

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dept. Of Tourism Signals Commitment To Caribbean Collaboration

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The new head of the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism has signaled his department's desire to collaborate with other Caribbean destinations in promoting the region in the global marketplace, D.O.T. announced Wednesday.

"A rising tide lifts all boats, so it is important that Caribbean destinations work more collaboratively to earn a greater share of the global tourism business," remarked Joseph Boschulte, D.O.T. commissioner designee.

Speaking in the wake of the successful 37th annual Caribbean Travel Marketplace held in Montego Bay, Jamaica last week where he held informal meetings with major industry

stakeholders, Mr. Boschulte voiced the territory's hope to work closely with members of the region's leading tourism organizations, the private sector-driven Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) and the intergovernmental Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO).

"While the region's islands often compete against each other for tourism business, we must also understand the value of working together as Caribbean destinations," he said.

Mr. Boschulte urged that marketing programs be demonstrably capable of generating measurable returns on investment for the respective destinations, stating, "We cannot sign off on marketing initiatives because they look good or feel good. We need to do the market research, evaluate the potential impact of each initiative, and measure and monitor their results before committing additional resources."

While in Montego Bay, the commissioner designee pledged the U.S. Virgin Islands' support for the regional work of CHTA, producers of Caribbean Travel Marketplace, and held informal talks with CHTA CEO and Director General Frank Comito and Chief Marketing Officer Matt Cooper.

The tourism leader also had a productive discourse with both Hugh Riley, secretary general of the Caribbean Tourism Organization, and CTO Chairman Dominic Fedee, who serves as St. Lucia's Minister of Tourism.

"We had a very cordial discussion and I look forward to evaluating whether a return to CTO would make good business sense for our destination," he said. Meanwhile, Mr. Boschulte said tour operators, meeting planners and sellers of Caribbean travel are keen to book business to the U.S. Virgin Islands.

He said buyers attending the convention were eager to learn about timelines for the reopening of larger hotels since the storms of 2017, and welcomed news of the availability of accommodations for leisure visitors at properties such as Bolongo Bay Beach Resort and Emerald Beach Resort on St. Thomas, The Buccaneer and Sand Castle on the Beach on St. Croix, and The Westin St. John Resort Villas and Gallows Point Resort on St. John.

Commissioner Designee Boschulte also spoke of strong interest in the destination's villa product, and reported the department was evaluating partnership proposals aimed at elevating the destination's profile, especially in the digital arena.

"Our team was fully booked with back-to-back appointments during this year's Marketplace," reported the commissioner designee, who used the annual gathering to gauge how the territory stacked up against its neighbors, most of which had strong delegations attending the Caribbean's marquee travel and tourism event, according to the release.

The tourism leader has been communicating with hotel developers in the Territory to see how the department can assist with bringing renovated properties online. At the same time, he was also inviting corporate entities to look at opportunities for opening new properties in the territory. "We will be embarking on an extremely aggressive push to attract new developers to invest in our islands," he said.

Concurrently, Mr. Boschulte said there was a push to increase flights to both Cyril E. King Airport on St. Thomas and Henry E. Rohlsen Airport on St. Croix.

Feature Image: Commissioner Designee Joseph Boschulte (center) with CHTA's Frank Comito (left) and Matt Cooper.

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