

MINISTER SHAMFA CUDJOE

Signing of CARPHA-IDB Technical Co-operation
Agreement- Wednesday 27 January 2016

S Farrell

2016

Good Morning

Executive Director, CARPHA, Dr. C. James Hospedales

Mr. Julian Belgrave, COO, Trinidad and Tobago IDB Country Office

Mr. Hugh Riley, CEO, Caribbean Tourism Organization

Dr Lisa Indar, Head Tourism and Health Programme

Members of the Media

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to thank CARPHA for this kind invitation to bring remarks on the occasion of the signing of the CARPHA-IDB Technical Co-operation Agreement.

This Agreement represents a project that seeks to enable a Regional Tourism Health Information, Monitoring and Response System.

It is anticipated that CARPHA will collaborate with the Caribbean Tourism Organisation, the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association in six Caribbean countries: Bahamas, Barbados, and Belize. Guyana, Jamaica and, of course, Trinidad and Tobago.

The primary objective of this enterprise as I understand it is to improve the capacity of participating countries to provide cost effective solutions to Health, Safety and Environmental Sanitation threats impacting on sustainable tourism in the Caribbean. **This project will also build a training and certification programme geared at enhancing our capacity in food and environmental safety. This could only redound to the benefit of our tourism industry.**

There is an important interconnection between tourism and Public health, environmental sanitation and safety.

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation advocates that the business volume of tourism surpasses that of oil exports, food products and automobiles. The tourist industry is a major player in international commerce, and represents at the same time one of the main income sources for many developing countries. This growth goes hand in hand with an increasing diversification and competition among destinations.

In 2015 there was a 4% increase in arrivals worldwide and the market is set on a growth path. The robust performance of the sector is contributing to economic growth and job creation in many parts of the world. It is therefore critical to promote policies and programmes that foster the continued growth of tourism in the Caribbean.

All agencies that are interested in the health and well being of tourists must pay attention to the implications inherent in the international movement of masses of people and more particularly in our Caribbean where we still grapple with many challenges affiliated with our public health systems.

As we employ the necessary steps to address our current economic situation, face head on, we must make the required investments to ensure that **Tourism takes its rightful place as a primary source of income, economic activity and foreign exchange**. Strengthening the Public Health System is one distinct way to strengthen the tourism product.

In today's competitive world of travel, food plays an ever increasingly important role. People not only seek new food experiences but continue to

demand greater levels of food safety. While safe food cannot assure a destination's success, food illnesses can help to determine its failure

It becomes even more important for the Tourism sector to partner with public health agencies to ensure that international standards in health, sanitation and hygiene are upheld.

Among the activities that this agreement will enable are:

1. The establishment of a Health Safety and Environmental Sanitation Standards and Certification System
2. Development of food safety and environmental sanitation training and certification.

These represent a set of credible standards that are accompanied by certification schemes.

The primary benefit to our countries is a healthier safer improved tourism product.

This is wholesome and positive activity in the right direction.

We at the Ministry of Tourism are pleased to be associated with this project.

It lifts the ante of what is possible in supporting the tourism industry in our region and reinforces our capacity to respond to health or sanitation challenges.

CARPHA has taken the charge head-on in providing information to the public about the Zika Virus and it is actions such as these that are necessary to safeguard our islands from what could be major outbreaks.

I congratulate CARPHA on this effort.

The signing of this Agreement and what it enables continues the momentum in the right direction and further congratulations are in order to CARPHA and the IDB and all their stakeholders for arriving at this point of signing a robust agreement that will benefit us all. .

I thank you