

Jamaica's tourism minister to chair new CTO committee

■ MIAMI/CMC

JAMAICA'S tourism minister Edmund Bartlett has been appointed chair of a new high-level Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) committee that will craft a regional strategy to manage the supply side of tourism and retain a larger share of tourism earnings within Caribbean economies.

The CTO said the committee will focus on deepening linkages between tourism and sectors such as agriculture, and manufacturing. It will include representatives from Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, St Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

'This committee is about moving from leakage to linkage,' Bartlett said, adding: 'Our goal is to ensure that more of every tourism dollar stays in the Caribbean, builds our businesses, creates quality jobs for our people and strengthens the resilience of our economies. By working together as a region, we can secure a bigger share of the value that tourism generates in our own space.'

Barbados' Minister of Tourism and International Transport and CTO chairman Ian Gooding-Edghill said the appointment of Bartlett to chair the committee concretises the decision taken by the CTO member countries at the September 30 Council of Ministers and Commissioners of Tourism meeting to expand the region's focus on building stronger linkages in the tourism sector.

'As Jamaica has been a leading proponent of the supply side of tourism and the retention of revenues from the sector, the Council of Ministers and Commissioners unanimously agreed that Minister Bartlett should lead this regional initiative.

'We are pleased that the minister has accepted yet another challenge to further advance the development of the region's tourism sector, as the CTO's Council reaffirms its commitment to pursuing this strategy,' Gooding-Edghill said.

To ensure a strong technical foundation for the initiative, Bartlett also offered the services of Prof Lloyd Waller, executive director of the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre (GTRCMC), to develop the terms of reference to guide the committee's work.

J'ca recovering from Melissa

He further updated ministers on Jamaica's recovery after Hurricane Melissa, noting that the country is on track to have about 70% of its hotel rooms back in operation by January, supported by intensive repair and renovation works, and that capacity at Jamaica's three international airports is already above 85% of pre-Melissa levels as airlift is restored for the winter season.

Bartlett expressed deep appreciation for the strong show of solidarity from sister Caribbean countries, including the Turks and Caicos Islands, the US Virgin Islands, The Bahamas and others, emphasising that regional support has been vital in accelerating Jamaica's recovery and protecting tourism jobs.

The CTO Secretariat has also been mandated to do exploratory work on the carrying capacities of member states, providing critical data to support the committee's recommendations and to underpin sustainable, resilient tourism growth across the region.