

SIR ROYSTON O. HOPKIN, KCMG  
Spice Island Beach Resort

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*A Not-for-Profit registered in the  
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## Greetings and message from

### **Sir Royston O. Hopkin, KCMG, Chairman - CAST**

On behalf of the CAST Governing Council, management and staff, we wish all our tourism industry partners and colleagues a very happy New Year! The start of a New Year is always a good opportunity to reflect on the successes and short comings of the previous year and on the ways in which we can continuously improve.

The good news is that the Caribbean tourism sector performed very well in 2005 with most countries registering high visitor and occupancy levels, which would suggest profitable industry operations. The not so good news is the persistent trends and reports of the declining quality of terrestrial and marine ecosystems – which are so vital to the Caribbean visitor experience. There is also a troubling sense that the Caribbean tourism sector is less concerned today, with its environmental performance. If proved true, this could potentially deal a devastating blow to the long term sustainability and quality of the visitor experience.

It is a well known fact that achieving a healthy return on investment (ROI) in the shortest possible period is not necessarily consonant with the long term planning horizon required for designing and implementing conservation programs. It is, however, so necessary that these two poles dovetail together and soon. Perhaps the recent comments of Peter de Jong, President & CEO of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) is illustrative. *“Marketing is no longer the key issue. Management is and for that a whole new set of skills may be required to manage media relations, product development, security concerns, cultural degradation, globalisation, etc.”* These remarks were made following a November 2005 Asia-Pacific tourism industry sustainability survey.

The parallel for Caribbean tourism is that like our competitors in Asia-Pacific, our region is still highly vulnerable to external events including hurricanes. The resulting devastation affects an entire destination or country, with loss of employment, business and critical services interruption, destruction of country and property assets etc. Recovering basic services often requires massive injections of aid money and material assistance.

We believe that the “whole new set of skills” to which de Jong refers, is not necessarily all that new nor is it confined to “marketing” the destination better. Rather it is fostering a whole new attitude for leadership that focuses proven management strategies towards making businesses more robust during times of crises.

For years, CAST has been advocating the adoption of environmental management systems (EMS) which is what the *Green Globe 21 Standard* certifies. EMS provides an operating framework for better managing and controlling business operations. This implies that a business will establish and meet its defined performance targets including ROI, environmental, social, or health & safety; and empower, train and equip its staff to meet these priorities. The EMS provides a holistic management solution which has often been touted by certified businesses in the region yet overlooked by those that are less concerned about environmental performance. If designed and implemented well, the EMS will provide the business with the “new set of skills” to which de Jong refers – with good performance results. Don’t just take our word for it ask the top hotel environmental performers that have repeatedly won the prestigious regional and international environmental awards.

We urge all Caribbean interests to rededicate themselves in 2006 to protecting and conserving the region’s key natural resources on which we all depend. It is the other side of the “marketing” coin – and equally relevant to achieving a quality and sustainable tourism experience!