

The Virgin Islands Consortium

With Sustainable Tourism A Focus Of 2017, D.O.T. Says Residents Play Key Role In Initiative's Success

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The World Tourism Organization has dedicated 2017 to the advancement of sustainable tourism, and the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism says the five points highlighted by the organization in making the initiative successful includes a key component -- the involvement of locals.

"In the United States Virgin Islands, we gladly endorse this global initiative as we know full well the importance of developing tourism sustainably: we all know tourism drives our economy and contributes enormously to our infrastructure and basic services," said Beverly Nicholson-Doty, commissioner of tourism.

"But this year, let us ensure the benefits of the tourism industry contribute directly to improving the quality of life of our people, our fragile environment and the vibrant revival of our territory's cultural assets. We can do our part in setting guidelines for sustainable tourism development but we, the people of the USVI, are the ones who must make it work," she added.

According to the commissioner, sustainable tourism -- the concept of visiting a place as a tourist and trying to make only a positive impact on the environment, society and economy -- requires responsibility on the part of our citizens. "We have to take ownership of these complex issues and ensure our tourism sector benefits our families, our communities and our territory," she said.

In declaring 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, the World Tourism Organization suggested five areas of concentration.

First, it looks for inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Second, sustainable tourism should enable social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction. Resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change is the third area, while the fourth point seeks the enhancement of cultural values, diversity and heritage. The fifth aims at mutual understanding, peace and security.

"These are values we already hold dear, but we ask you to join us in recommitting to these five principles to make 2017 an extraordinary year for the U.S. Virgin Islands, especially as we commemorate our Centennial," Mrs. Nicholson-Doty concluded.