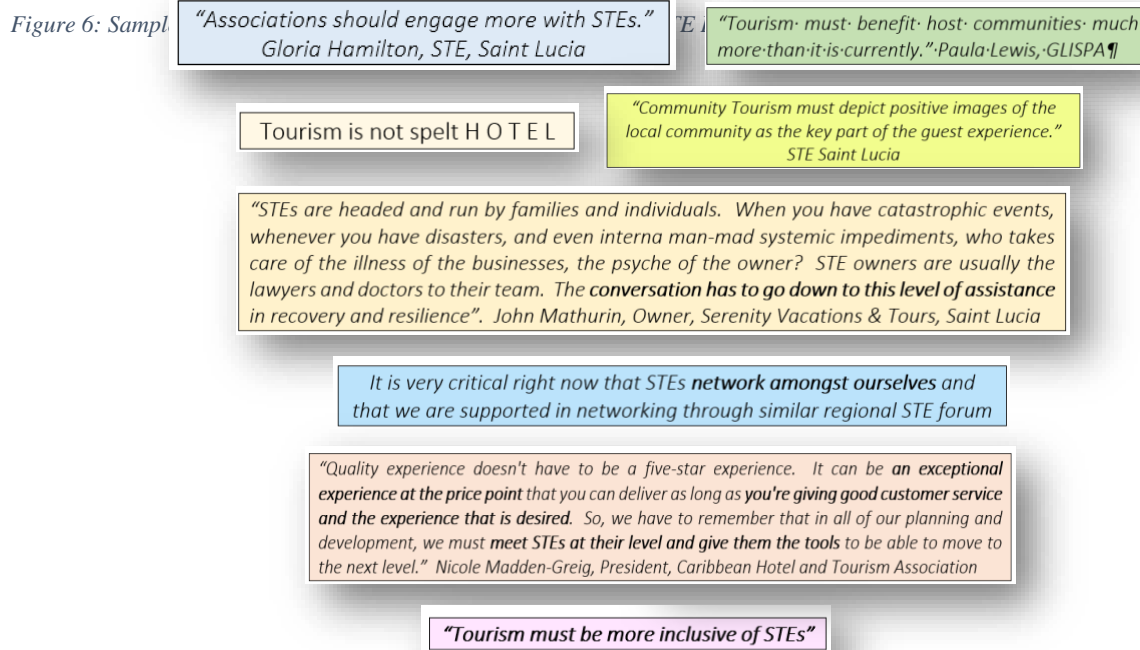
4.3.2 Panellist: STE Level- In the Shared & Non-Sharing Economy

STE panellists believe that while the findings and recommendations are consistent with the experiences of STEs, priority must now be given to nationally recognise STEs as a valid player in national economies. They called for a mind-set change in how STEs are viewed and what their needs may or may not be. Panellists felt that the concept of trickle-down economic benefits no longer holds as STEs are now positioned to be economic leaders in their communities and in the national economy. Their capability to provide employment and to contribute to national development is now undeniable. With the support of policy makers, STEs believe that they will be further poised for resilience and growth.

Panellists cited the importance of community tourism development, which has been seen to support STE development, involving more elements of the community – from farmers to fishermen and, most importantly, allowing a more equitable distribution of the economic benefits of tourism. STE panellist stressed the importance of policy and strategy that:

- expand community tourism
- equip STEs with the necessary tools for effective business operations
- support a level playing field for reaching the global market
- enable STE networking and provides a forum for sharing of ideas and experiences and for collaboration
- allow STEs to build-back-better, to grow, to thrive and to have a greater more positive and direct impact on the economy
- facilitate STEs in having a seat at the table for decision making and for guiding policy and strategy that will impact STEs
- creates value in developing authentic gastronomy experiences for offer by STEs/community tourism that support local supply chain and better facilitate supply chain issues in STE resilience
- recognises that tourism is made up of a range of services inclusive of and beyond accommodation, all of which are provided by STEs

Figure 6 provides highlights of comments from STEs views on Barriers to resilience

Figure 6: Sampl

"Associations should engage more with STEs."
Gloria Hamilton, STE, Saint Lucia

"Tourism· must· benefit· host· communities· much· more·than·it·is·currently."·Paula·Lewis,·GLISPA¶

Tourism is not spelt H O T E L

"Community Tourism must depict positive images of the local community as the key part of the guest experience."
STE Saint Lucia

"STEs are headed and run by families and individuals. When you have catastrophic events, whenever you have disasters, and even interna man-mad systemic impediments, who takes care of the illness of the businesses, the psyche of the owner? STE owners are usually the lawyers and doctors to their team. The **conversation has to go down to this level of assistance in recovery and resilience**". John Mathurin, Owner, Serenity Vacations & Tours, Saint Lucia

It is very critical right now that STEs **network amongst ourselves** and that we are supported in networking through similar regional STE forum

"Quality experience doesn't have to be a five-star experience. It can be **an exceptional experience** at the price point that you can deliver as long as **you're giving good customer service and the experience that is desired**. So, we have to remember that in all of our planning and development, we must **meet STEs at their level and give them the tools** to be able to move to the next level." Nicole Madden-Greig, President, Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association

"Tourism must be more inclusive of STEs"

4.3.3 Panellist: Ministerial/Policy Makers & Influencers

This panel, moderated by **Kim Osborne, Executive Secretary** for Integral Development, OAS, began with input from **The Honourable Denise Charles**, Minister of Tourism, International Transport and Marine Initiatives, The Commonwealth of Dominica who commended the efforts of the OAS for commissioning the assessment and the efforts of CHTA for the research and presentation provided.

Minister Charles felt that the assessment accurately captured the challenges to resilience that MSMTEs in Dominica faced as revealed in the recent consultation held in Dominica with their STEs. Minister Charles confirmed that Dominica recognises the value and importance of MSMTEs in the country's economy and the need to hand-hold STEs and to provide the much-needed resources, training and support to help mitigate against the challenges that they are faced. Minister Charles highlights the issue of digitalization as among the factors that limits STEs marketing access to the global market and looks forward to continued regional governmental cooperation to strengthen the tourist ecosystem for STES and for economic growth and recovery.

Rather than comment on the same challenges, Minister Charles opted to share the solutions and responses implemented in Dominica to support STEs impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as a means of policy and strategy to address resilience and quick business recovery. These included:

(i) Income support to STE employees and STE owners for up to a year

(ii) Credit Facility of 1% interest rate with a grace on principle interest of up to 6 months so that STEs could restructure their business, adapt to COVID-19 protocols and rebound quickly

(iii) Waiver on duties of imports, equipment and PPEs

(iv) Training to adapt and easily transition into dealing with customers, and

(v) The creation of a $30 million facility at our Development Bank to help SMEs rebound from COVID-19

Figure 7: Comments from Plenary One Policy Makers

"We (Dominica) believe that this sector **needs to be more resilient and sustainable and** have taken a broad approach that includes **legislation review** and the implementation of a **One-Stop-Shop policy for the provision of fiscal incentives** currently granted for 2 years."

We had to establish a **gastronomy network** to encourage food production by STES by building their capacity. This created **linkages with small farmers** and other community members as a strategy for STE development at the community tourism level. The Honourable Edmund Bartlett, Chair, CITUR and Minister of Tourism Jamaica

"I am **appreciative of the information** that has been given here as is certainly provides **a foundation that our administration** in Tobago as we look towards the tourism sector as a real pillar of our economy. We have to take a **more aggressive and absurd approach to taking care of our sector and STEs**, and being the ones to be proactive, and ensuring that that door is open in terms of collaboration." The Honourable Tashia Burris, Secretary for Tourism, Culture, Antiquities and Transportation, Tobago House of Assembly, Tobago

"I'm very optimistic about this conversation we're having here because it's true that we need to have a **more direct approach to helping our small and micro-sized tourism enterprises.**" The Honourable John Pinder III, Parliamentary Secretary, The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, Investment and Aviation, The Bahamas

We don't have airlines. We don't have cruise ships and much of the mega hotels that are built in our space are foreign investments. We don't have oil......most of us, so we have to buy energy. All of those are elements that we know we have to buy. But when the visitor comes to the destination, whose transportation are they using? Whose houses do they stay in for the shared economy. So, I want to make the point that **policy, then, must be to encourage and build the capacity of small enterprise and fund them** so that they can support tourism economic development as owners of tourism services. The Honourable Minister Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism, Jamaica

Other panellist found the assessment useful and expressed their support for a resilient tourism economy and the need to nurture STEs. **The Honourable John Pinder III, Parliamentary Secretary**, The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, Investment and Aviation, identified a strategy of their Tourism Development Corporation to develop a database of STEs that identifies every single vendor and personnel that work within the tourism industry. He also recommended that there be region-wide policies and support for advancing STE development through organisations like the OAS, CARICOM, CTO and CHTA.

Tobago Secretary for Tourism, **The Honourable Tashia Burris** notes the need for a reset of tourism development on the island of Tobago as the policies in place before COVID-19 must now be revised to be more proactive and responsive to the needs of the industry and to STE development. Secretary Burris, therefore, felt that the assessment was timely as it provides a framework for consideration as Tobago moves ahead.

The Honourable Edmund Bartlett, Chair, CITUR and Minister of Tourism Jamaica, focused on the gastronomy aspect of the country's asset that attract tourists and that STEs are quite capable of facilitating – and have actually done so successfully. This involves linkages with farmers within the community. Given this, Minister Bartlett recommends the **development of gastronomy STE networks** at the community level as a policy option.

4.3.3.1 Key to Question posed to Policy Makers

> The current **policy frameworks that exist in our countries do not adequately address** the issues in terms of development of **MSME in tourism and business continuity**, nor their needs in terms of business development. Do you share this view? How do we remedy that situation?

Policy makers supported the statement that policies specific to STE development are inadequate. They generally agree that:

- Tourism in the Caribbean generally developed without being properly structured, planned and organized as a serious economic activity in the region
- History in the region recognised commodities as the basis of our economy so we moved through commodities like sugar, rice, bananas, citrus. Some had minerals – like Jamaica, others had oil – like Trinidad
- While we structured our economies around these commodities tourism and travel was happening
- By the time we recognised the growth of tourism there was no specific zoning for tourism development and activities
- Tourism development came "after the fact" and is still trying to come to terms with the sector by way of policy and planning
- Suddenly, in the last 20 years, countries discovered that tourism is "big business" and "an export industry" that brings in foreign exchange and was growing exponentially with the number of entrepreneurs involved
- By then, Caribbean countries ranked low on the ease of doing business, and
- External and other shocks and disasters have further highlighted the inadequacy or lack of prior planning, as well as weaknesses in policies

Policy makers also recognised that remedying the situation would require reorganising tourism in the interest of retaining the earnings of tourism and unlocking the potential of local entrepreneurs to supply the services needed by the sector.

The consensus is that:

- Policies, strategies, schemes and mechanisms that prioritise the involvement of local artisans and STE entrepreneurs are critical
- Policy makers need support with reviewing existing policies and in developing new, responsive policy, strategy and legislation
- Proactiveness must now be a guiding principle for policy makers
- Politicians must act to inspire industry stakeholders
- Policy makers must have more regional dialogue on tourism and STE development with common policies to that support STE development
- Policies pre-COVID is not necessarily still applicable post-COVID
- There must be political will to undertake the necessary adjustments needed

4.3.3.2   Recommendation & Closing Recognitions

Within the context of CITUR and under the chairmanship of The Honourable Minister Edmund Bartlett, policy makers can begin to share policies that must be modernized, developed and or changed in this new era of focus on STE resilience and sustainability.

Specific closing recognitions from Panellists are added in **Figure 8**:

Figure 8: Plenary #1 Closing Recognitions

> Tourism is the fastest and most efficient way of transferring wealth from the rich to the poor"

> Covid 19 has presented the opportunity for us to finally get it right

> Tourism must be seen as an **export** sector
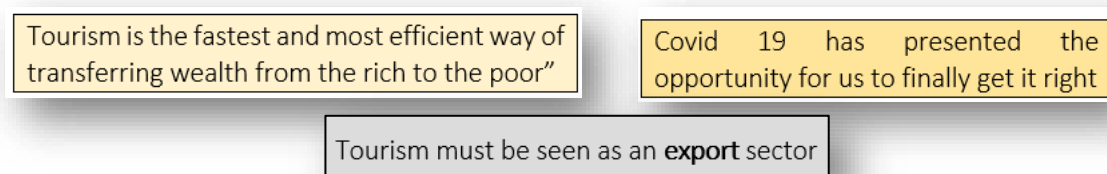
4.3.3.3   Call to Action by Policy Makers

Plenary #1 ended with the following call to action by panellists in **Figure 9**:

Figure 9: Plenary #1 Call to Action Statements by Policy Makers

> *Reimagine tourism in the Caribbean so as to create a level of inclusion and to retain the dollar in our space.* Minister of Tourism, Edmund Bartlett, Jamaica

> *Empower, Motivate and Transform STEs.* Tourism Secretary Tashia Burris, Tobago

> *Private sector (STEs), continue to play your role in the industry.* Tourism Parliamentary Secretary, John Pinder III, Bahamas

4.3.4   Other Comments from Participating Delegates

- Cooperatives and the cooperative movement should be included in the discussions
- Policies must be moved forward for advancing Cooperative development across Caribbean States
- The cooperative model can support driving community tourism
- Cooperative can help with the supply chain, e.g., farmers cooperatives can be suppliers directly to the accommodation sector
- Regional supply logistics – what is the demand? Why do businesses import from outside rather than utilise local suppliers? Maybe given the incentives, it may be less costly to import than to utilise what is available locally.
- Fiscal incentive packages should be geared towards attracting foreign investors
- Establish a separate investment package for local investors
- If there must be leakages in tourism it should be leaked in the Caribbean as opposed to outside of the region
- There should be a single tourist visa for the entry into the Caribbean region
- Artisan villages were established over Jamaica which required a change of mindset. It provides an ecosystem that is conducive to proper merchandising where visitors see the array of products and the authenticity of the supplies and products

- Lessons can be learnt from the regional visa policy that was adopted in 2007 and incorporated into the recommendations
- Food security and the role of STEs in supporting this critical area in the region and within the sector

Following are general summary insights of the input, comments and agreements from panellists and delegates. **Table 4** summarizing the main points that emanated from the discussions and input.

Table 5: Summary - Plenary #1, Assessment of Barriers to STE Resilience, Findings & Recommendations

Theme	Issue/Barrier to STE Resilience & Sustainability/Comment	Key Recommendation
Tourism Supplies Logistics/ Supply Chain	Supply chain participants are the first to supply the sector upon the restart of tourism after a disaster. STE resilience is tied to the strength and ability of the supply chain to rebound after a disaster Having local suppliers meeting the demands of tourism will help retain the tourism dollar in the region	• Create policies and a business environment that will encourage the growth and utilisation of local and regional suppliers to the STE sector • Extend concessions to supply chain after disasters to support their ability to cater to STEs at that time
Public Private Partnership	The UNWTO has noted that the Caribbean tourism recovery after a disaster is among the fastest worldwide. This is attributed to, among other factors, Public, Private Partnerships (PPP) and the resilience of the Caribbean people. PPP, must continue to be a key element in all aspects of tourism development and STE resilience in the region	• Reimagine tourism centred on an enhanced PPP to address wider issues that impact upon STEs continuity including supply chain issues and regional transportation
Awareness Building	STEs are not always privy to the support that may be available to them because information is, more often, given to or circulated among larger establishments and foreign investors	• Actively seek to provide information to STEs as valid investors in the tourism economy and to build their awareness of investment and business support
Vertical Integration by Large Tourism Enterprises	Impediments to trade orchestrated by large industry players that systematically lock out small local STEs, e.g., some hotels now offer services that were traditionally reserved for locals – car rentals, hair dressing and beauty spas, photography etc. They then charge local service providers a fee to offer their goods and services to clients staying at their resort. This is truly unconscionable and leads to resentment locally and even crime, indirectly as where there is inequality crime is inevitable. Therefore, the greater the societal inequality the greater the crime.	• Establish policies that allows STEs to flourish by promoting inclusivity and strengthening STEs ability to provide the value chain services assumed by the large accommodation sector • Develop policies to encourage large resorts to utilised STEs to provide guest services
Air Access	Caribbean nationals migrate more to STEs so intra-regional access should be on the policy agenda of governments as a necessary means to advancing STEs resilience and sustainability	• PPPs must continue the discussion of air access and cost as it hampers both STE and the wider tourism sector • A Caribbean transportation policy that will encourage regional airlines to develop and grow in support of tourism resilience is needed
Gastronomy	MSMTEs are in an advantageous position to support gastronomy and its supply chain at the community level	• Focus policies on STE development at the community level for gastronomy

Theme	Issue/Barrier to STE Resilience & Sustainability/Comment	Key Recommendation
Best Practice Exchange	STEs limitation can also be attributed to lack of involvement in areas that will allow best practice exchange and sharing of opportunities to allow STEs to thrive	• Opportunities must be available for networking and the exchange of best practices
Collaboration and Cooperation	Cooperation and collaboration are not maximised when it comes to policies and the advancement of tourism	• Collaboration and cooperation are needed among policy makers to also help with linkages
STEs cross boarder Collaboration	STEs can draw on the benefit of networking and collaborating with larger enterprises and associations. Benefits include the power of size when in aggregate and this translates in areas such as buying and negotiation power. Networking through STE clustering must also be considered	• Support the implementation of an STE Networking Forum as a stimulation platform to share solutions, ideas, trials, triumph, benchmarking and further support business networking with STEs locally and in other regional destinations • STE clustering should be utilised as a strategy to support STE networking and, in turn, resilience building
Driving Innovation	While STEs are not seen as drivers of innovation, they are nimble and has the potential to move faster in decisions to adopt business models	• Continue to support innovation in business operations at the STE micro level and their uptake of business tools
Existing Intelligence in the Industry	The tourism industry is well advanced in the Caribbean. Skills, know-how/intelligence and business operation tools, therefore, already existing in the Caribbean tourism industry but is not accessible to STE particularly in the informal sector, which is still in the infancy stage but a rapidly growing aspect of tourism. The learning curve for STEs does not have to be as long as previous enterprises because the technology, tools, intelligence, experience and knowledge are in place and can be made available to/shared with STEs.	• STEs must be allowed to tap into the skills, tools and intelligence already existing which will help to elevate the resilience and sustainability of STEs and the tourism industry as a whole
Access to tools & seat at the table	STEs need to be equipped with the skills knowledge and tools that larger establishment have access to. This also comes by building alliances and having a seat at the table.	• STEs must themselves get involved, understand the benefits of association and alliances and ensure that they have "a seat at the table" • STEs should have equal access to national tools developed to support the sector, which must also be designed with STEs in mind
Pricing & Revenue Management	Capacity development for STEs must include pricing and revenue management. STEs must also have a better sense of costs – cost of production and areas for greater efficiencies	• Develop pricing and revenue management tools and develop the capacity of STEs accordingly
Legal and Medical/ Psychological Support	While larger establishments have the infrastructural access to legal, medical and related support for staff and for business operations, this is not the case of STEs and is an area not discussed in the STE resilience building arena. STE owners must provide these support services with "no one to turn to for same". This should also be seen as a systematic impediment to STE resilience	• Consider the human element of STE owners and work on a holistic strategy that also considers supporting this facet of STE resilience building
STE Networking	Networking among ourselves is importance	• As a result of this forum, OAS can begin supporting STEs in establishing a STE

Theme	Issue/Barrier to STE Resilience & Sustainability/Comment	Key Recommendation
		network and in having the first ever STE Networking Forum • STEs must lead the creation of a network group to share triumphs and for business-to-business collaborations. They may use media including WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter etc.
Youth economy	STEs offer opportunities for the youth who come with a high level of technology savviness and knowledge in utilizing social media and digital marketing	• Involve youth entrepreneurs in sustainable tourism and in taking STEs to a new level of digitization, innovation and technology
Goal Setting	There is no specific growth rate set for increasing STEs in the short, medium and long terms	• National policies and development plans should set growth rates for STE for the short, medium and long term - overall and within each sub-sector
Linkages	Leakages remain a critical challenge in STE Resilience	• Include linkages strategies as part of the policy framework in STE resilience
Incentive Package	There are no specific comprehensive incentive packages to enter the tourism industry as an STE	• Develop a defined investment incentive and concession scheme for STEs

5.   PLENARY TWO: CRISIS COMMUNICATION STRATEGY & PROCEDURAL GUIDE

Jeremey Collymore, International Advisor/Consultant Disaster Risk Management, Resilience & Research Fellow, the UWI Institute for Sustainable Development, presented the crisis communication strategy and procedural guide for the consideration. *(The presentation can be accessed here).* This was followed by considerations and discussions from:

(i)   A Stakeholder/STE Panel moderated by the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) Sustainable Tourism Specialist, Amanda Charles, and

(ii)   A Ministerial and Disaster Readiness Policy Makers' panel moderated by Pablo González, Principal Specialist and Chief, Sustainable Communities, Resilience and Risk Management, & Director (a.i.) Department of Sustainable Development, Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, OAS

In her opening the Sustainable Tourism Specialist, Amanda Charles noted that from time to time, our valuable yet vulnerable Caribbean tourism sector can be threatened by a crisis, which could be anything from storms to crime, to natural or man-made hazards, and pandemics. With this, Amanda Charles stressed that effective and well-coordinated communications can significantly enhance the restoration of the Caribbean's ability to attract visitors in the aftermath of a crisis. She cited that CTO's experience has proven that, with the right planning and response, a crisis can present an opportunity to build trust and demonstrate concern and commitment to stakeholders and interested groups.

> *"Crisis Communications or communication during times of **crises is a critical component across the disaster risk management continuum, with the objective to** protect the **reputation and credibility of the tourism enterprise and the destination,** by proactively disseminating accurate and timely information to key stakeholders."*
> *Amanda Charles, Sustainable Tourism Specialist, CTO*

5.1   CRISIS COMMUNICATION STRATEGY PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

Jeremy Collymore indicated that the Crisis Communication Strategy was used to inform post-incident actions to facilitate recovery and resumption of operations. Its purpose was:

   (i)   To assist STEs in preparing for and mitigating the impact of disruptions

   (ii)   To facilitate STE planning for the unexpected, the unusual and the unfamiliar, and

   (iii) To be used as part of the overall business continuity of operations process

As seen in **Figure 10**, the Crisis Management Framework covers five critical disruption categories faced by STEs.

Figure 10: The Crisis Management Framework
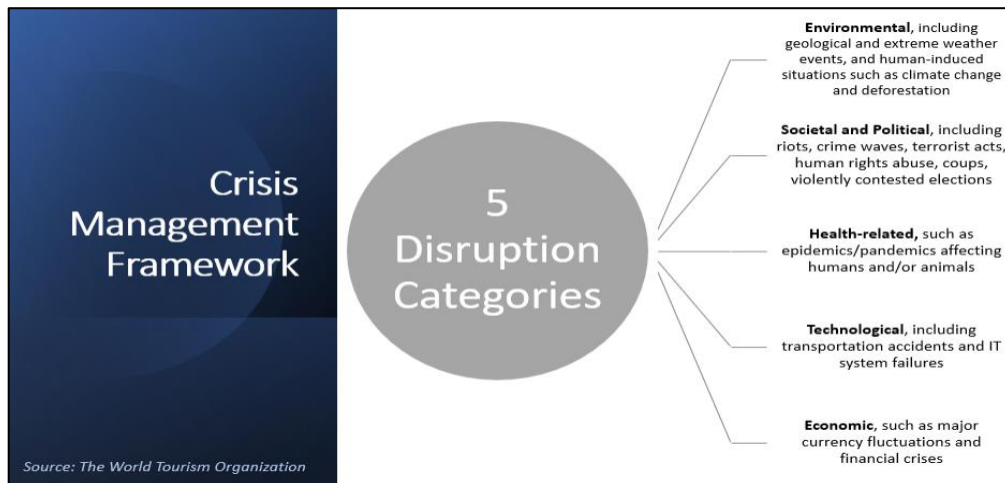
As summarized in **Figure 11**, the communication strategy allows STEs to identify potential crises and to implement strategies to plan, manage and respond accordingly in order to quickly recover.

Figure 11: Scope of the Crisis Communications Procedure
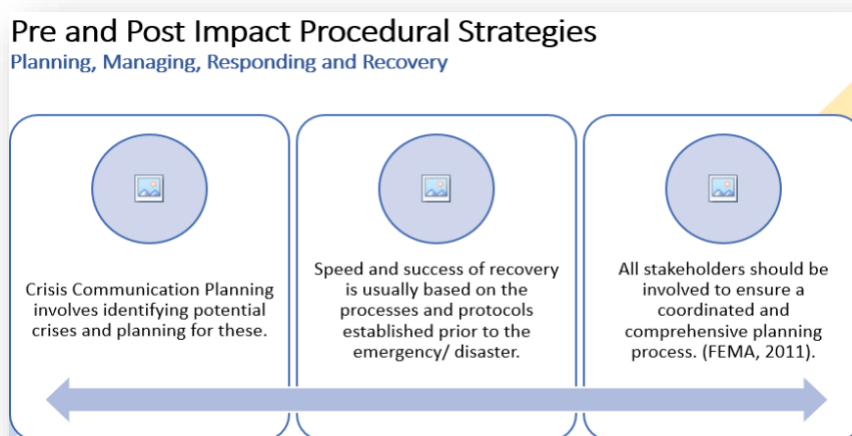
Key best practices within the crisis communication framework and plan highlighted by Mr. Collymore for the consideration of delegates included:

   (iv)   Considerations for messages, pre, during and post impact to "influence information flows and content"

   (v)   The establishment of a Crisis Management Team (**Figure 12**)

17

(vi) Selecting Communication Channels (Effective messaging is usually delivered over multiple platforms to capture the widest possible target audience)

(vii) The need for Multi-Lingual messaging

(viii) Recommendations for a social media policy in the context of the global tourism village we live in today, and

(ix) Media engagement as a key factor in ensuring that the information communicated to staff, visitors, their friends and family at home and abroad, and the local community is honest, factual and neutral.

Figure 12: Crisis Management Team Development

"Disruptive triggers may be **outside your control** but the **management and mitigation** of the consequences **is your responsibility.**" Jeremy Collymore, Advisor/Consultant/Research Fellow, UWI Institute for Sustainable Development

5.2   CONSIDERATIONS BY PANEL MEMBERS AND FORUM DELEGATES

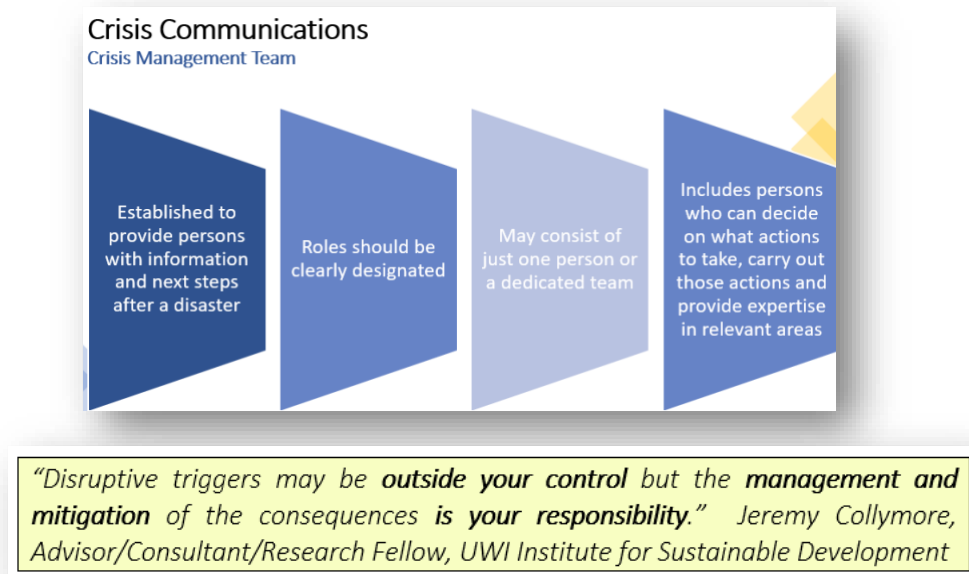Panellists acknowledged the presentation and commented on its usefulness as a tool that can add value to what STE in the sharing economy and the tourism space needs. The consensus was that the presentation provided a relevant infrastructure that allows communication with stakeholders through appropriately considered mediums.

5.2.1   Key Recommendations

Panellists recommended the following:

(i) Given the community level in which STEs operate and interact, the Crisis Communications Strategy should include a specific section related to **engagement of communities and community communications**. The Bahamas (Carl Smith, PS, Office of the Prime Minister Disaster Coordination Unit, Bahamas), for example, noted that across the country's island archipelago, one will find that while **local residents know their communities well** there has been a challenge in the flow and sharing of information at the community level when planning for and responding to crisis events. This experience was exemplified by Hurricane Dorian so there is resolve that **engaging the community in a crisis community strategy** is one of the things that needs to happen.

(ii) A Tourism Crisis Communications Strategy should also facilitate **building the knowledge capacity of STEs** to understand the industry in which they operate – **one that is prone to disasters** – so that when public sector measures are put in place, they can associate much easier with those measures. Measure and the use of relevant tools at the business level will become more relevant to them and their buy-in could be easier.

Figure 13: Comments Re STE Crisis Communication Strategy

> We need to plan for the unexpected, the unusual and the unfamiliar.

> We need to ensure that the communities in which STE operate and the employees that work for these STEs are ready to return to work quickly. This means considering the resilience and recovery of those communities and the households and all the systems involved one of which is a Crisis Communication.

> When we talk about communication, we're not just talking about information during a crisis but we must include information communication that has to happen in "times of peace".

5.2.2   Additional Considerations

Panellists further added comments on the **role of the media**, the need to **utilise technology** in crisis communications, the need for **communications in multiple languages**, and importantly, the need for **public private partnerships** in times of crisis. It was recognised that STEs are often guided by what they hear from any and every source, so it is necessary for policy makers/public sector to build a **relationship and trust** with STEs in order to share accurate and credible information. Panellists also shared experiences with crisis management. An example noted by Saint Lucia is the development and utilisation of a **Crisis Hospitality Management Plan**. Saint Lucia also organises **multi-hazard contingency planning workshops** as a capacity development measure to support STEs in this area.

Overall, best practices and comments from member on the panels includes:

- Development and training of STEs in the utilisation of a Crisis Hospitality Management Plan (done by the Saint Lucia Ministry of Tourism)

- Establishing ongoing communications (relationship building) with STEs as "Communications should not only start when the event occurs"

- Ensuring that the right medium is used to get messages to STEs and ensuring that communication flows freely and easily so status and updates are continually shared with/among stakeholders

- Identifying an individual with whom STEs can have a direct line of communication and who can disseminate relevant information. This helps with the credibility of the information provided and contributes to information management particularly during national crisis situations

- Interactions between STEs and the existing emergency management infrastructure where STE representatives attend public/private sector disaster preparedness meetings to ensure that STEs are informed, exposed to potential impacts of impending disasters and are part of the decision-making exercise (BETA. Barbados)

- A communications ecosystem that includes direct communications not only with the public sector officials, with employees, vendors, guests and prospective guests, but also communications with other STES and communications at the community level.

- Ensuring that communications are accurate, credible and timely

- Recognising the mother tongue of both visitors and people who work in the industry, and ensuring that communications are delivered not only for English speakers

- Keeping local media engaged (policy makers/public sector) and managing the information that is provided to the media

Table 6: Summary Plenary #2, Crisis Communication Strategy & Procedural Guidelines

Theme	Issues/Barrier to STE Resilience/Comment	Key Recommendation
Community Level	STEs operate in and are influenced by the communities in which they operate. Specific mention of this relationship must be outlined in the strategy.	• Include a Community Communications Procedure as part of the Crisis Community Strategy for STEs
Disaster/ Industry Link	STEs do not always understand the industry in which they operate and its inherent link to disasters	• Include an element that specifically builds the awareness of STEs to the nature of the industry that they are in which is prone and vulnerable to disasters • Education about the industry should be factored into the education system starting from primary school levels
STE Help Desk	STEs gather information anywhere it may be found and this may not always be accurate or reliable. The potential for an STE help desk to support implementation of the procedures and strategies identified as part of the crisis communications framework should be explored	• Include a policy to support STEs with the set-up of a Crisis help desk and for streaming information to STEs
STE/STE Communication	A system should be in place for peer-to-peer STE to STE communication	• Support should be provided for a network system that allows STE peer-to-peer communications
STE Independence	When a crisis strikes there is a view that there is "too much government in our lives." STEs should not wait too much on governments to tell them what to do but rather to set the right environment for STEs to be proactive and to become independent and to thrive	• Policy makers should provide an environment in which STEs can thrive independently as far as possible
Data	Good, timely, reliable data and a database is at the core of developing and implementing a good crisis communication strategy – this holds for government supporting STEs and for STEs to reduce risk	• Build into the Crisis Communication Strategy solid mechanisms for user friendly data and database to support decision making and communications
Guest Communications	Communicating with guests and potential guests is a critical part of recovery	• A recovery/communicating strategy must have a clear approach for communicating with guests and potential guests
CERT	Community Emergency Response Teams must be a vital part of any communication strategy for STEs. "CERTs establish communication channels in peacetime so that when a disaster happens, they know each other personally"	• Continue capacity development for CERT
Essential Services	If essential services are not functional – electricity, security etc. then it is a challenge to STEs especially those in remote areas	• Public Private Partnerships may be considered at the national and community levels

6. PLENARY THREE: BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING

The presentation for plenary three titled "**Business Continuity Planning, Business Impact Assessment and Recovery**," was presented by **Dr Evangeline Inniss-Springer PhD**, Director, Disaster Risk Reduction Centre, UWI with two moderators:

(i) Andria Grosvernor, Deputy Executive Director (Ag), CDEMA, and

(ii) Professor Dr Lloyd Waller PhD, Executive Director, Global Crisis Management and Resilience Centre, Jamaica

In providing background to this session, Andria Grosvernor drew the following to the attention of delegates:

(i) The region is experiencing change – change in the climate and change in the diversity and complexity of hazards with a resulting change in the level of socio-economic disruption impacting lives, livelihoods, and development trajectories.

(ii) The period 2020-2021 in the Caribbean region saw numerous threats and impacts, including Volcanic Emergency in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Flooding in Guyana and Suriname, Earthquake, and Tropical Storm Grace. 2022 has seen severe flooding once again in Guyana and Suriname - all happening in the midst of a global pandemic of over 2 years.

(iii) In 2018 after the devastation by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community adopted the Caribbean Resilience Framework to Advance Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) whose goal is sustainable development.

(iv) The Resilience Framework is built around five (5) pillars
- Social Protection for the Marginal and Most Vulnerable
- Safeguarding Infrastructure
- Enhancing Economic Opportunity
- Environmental Protection
- Operational Readiness and Recovery

With the Caribbean Region being a tourism-intensive region that attracts visitors wanting to experience the richness of our culture and the experience of relaxing in our region and with STEs comprise 95% of the tourism industry, STEs are key stakeholders and shareholders in the resilience agenda. Business continuity is, therefore, critical for STEs given their role and the hazard environment in which they operate.

Figure 14: The Concept of Business Continuity Management

> *Business Continuity Management (BCM) encompasses a range of processes and tools for (a) identifying vulnerabilities that may disrupt business functions, and for (b) developing plans to mitigate and respond to those risks, so that critical business functions can continue within the context of the anticipated disruption.*

> *Business Continuity Management (BCM) is a valuable undertaking for any organisation, within both the private and public sector. Public services are vital to effective post-disaster recovery in areas such as communications and livelihoods restoration among at-risk groups. Further, private sector organisations rely on many services delivered through public sector agencies for their business continuity post-disaster.*

6.1   PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

The purpose of the presentation, according to the presenter, Dr Inniss-Springer, was to "provide a comprehensive overview and understanding of the business continuity process through practical tools and techniques that businesses can use to examine areas that could affect operations". This was done with the objective to enhance users' understanding of the importance of business continuity planning *(access the presentation here)*. With this, the presentation:

(i) Highlighted the **critical components of the contingency planning process** and the **importance of understanding the local hazard environment**

(ii)   Shared **continuity planning tools** that can be used to develop tailored business continuity plans (BCPs) that are consistent with industry standards/best practices, and

(iii)   Provided insights in the training provided to STES to **establish a business continuity program.**

Dr Inniss-Springer reminded delegates that business continuity planning is the implementation of procedures before something happens, and disruptions can come in many different forms. These do not have to be national but can be localized to the particular STE.

6.1.1   Overview of the Tool

Dr Inniss-Springer informed that the tools developed are not theoretical but rather can be practically applied, are user-friendly in nature and can be utilized by anyone and businesses of any size. The contents of the tool are graphically presented in **Figure 15** and further outlined below:

- The tool provides a detailed step-by-step guide in a series of checklists and templates on how you can go through establishing a business continuity program and can be used by STEs for training and retraining

- STEs utilising the template will not need to invest any significant level of effort or resources because some language is already written into, and areas highlighted for adaptation in, the tool

- There are 5 elements of the tool, ranging from checking the business continuity readiness of the STE to assessing the vulnerability of the STE – STEs located on the coast, for example, may have a different vulnerability assessment than one that is located inland

- The tool allows STEs to rank and prioritize hazards the they need to focus on and the essential resources that STEs will need to function. Once these resources are documented the STE is able to see how any blocks in the supply chain can then affect their business. STEs are then able to prioritize their services and products

- The tools places STEs in a powerful position because they are able to identify the resources that they would need, and to put them in place – actually or on stand-by.

- Once STEs have thought through the business continuity process they can continue to deliver products and services based on predefined levels. Therefore, if planned and thought through, e.g., what the contingencies are and what must be put in place to operate, STEs will be in a better position to be able to handle the disruption.

- Considerations also include the community because STEs do not function in isolation as they are part of a community – their employees and owners are all part of the community in which the STE operates.

Figure 15: Contents of the Business Continuity Planning Tool
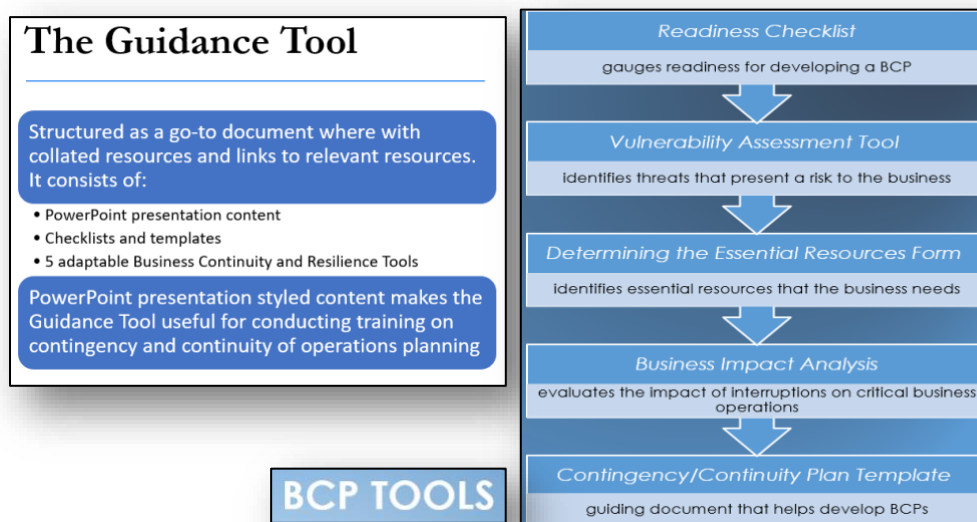
6.1.2   Benefits of Business Continuity Planning

As summarized in **Figure 16**, Dr Inniss-Springer noted that a BCP demonstrates that a business is proactive in improving overall efficiency and allocates the right financial and human resources to keep the business operating. Key areas of benefits related to business continuity planning outlined include:

(i)   The ability given for STEs to continue to deliver their products and services at acceptable predefined levels when disruptive incidents occur, and

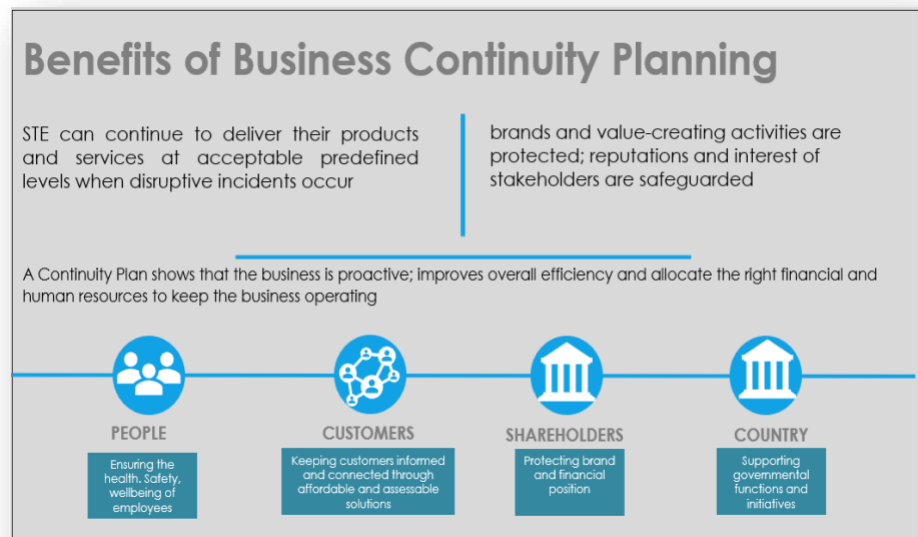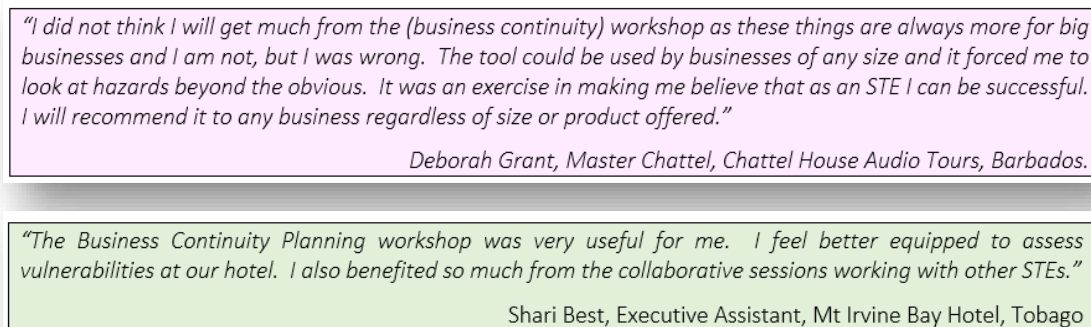(ii)   The support provided to protect brand and value-creating activities and reputations

Figure 16: Benefits of BCP

6.1.3   Piloting of the Tool

Training was undertaken on the tool piloted with 45 - 65 persons attending 2 or more sessions. The majority (55%) of the participants were from The Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados with 40% representing the accommodation sector. It was noted that feedback from the pilot training was extremely useful and allowed further enhancement of the tool. Comments are placed in **Figure 17** from STEs that participated in the pilot workshop.

Figure 17: Comments from STEs that Piloted the Business Continuity Tool

> *"I did not think I will get much from the (business continuity) workshop as these things are always more for big businesses and I am not, but I was wrong. The tool could be used by businesses of any size and it forced me to look at hazards beyond the obvious. It was an exercise in making me believe that as an STE I can be successful. I will recommend it to any business regardless of size or product offered."*
>
> *Deborah Grant, Master Chattel, Chattel House Audio Tours, Barbados.*

> *"The Business Continuity Planning workshop was very useful for me. I feel better equipped to assess vulnerabilities at our hotel. I also benefited so much from the collaborative sessions working with other STEs."*
>
> *Shari Best, Executive Assistant, Mt Irvine Bay Hotel, Tobago*

(These experiences were not aired at the Forum due to technicalities but are included for information purposes)

In summary, participants' feedback from piloting of the tool were centred on:

(i)   Knowledge on how to prepare for hazards and disruption

(ii)   Learning from others through breakout sessions and group discussions

(iii)   Sharing of Practical Tools

(iv)   Translating theory to practice, and

(v)   Challenging the norm and providing new ideas

6.1.4 Key Takeaways

The presenter welcomed input from delegates towards improving the tool but cautioned that, while the tool can allow STEs to continue to deliver their products and services at predefined levels when disruptive incidents occur, STEs must still be aware that having a BCP is not a cure and will not prevent the hazard impact, but it will allow the STE to better handle disruptions of any kind. The presenter also noted the following (**Figure 18**):

(i)   When responding to hazards, some actions work while some do not

(ii)   BCPs must be tailored to the individual STE's context, and

(iii)   The community in which the STE operate must be considered

Figure 18:Key Takeaways on BCP
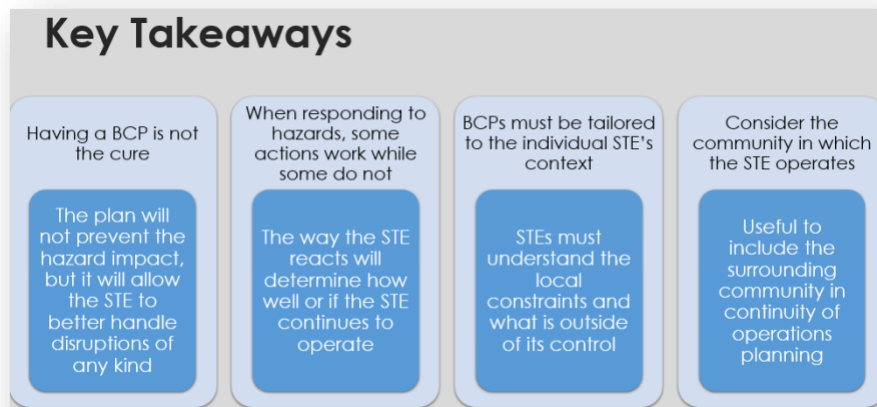
6.2   CONSIDERATIONS BY PANEL MEMBERS AND FORUM DELEGATES

The tool was well received by delegates with panellists expressing the view that the presentation was "very thorough". STEs on the panel felt that the capacity building aspect included with the tool was critical. One of the challenges noted was the dilemma faced by STEs between maintaining livelihoods and families and maintaining the businesses which supports the livelihood of STE owners and families. The view was expressed that the Business Continuity Tool will reduce or eradicate this dilemma.

Business continuity planning was viewed on the panel as "**a fairly new concept**" in the tourism business arena so it may take time for people to adopt. This can happen quickly with both public and private sectors collectively working to build awareness and support its utilization through relevant integrated policies. Support was also given to the idea that BCPs must not be academic, but pragmatic and should "maximise inclusiveness with peer tutoring allowed for more buy-in." BCPs must further allow STEs to adapt and adjust over time.

In addition to the comments of STES, disaster management experiences and practices were also shared by policy makers/influencers from Suriname, St. Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Jamaica and Guyana – all up whom agree that "we are facing the same disasters" and considered strategies that can allow them to support the utilization of the tool by STEs in their jurisdiction.

Overall, the following comments were made or points noted in the panel discussions:

- The need to ensure that STEs have a contingency pool of resources or a contingency fund to allow STEs to sustain periods without any business, which should be a part of contingency planning

- Contingency planning calls for agility

- Vulnerability is not the same as being exposed to a hazard. The same hazard will, for example, affect STEs in different ways.   *"Vulnerability is often within our control so the whole point of business continuity is to reduce your vulnerability as much as possible"*

- Engagement of staff is important in figuring out and addressing vulnerabilities. The more drills that are run with staff, the better prepared the STE will be for when things actually happen.

- While there are things that may go into a plan that are within your control there are other systemic areas which, in order to change, will require that STEs join forces with other members of their community

- Other areas to be considered then are, areas like the ability to access funds, access to obtain liability insurance, supply chain considerations – which can be supported by business associations and other partnerships

- Collaboration and network/association involvement is a strategy to support vulnerability as it levels up that sort of collaborative resource that can advance business continuity

- National Emergency Management Offices (NEMOs) plays a coordinating role in disaster management and, in some instances works with a "complex grouping of committees, agencies and institutions in both the private and public sectors." NEMO representatives were pleased to see the awareness of the tool and considered their position to support its uptake by STEs particularly as most NEMOs have a committee or sub-committee that focuses on crisis management in the hospitality and tourism sector

- Given that "capacity is very poor in our countries along the funds to implement needed activities," OAS should consider also building the capacity of NEMOs and Ministries of Tourism on the use of the tool so that they can aid STEs and ensure sustainability in capacity development (train the trainers)

- Most businesses only have a business plan when it is a mandatory requirement for funding, however, there is now an urgency for business continuity planning and this must be factored into the political agenda as part of government requirement for business operation. Business continuity plans cannot end up being another document "to sit on the shelves"

- There are also systemic vulnerabilities that will need a broader system and network support to be addressed

- The public sector has a role to play in reducing the systemic vulnerabilities as much as possible. Some matters, therefore, must be done from the national level.

7. CLOSING SESSION

The closing session facilitated remarks from **Tom Lersten**, Acting Deputy Permanent Representative for the US Permanent Mission to the OAS, with Pablo Gonzales, Principal Specialist and Chief, Sustainable Communities, Resilience and Risk Management & Director (a.i.) Department of Sustainable Development, Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, OAS providing delegates with the "Next Step" following the HLPF.

This was followed with closing remarks from:

(v)   Jennifer Griffith, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Jamaica, and

(vi)   Kim Osborne, Executive Secretary for Integral Development, OAS General Secretariat

7.1   NEXT STEPS

7.1.1   Context

Prior to an indication of the next steps, Pablo Gonzales set the context by providing background on the process followed in the development and implementation of the OAS initiative to build the resilience of STEs in the region, of which the HLPF was a strategic element. In this regard, he informed delegates of the challenge given to OAS by its Member States to support the efforts of governments in the Caribbean in building the resilience of STEs, the initiative of which was made possible by funding from the US Permanent Mission to the OAS.

Pablo Gonzales underscored that, first and foremost the sustainability of the outputs and outcomes of the project was considered and, in light of that, the proposal was to work closely with regional partners and organizations

such as CTO, CDEMA, UWI and CHTA and to ensure that the private sector and STEs were involved from the onset. OAS also looked at building upon its past work with other US agencies like FEMA, and in the region done to identify existing capacity and human capital to supplement with others like CTO, CDEMA, UWI and CHTA had also done.

The understanding was to start with a sound integrated assessment of barriers and challenges that STEs face. Pablo Gonzales recognised and clarified that STEs included Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), as the target group for resilience building. The aim of the assessment was centred on the drawing public and institutional policy recommendations based on a consensus building process that leads to actual implementation. The OAS acknowledged that a signed agreement among all stakeholders to implement the recommendations could not have been done but also recognised that the process would have provided the authority – technical and policy-wise, to increase possible implementation – which is the intention set the OAS led by the Executive Secretary, Kim Osborne.

7.1.2   Forward Plan

In moving ahead Pablo Gonzales pointed out the following:

- The integrated assessment undertaken will now be "retrofitted" with the recommendations of the HLPF

- A concrete policy recommendation framework will then be established for practical implementation to build the resilience of MSMTEs and minimize business interruptions to accelerate recovery

- Delegates were reminded that STEs do not have the ability as larger corporations to cushion themselves for minimal economic losses and quick recovery. The suite of tools established as part of the initiative will, therefore, be fine-tuned where appropriate based on input form the HLPF. The next steps for these tools include:

    - Conversion into a short course that can be used to certify STEs

    - There are also CERT self-training programs available to Member States

    - Roll out of additional training in the use of these tools (CERT instructors have already been identified)

The presenter indicated that ultimately, the OAS stands ready to support governments to formulate and implement policy for STE resilience and the communities whose livelihood depends on them. OAS will continue to work with STEs to build their resilience to multi-hazards, external and internal shocks.

As part of the next steps Pablo Gonzales stressed, however, that the resulting policy recommendations will require the will to implement and the collaboration of the industry and communities with employees and partners and with government and sector association support in promoting the tools, providing training and supporting access to financial mechanisms.

> **What's next? What's next is really up to you.**
> Pablo Gonzales, Principal Specialist and Chief, Sustainable Communities, Resilience and Risk Management & Director (a.i.) Department of Sustainable Development, Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, OAS

7.2   HIGHLIGHTS OF REMARKS AT THE CLOSING SESSION

Tom Lersten, Acting Deputy Permanent Representative for the US Permanent Mission to the OAS

Speaking remotely from Washington DC, **Tom Lersten**, Acting Deputy Permanent Representative for the US Permanent Mission to the OAS, expressed gratitude to the Honourable Minister Edmund Bartlett, Executive Secretary Kim Osborne, CTO, CHTA, UWI, and CDEMA for their contribution to the success of the HLPF

He felt that the forum has clearly demonstrated that STEs are the backbone of the tourism economy in the Caribbean providing half of the jobs in the entire region. With this he expressed his understanding of the critical need for building the resilience STEs inclusive of the very communities whose livelihoods depend on them. Tom Lersten further noted that:

- They wanted to support the delivery of specific actions that will build the foundation of STEs resilience to include training tools, such as business, continuity and community tendency planning and the facilitation of CERT and training

- The accomplishments of the initiative are acknowledged in these regards and the US Permanent Mission to the OAS is pleased to have contributed, and

- Moving forward the Mission encourages the continued partnerships established as part of this initiative to create integrated policies, strengthen economic, environmental and citizen resilience particularly in the new post-covid landscape where new innovative models for economic development are key to recovery and building resilience

Tom Lersten ended with the resolve of the United States to stand as partners to promote economic growth, resilience to disasters, competitiveness and democratic stability in this hemisphere.

Jennifer Griffith, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Jamaica

PS Jennifer Griffith expressed pleasure with the information shared and the rich discourse that occurred at the forum. Further to Minister Bartlett's recognition, she also:

- Acknowledged the importance of MSMEs operating in tourism as the backbone of the economy in Jamaica

- Agreed with the established understanding that MSMEs in tourism remain highly vulnerable to local, national and global disruptions

- Commended the relevancy of the forum and felt that its timing was opportune as it came in the beginning months of the start of the hurricane season in the region when we are at a high alert on matters related to disasters, and

- She reiterated the importance of preparing for emerging risks and the opportunity this affords us to urgently address the threats of disruptions and to also recover on the strongest possible path

PS Griffith acknowledge the importance of the initiative and called for the continued support of the OAS to ensure that the outcomes of the forum were implemented. In fact, PS Griffith agreed and supported the views of Executive Secretary Kim Osborne that the region is not deficient of dialogue and conversation issues but what remains deficient is implementation.

PS Griffith thanked the government of the United States of America for their commitment and continued support to the development of the region and to the OAS for their role in facilitating the project which has culminated in Jamaica with the HLPF. She confirmed the commitment of Jamaica to the process particularly as Jamaica is the now chairing the Inter-American Committee on Tourism through The Honourable Tourism Minister Bartlett.

> *"We urge for a continuation of the activities, we urge implementation of the recommendations, and we urge that we continue to speak together and arrive at solutions together." Jennifer Griffith, PS, Ministry of Tourism, Jamaica*

PS Jennifer Griffith ended by expressing her hope that all delegates experienced the warm hospitality of Jamaica and invited delegates to participate in the field trip organised by her Ministry to further experience the services and hospitality of small tourism enterprises.

Kim Osborne, Executive Secretary for Integral Development, OAS General Secretariat

Executive Secretary closed the deliberations with a vote of thanks to all involved in the successful organisation and implementation of the HLPF. She recognised the hard work and effort that has to go into coordinating events such along with the funding backing needed for which she also thanked the US Permanent Mission to the OAS.

In closing, Executive Secretary Kim Osborne informed delegates that the OAS is not only paying attention to building the resilience of STEs but that they are involved in a range of other related programs. She mentioned, for example, that the OAS is also "talking about our Small Business Development Centres" and will, shortly, be launching a Women's Economic Empowerment Program. In October 2022, the OAS will also host, within the context of science and technology, a science and data for decision-making program to be held in Dominica.

Given this, Executive Secretary Kim Osborne, on behalf of the OAS, expressed appreciation for the continued support of the OAS partners and stressed the need to ensure that "we are not working in silos." Kim Osborne also expressed her honour of working with the host Minister of Tourism, The Honourable Edmund Bartlett and to be a part of his first CITUR duties of hosting the HLPF.

> *"The recommendations emanating from this (HLPF) have been very strong, very positive, very concrete, and really could be a game changer." Kim Osborne, Executive Secretary for Integral Development, OAS General Secretariat*

Field Trip

Upon close-off of the HLPF, delegates were hosted by the Ministry of Tourism, Jamaica with a field trip to Bunkers Hill Trelawney where they experienced the products and services of the entrepreneurs of that community collaborating under community tourism to provide a unique cultural experience and rive tour.

8.   REPORT SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

The HLPF validated the findings and policy recommendations established based on the research and input of STEs and associated public, private and NGO agencies across the region. It also allowed further policy clarity and expansion as well an identification of additional areas for policy focus in advancing STE resilience.

While policy clarity and additional recommendations emanated from discussions at the HLPF it was clear that, **capacity development is at the core of STE resilience and sustainability**. In fact, this was stressed as by the Honourable Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism, Jamaica, **as one of three key areas** for the focus of government STE policies:

(iv)   building the knowledge and training capacity of STEs,

(v)   supporting their adjustments to meeting the financial challenges they face, and

(vi)   supporting them in the area of marketing.

Most importantly, the HLPF ascertained that STE resilience building **required the political will** and policy direction of government **to drive its success** particularly at this time as the region recovers and advances in sustainable, resilience and inclusive tourism development.

Further, deliberations at the HLPF pointedly indicate that **public private partnership (PPP)** is necessary and that governments and private sector associations and other agencies that support STEs must review their current agenda to **ensure that STEs are fully integrated** as a specific area of focus in their policies, plans and forward strategies.

While the support of government and intermediary private sector associations are critical, the HLPF confirmed that the **role of STEs themselves cannot be overlooked**. STEs must lead their resilience by networking and involvement in relevant national associations and by ensuring that they have a "seat at the table" for decision making that impacts their resilience and sustainability. In fact, a critical consensus of STEs is that an **STE networking forum** should be on the **post HLPF agenda for OAS** and its collaborating partners to share solutions, ideas, trials, triumph, benchmarking and further support business networking with STEs locally and in other regional destinations.

Discussions also confirmed that closely linked to STE resilience is the need to **engage the communities** in which STEs operate and the need to also pay close attention to supply chain issues and development strategies.

The policy recommendations as validated, clarified and further established at the HLPF are sectionized under the following ten (10) categories (in no specific order of priority or importance) and expanded in **Table 6**:

(i)   National Policy & Government Leadership

(ii)   Knowledge, Awareness & Training Capacity

(iii)   Marketing & Operations

(iv)   Supply Chain & Linkages

(v)   Communications

(vi)   Resilience Leadership

(vii)   Advocacy & Support

(viii) Networking

(ix)   Public Private Partnership, and

(x)   Other

The HLPF **achieved its goal** to engage policy makers in the discussions on the importance of tourism in the region, the critical role and importance of STE and the need to ensure their resilience and sustainability through the strategic policy leadership of government.

Table 7: Summary of Policy Recommendations-Micro/Macro/Intermediary/OAS/Regional Level

Theme	Level *(Macro/ Intermediary/ Micro/ OAS/Regional)*	Issues/Barrier to STE Resilience/ Comment	Key Recommendation
1	**National Policy & Government Leadership**		
Recognition of STE	Macro	STEs are not given the level of recognition in the wider scope of the tourism sector	• Recognize STEs as a valid & critical part of Tourism Industry by formally and specifically placing STEs on the policy agenda regionally and nationally • Establish a fully comprehensive Policy & Strategy Framework for STEs to guide their resilience and continuity post-disaster
Fiscal Incentives & Concessions	Macro	The length of time given for fiscal incentives is usually shorter for STEs There are no specific comprehensive incentive packages to enter the tourism industry as an STE	• Develop specific Fiscal/Tax Incentive Schemes for STEs growth and resilience, reviewing existing ones where applicable, for continued relevance and modification • Provide relevant fiscal concessions over an equitable time frame to allow STEs to establish themselves
Government Leadership	Macro	There is a need to ensure that small players have the same information and tools as large players so that they are able to become resilient businesses.	• Governments must invest in the information and mechanisms needed to "de-risk" STE investments and to create the space where information and tools are available • Government must adopt a "thought leadership" policy

Theme	Level *(Macro/ Intermediary/ Micro/ OAS/Regional)*	Issues/Barrier to STE Resilience/ Comment	Key Recommendation
Goal Setting	Macro	There is no specific growth rate set for increasing STEs in the short, medium and long terms	• National policies and development plans should set short, medium and long-term growth rates for STEs - overall and within each sub-sector
STE Independence	Micro	When a crisis strikes there is a view that there is "too much government in our lives." STEs should not wait too much on governments to tell them what to do but rather to set the right environment for STEs to become independent and to thrive	• Policy makers should provide an environment in which STEs can thrive independently as far as possible
2	**Knowledge, Awareness & Training Capacity**		
Capacity Building	Macro, Intermediary	Capacity building is one of the single most important factors for STE resilience and sustainability	• Establish a training and development program for STEs that will allow capacity development in the range of areas needed by STEs including: (i) Pricing Methodology (ii) Pricing & Revenue Management (iii) Contingency planning (iv) Crisis Management (v) Crisis Communications Strategy (vi) Marketing (vii) Business Planning (viii) Incorporation of Technology (ix) Importance of Network Engagement & Advocacy (x) Social Media Marketing (xi) Business Negotiations.
Knowledge based capacity	Macro	Knowledge based capacity of STEs is weak	• Support the development and accessing the knowledge and tools need by STEs to thrive in the global space in which they operate
Awareness & Business Support	Macro	STEs are not always privy to the support that may be available to them or the vulnerable nature of the industry in which they operate	• Actively seek to provide information to STEs as valid investors in the tourism economy and to build their awareness of the availability of investment and business support
STE Awareness & Education	Macro	STEs do not always understand the industry in which they operate and its inherent link to disasters	• Include an element that specifically builds the awareness of STEs to the nature of the industry that they are in which is prone and vulnerable to disasters • Education about the industry should be factored into the education system starting from primary school levels
Mentorship/ Existing Intelligence in the Industry	Intermediary	Linked to capacity development, and given the experience and knowledge of well-established tourism enterprises, the learning curve for STEs does not have to be as long as previous enterprises	• Establish an STE mentorship program in which established tourism enterprises are encouraged to mentor STEs for a given period • STEs must be allowed to tap into the existing skills, tools and intelligence which will help to elevate the resilience and sustainability of STEs and the tourism industry as a whole
3	**Marketing & Operations**		
Marketing Reach	Macro Association	STEs are not able to effectively reach the global market. Resilience and sustainability are, therefore, challenged	• Equipped STEs with the knowledge and strategy to easily and effectively reach the market • Targeted marketing to promote STE offerings should be embedded in destination marketing strategies
Liability Insurance and Sharing of Risk	Macro, Intermediary Micro	Lack of liability insurance is a major deterrent to business profitability and sustainability	• Devise mechanism for STE access to liability insurance • Contractual arrangements with clients must be factored into STE training and knowledge transfer. STEs must be aware that there should be a mutual risk • An effective approach to help STEs with liability/risk insurance must be considered
Digitisation	Macro Association Micro	Electronic mechanism to accept financial transactions is a barrier to STEs resilience and sustainability because of the bank charges for the facilities.	• Support policies to better enable the digitisation of the STE sector • STEs must put direct booking channels in place to reduce the fees and costs and work with credit card companies, issuing banks, and OTAs to increase usage of digital transaction technologies

Theme	Level (Macro/ Intermediary/ Micro/ OAS/Regional)	Issues/Barrier to STE Resilience/ Comment	Key Recommendation
Youth Economy	Macro	STEs offer opportunities for the youth and young adults who come with a high level of technology savviness and knowledge in utilizing social media and digital marketing	• Involve youth and young entrepreneurs in sustainable tourism and in taking STEs to a new level of digitization, innovation and technology
4 Supply Chain & Linkages			
Tourism Supplies Logistics/ Supply Chain	Macro	Supply chain participants are the first to supply the sector upon the restart of tourism after a disaster. STE resilience is tied to the strength and ability of the supply chain to rebound after a disaster	• Policies to support holistic and inclusive recovery of tourism supply chain enterprises are needed • Create policies and a business environment that will encourage the growth and utilisation of local and regional suppliers to the STE sector • Extend concessions to supply chain after disasters to support their ability to cater to STEs at this time
Linkages	Macro	Leakages remain a critical challenge in STE Resilience	• Include linkages strategies as part of the policy framework in STE resilience • Give concessions for linkages creation
5 Communications			
Crisis Communication Strategy	Micro	Low uptake of crisis communications strategy by STES	• STEs must factor into their operations the development and use of a Crisis Communication Strategy
Guest Communications	Micro	Communicating with guests and potential guests is a critical part of recovery	• A recovery/communicating strategy must have a clear approach for communicating with guests and potential guests
STE/STE Communication	Macro	A system should be in place for peer-to-peer STE to STE communication	• Support should be provided for a network system that allows STE peer-to-peer communications
Data	Macro	Good, reliable data is at the core of developing and implementing a good crisis communication strategy – this holds for government supporting STEs and for STEs to reduce risk	• Build into the Crisis Communication Strategy solid mechanisms for user friendly data to support decision making
6 Resilience Leadership			
Policy Platform for STE Resilience	Macro Regional	A common platform for STE resilience is needed at the governmental/regional level	• Policy makers should focus on an STE resilience building platform that: • builds the knowledge and training capacity • establishes policies and strategies to adjust STE financial challenges • supports the marketing needs of STEs
Citizen Resilience	Macro	Tourism is about people – STEs, employers, entrepreneurs, employees, communities, supply chain – farmers, artisans, fishermen, rural communities	• Policy makers must recognise that people are the centre of plans by and making citizen resilience the cornerstone of all STE tourism development effort
STE Resilience & Leadership	Micro	STEs must also actively involved in their advancement and become overdependent on government	• STEs should take the lead to seek means to develop their capacity and to get involved and to take leadership in their hands • STEs must include capacity development and training as part of their corporate existence • STEs must place importance on and seek to incorporate business tools such as business continuity plans and crisis management strategies into their operational program
Community Tourism/ Community Level	Marco	Community tourism can help with the development and sustainability of STEs STEs operate in are influenced by the communities in which they operate.	• Establish Community Tourism as a policy strategy to support STE resilience and sustainability • Include a Community Communications Procedure as part of the Crisis Community Strategy for STEs

Theme	Level (Macro/ Intermediary/ Micro/ OAS/Regional)	Issues/Barrier to STE Resilience/ Comment	Key Recommendation
		Specific mention of this relationship must be outlined in the strategy.	
CERT	OAS/Regional Macro Micro Intermediary	Community Emergency Response Teams must be a vital part of any communication strategy for STEs. "CERTs establish communication channels in peacetime so that when a disaster happens, they know each other personally"	• Continue capacity development for CERT
Vertical Integration by Large Tourism Enterprises	Macro	Impediments to trade orchestrated by large industry players that systematically lock out small local STEs, e.g., some hotels now offer services that were traditionally reserved for locals – car rentals, hair dressing and beauty spas, photography etc. They then charge local service providers a fee to offer their goods and services to clients staying at their resort.	• Establish policies that allows STEs to flourish by promoting inclusivity and strengthening STEs ability to provide the value chain services assumed by the large accommodation sector • Develop policies to encourage large resorts to utilized STEs to provide guest services
7	**Advocacy & Support**		
Associations' Support & Involvement	Intermediary	Traditional hotel and tourism associations are viewed as not effectively and specifically catering to the needs of STEs. STES should consider being part of the regional/national hotel and tourism association for the benefits afforded.	• Establish and implement a specific STE engagement strategy • Review existing membership and benefits schemes to ensure relevance • Development specific schemes/membership packages for STEs and upward mobility for association leadership • Include engagement of STEs as a strategic element of its policies and work programs with appropriate membership fees and packages • Encourage the involvement of STEs in formal networks and industry associations
Seat at the table/STE Involvement	Macro Micro	Be equipped with the skills knowledge and tools that larger establishment has access to but this also comes by building alliances and having a seat at the table.	• STEs must themselves get involved, understand the benefits of association and alliances and ensure that they have "a seat at the table" • STEs should have equal access to national tool developed to support the sector, which must also be designed with STEs in mind
STE Help Desk	Macro Intermediary	STEs gather information anywhere it may be found and this may not always be accurate or reliable. The potential for an STE help desk to support implementation of the procedures and strategies identified as part of the crisis communications framework should be explored	• Include a policy to support STEs with the set-up of a Crisis help desk and for streaming information to STEs. • A dedicated online "knowledge centre" tailored to STEs could be set-up on CTO and CHTA websites to address some FAQs and matters
8	**Networking**		
STE Network Forum	Macro Intermediary Micro OAS/Regional	STE must collaborate, share experiences, build synergies and leverage resources	• Establish a **regional network of STEs** • Institute an annual **regional STE networking forum** • **Support the implementation of an STE Networking Forum** as a stimulation platform to share solutions, ideas, trials, triumph, benchmarking and further support business networking with STEs locally and in other regional destinations
STE Networking	Micro Macro OAS/Regional	"Networking among ourselves" and with the broader industry is important	• As a result of this forum, OAS can begin supporting STEs in establishing a STE network and in having the

Theme	Level *(Macro/ Intermediary/ Micro/ OAS/Regional)*	Issues/Barrier to STE Resilience/ Comment	Key Recommendation
			first ever STE Networking Forum in the CARICOM region • STEs must lead the creation of a group to share triumphs and for business-to-business collaborations • Regional events and online activities by CHTA and CTO (i.e., Caribbean Travel Marketplace, Caribbean Hospitality Industry Exchange Forum, Caribbean State of the Industry Conference) are excellent networking and educational forums and should be adapted to provide an affordable and easy way to engage STEs
STEs Clustering cross boarder Collaboration	Micro OAS/Regional	STEs can draw on the benefit of networking and collaborating with larger enterprises and associations. Benefits include the power of size when in aggregate and this translates in areas such as buying and negation power.	• STE clustering should be utilised as a strategy to support STE networking and, in turn, resilience building • Networking through STE clustering must also be considered
Share Solution	Macro Intermediary Micro	In an interconnected world we cannot afford to work in silos.	• Exercise the policy of co-petition where, while competing, cooperation takes place. This includes sharing of data and information for the advance of all through existing and new local and regional knowledge sharing mechanisms
Collaboration and Cooperation	Micro Macro Intermediary OAS/Regional	Cooperation and collaboration are not maximised when it comes to policies and the advancement of tourism	• Opportunities must be available for networking and the exchange of best practices locally and regionally thru virtual learning, webinars, and events.
Alliance for Innovation	Macro Micro	Be equipped with the skills knowledge and tools that larger establishment has access to but this also comes by building alliances and having a seat at the table.	• STEs must themselves get involved, understand the benefits of association and alliances and ensure that they have "a seat at the table" • STEs should have equal access to national tools developed to support the sector, which must also be designed with STEs in mind
9	**Public Private Partnership**		
Public Private Partnership	Macro Intermediary Micro	PPP, must continue to be a key element in all aspects of tourism development and STE resilience	• Reimagine tourism with one centred on an enhanced PPP to address wider issues that impact upon STEs continuity including supply chain issues and regional transportation
Coordinated Actions	Macro Intermediary Micro OAS/Regional	STEs, public, private and NGOs cannot work in silos if STE resilience is to be successful	• Establish a policy framework for Private Public Partnership and cooperation to leverage resources in the advancement of STE resilience and sustainability
Air Access	Macro Intermediary OAS/Regional	Caribbean nationals migrate more to STEs so intra-regional access should be on the policy agenda of governments as a necessary means to advancing STEs resilience and sustainability	• PPPs must continue the discussion of air access and cost as it hampers both STE and the wider tourism sector • Implementation of a Caribbean transportation policy that will encourage regional airlines to develop and grow in support of tourism resilience is needed
Restoration of Essential Services	Macro	If essential services are not functional – electricity, security etc. then it is a challenge to STEs especially those in remote areas	• STE representation in local associations, particularly thru local tourism EMS's or crisis management committees, can help to ensure networking and connectivity to support restoration of essential services • Public Private Partnerships may be considered at the national and community levels
10	**Other**		
Legal and Medical/ Psychological Support	Macro Micro	While larger establishments have the infrastructural access to legal and medica and related support for staff and for business operations, this is not	• Consider the human element of STE owners and work on a holistic strategy that also considers supporting this facet of STE resilience building

Theme	Level *(Macro/ Intermediary/ Micro/ OAS/Regional)*	Issues/Barrier to STE Resilience/ Comment	Key Recommendation
		the case of STEs and is an area not discussed in the STE resilience building arena. STE owners must provide these support services with no one to turn to for same. This should also be seen as a systematic impediment to STE resilience	
Gastronomy	Macro	MSTEs are in an advantageous position to support gastronomy and its supply chain at the community level	• Focus policies and training on STE development at the community level for gastronomy

Annex follows:

HIGH LEVEL POLICY FORUM

for

Building The Resilience of Small Tourism Enterprises (STE) in the Caribbean to Disasters
Holiday Inn Resort: All-Inclusive
Montego Bay, Jamaica
20 & 21 July, 2022

TUESDAY 19, JULY, 2022	
ARRIVAL & PRE-FORUM EVENTS	
ALL DAY	**ARRIVALS OF DELEGATES**
4:00 pm – 7:00 pm	**REGISTRATION** Lobby, Holiday Inn Resort
3:00 pm - 4:00 pm	**MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE (Closed Session)** **Members: OAS, CHTA, CTO, CDEMA, UWI** **Aim:** To review progress and achievement, discuss potential future collaboration and support to the outputs and outcomes of the project **Venue:** Oasis Board Room, Holiday Inn Resort, Montego Bay
6:30 pm	**BRIEFING FOR PANELLISTS AND MODERATORS** **Venue:** Oasis Board Room, Holiday Inn Resort, Montego Bay
7:30 pm	**SPECIAL RECEPTION AND DINNER FOR ALL DELEGATES** **Hosted by Holiday Inn** **Venue:** Adult Pool Deck, Block 7, Holiday Inn Resort, Montego Bay

WEDNESDAY 20, JULY, 2022	
8:00 am – 9:00 am	**SPECIAL MEETING OF SMALL TOURISM ENTERPRISES (STEs only)** **Delegates:** STEs & Designated STEs Representatives **Host:** OAS & Forum Partners **Activity:** Debriefing on the Holistic/Integrated Assessment in preparation for the plenary sessions, and discussions on future OAS/Partner STE support and collaborations **Format:** In-Person & Virtual/By-Remote

WEDNESDAY 20, JULY, 2022	
OPENING SESSION **Rosehall Ballroom, Holiday Inn Resort, Montego Bay, Jamaica** *Mistress of Ceremony:* *Fiona Fennell, Medial Personality & Tourism PR Specialist, Jamaica*	
9:15 am	**ENTRANCE OF OAS & HOST DIGNITARIES** - **Kim Osborne**, Executive Secretary for Integral Development - **Honorable Edmund Bartlett**, Minister of Tourism, Jamaica
9:30 am	**Prayer** Paige Gordon Junior Advisor to the Honorable Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism, Jamaica
9:35 am	**National Anthem**
9:40 am	**Welcoming Remarks** Kim Osborne Executive Secretary for Integral Development, General Secretariat of the OAS
9:55 am	**Remarks** Senator, The Honorable Matthew Samuda Minister without Portfolio: Environment, Climate Change, and Water Office of the Prime Minister
9:10 am	**Opening Remark** Honorable Edmund Bartlett Minister of Tourism, Jamaica
10:30 am	**COFFEE BREAK**
FORUM PLENARIES	
PLENARY #1 Findings and Recommendations of the Multi-stakeholder Forum: An Integrated Assessment of Barriers and Challenges for Small Tourism Enterprises (STEs) in the Caribbean on their Post-Disaster Business Continuity	
10:45 am	**THE HOLISTIC/INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT OF BARRIERS TO STE RESILIENCE:** **FINDINGS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS** Presentation by **Frank J Comito** Special Advisor and Former Chief Executive Officer and Director General, Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association

CONSIDERATIONS: PLENARY #1	
11:05 am	**Considerations from Associations & STEs** **Panel:** **Nicola Madden-Greig**, President, Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association representing Associations supporting STEs **Gavin Bovell,** Vice President, Barbados Entrepreneurship and Tourism Association, Barbados representing STEs in the Shared Economy **John Mathurin**, Owner, Serenity Vacations & Tours, Saint Lucia representing STE participation at the OAS/CHTA Multi-Stakeholder Forum **Moderator:** **Vanessa Ledesma-Berrios**, CEO & Director General Ag, Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association
11:35 noon	**Considerations from Tourism Ministerial Policy Directorates** **Panel:** **Honourable Denise Charles,** Minister of Tourism, International Transport and Marine Initiatives, The Commonwealth of Dominica **Honourable Tashia Burris,** Secretary for Tourism, Culture, Antiquities and Transportation, Tobago House of Assembly, Tobago **Honourable John Pinder III**, Parliamentary Secretary, The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, Investment and Aviation, The Commonwealth of The Bahamas **Honourable Edmund Bartlett,** Minister of Tourism, Jamaica Input of **Other Ministerial Delegates & Representatives** **Moderator:** **Kim Osborne** Executive Secretary for Integral Development, General Secretariat of the OAS
12:30 pm	**LUNCH**
	PLENARY #2 Crisis Communication Strategy and Procedural Guide for STEs
2:00 pm	**THE CRISIS COMMUNICATION STRATEGY AND PROCEDURAL GUIDE** Presentation by **Jeremy Collymore** International Advisor/Consultant Disaster Risk Management; Resilience and Honorary Research Fellow, Institute for Sustainable Development, The University of the West Indies

	CONSIDERATIONS: PLENARY #2
2:30 pm	**Considerations from STEs** **Panel:** **David Smith,** Coordinator for the Institute for Sustainable Development at the University of the West Indies **Gavin Bovell,** Vice President, Barbados Entrepreneurship and Tourism Association, Barbados representing STEs in the Shared Economy **Deepa Girdari,** Senior Tourism Officer of Sustainable Tourism and Climate Change, Disaster Portfolio, Ministry of Tourism, Saint Lucia **Moderator:** **Amanda Charles**, Sustainable Tourism Specialist Caribbean Tourism Organization
3:00 pm	**Considerations from Tourism Ministerial & Disaster Readiness Policy Directorates** **Panel:** **Honourable Lennox John Andrews,** Minister of Economic Development, Planning, Tourism, ICT, Creative Economy, Agriculture and Lands, Fisheries and Cooperatives, Grenada **Carl Smith,** Permanent Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister Disaster Coordination Unit, The Commonwealth of The Bahamas **Carlos Manuel Paulino Cardenas,** Sub-Technical Director, Planning Centre National Emergency Commission, Dominican Republic **Judene Tingling Linares**, Deputy Director, National Biodiversity Office, Belize Input of **Other Ministerial Delegates & Representatives** **Moderator:** **Pablo González**, Principal Specialist and Chief, Sustainable Communities, Resilience and Risk Management, & Director (a.i.) Department of Sustainable Development, Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, OAS
4:00 pm	**CLOSE OF DAY ONE PLENARIES**
4:30 pm	**MEETING OF THE OAS TOURISM SECTOR SUB-COMMITTEE (closed session)**
	SPECIAL EVENING EVENT
5:45 pm – 9:00 pm	**COCKTAIL RECEPTION** **Hosted by** **The Honourable Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism, Jamaica** **Meeting Place for All Delegates:** **Porte Cochere, Lobby Entrance, Holiday Inn Resort, Montego Bay** **Transportation leaves at 5:45 pm** **Dress Code: Business Casual**

THURSDAY 21 JULY, 2022	
9:00 am	**SUMMARY OF DAY ONE** **Richard Campbell** Section Chief of Culture & Tourism, Department of Economic Development, OAS

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PLENARY #3

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Presentation of the Business Continuity Planning, Business Impact Assessment and Recovery – Needs Assessment, Gaps and Tools, and Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)

9:15 am	**Business Continuity Planning, Business Impact Assessment and Recovery** Presentation by **Dr Evangeline Inniss-Springer PhD** Director, Disaster Risk Reduction Centre The University of the West Indies
9:35 am	**Considerations from STEs** **Panel:** **Gavin Bovell,** Vice President, Barbados Entrepreneurship and Tourism Association, Barbados representing STEs in the Shared Economy **David Smith,** Coordinator for the Institute for Sustainable Development at the University of the West Indies **Dr Evangeline Inniss-Springer PhD,** Director, Disaster Risk Reduction Centre, The University of the West Indies **Moderator:** **Andria Grosvenor,** Deputy Executive Director (Ag) Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
10:00 am	**Considerations from Tourism Ministerial & Disaster Readiness Policy Directorates** **Panel:** **Rabinderdath Boeddha,** Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Suriname **John Hanley,** Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Nevis, St. Kitts and Nevis **Maria Medard**, Deputy Director, National Emergency Management Office, Saint Lucia **Roland Haye**, Regional Coordinator, Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management, Jamaica **Major Loring Benons**, Director General, Civil Defense Commission, Guyana Input of **Other Ministerial Delegates & Representatives** **Moderator:** **Professor Dr Lloyd Waller PhD** Executive Director, Global Crisis Management and Resilience Centre, Jamaica

	CLOSING SESSION
10:40 am	**NEXT STEPS** **Pablo González**, Principal Specialist and Chief, Sustainable Communities, Resilience and Risk Management, & Director (a.i.) Department of Sustainable Development, Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, OAS
10:45 am	**Remarks** **Tom Lersten,** Acting Deputy Permanent Representative for the US Permanent Mission to the OAS
10:55 am	**CLOSING REMARKS** **Jennifer Griffith** Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Jamaica **Kim Osborne** Executive Secretary for Integral Development, General Secretariat of the OAS
11:00 am	**End of Regional High-Level Policy Forum**
11:30 am – 4:30 pm	**FIELD TRIP** **Hosted by The Minister of Tourism, Jamaica** **Meeting Place for All Delegates:** **Porte Cochere, Lobby Entrance, Holiday Inn Resort, Montego Bay** **Transportation leaves at 11:30m** **Dress Code: Casually Comfortable (Comfortable walking involved)**

FRIDAY 22, JULY, 2022	
ALL DAY	**DEPARTURE OF DELEGATES**

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