

Tobago stakeholders open to new Sandals proposal



Sandals Resorts International executive chairman Adam Stewart, left, and Prime Minister Stuart Young at yesterday's meeting in Tobago with THA Chief Secretary Farley Augustine and a cross-section of Tobago stakeholders at the Prime Minister's official residence in Blenheim, Tobago. PHOTO COURTESY OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

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Tobago stakeholders and the Government have unanimously agreed to invite Sandals Resorts International to reconsider investing in the island, marking what could be a second chance to bring the world-renowned hotel chain to the island.

The announcement followed a high-level meeting between Prime Minister Stuart Young, officials from the Tobago House of Assembly (THA), tourism stakeholders, and the Sandals executive team, led by CEO Adam Stewart, at the Prime Minister's residence in Blenheim yesterday.

Speaking at a media conference afterwards, Young described the talks as a session where it was agreed to put Sandals on a "clean slate," saying the renewed discussions were focused on Tobago's growth and its positioning as a competitive global tourism destination.

Young revealed that Sandals is now willing to use its own funds for the investment.

"He (Stewart) is prepared from an investment point of view before all of us gathered here today that their usual model is one where he is prepared to invest in the plant in the hotel itself," Young said.

This commitment to self-funding could ease some of the past concerns that surrounded the initial deal, which included questions about transparency and public investment.

While no timeline has been set for a final decision, Young confirmed that both parties have agreed

to a step-by-step engagement process.

He emphasised that this process would be conducted with full transparency and consultation at every stage.

“I am hoping in the not-too-distant future, the Sandals Group will take a positive decision not only to look at Tobago but to indicate to us that they are prepared to brand Tobago as part of their destination packages and to invest in Tobago a Sandals hotel,” Young added.

Sandals’ previous proposal to establish a resort in Tobago fell through several years ago. However, this renewed interest signals a potential revival of a major tourism development that could transform the island’s hospitality sector.

The Prime Minister said it was heartening to see full support from Tobago’s key tourism players and THA officials. He said he believes the momentum and unified stance this time around could help the long-discussed project finally come to fruition. He said he had his fingers crossed that Sandals will give the country a “yes.”

Meanwhile, Chief Secretary Farley Augustine said he was satisfied with what was presented during the meeting with Sandals Resorts International and is looking forward to seeing a formal proposal for Tobago.

Augustine told the media that once Sandals agrees to consider investing in Tobago, it will present a new proposal. That clarity, he said, gives him confidence as both sides move towards re-engaging on brand-new terms.

On Saturday, during a political meeting, Augustine demanded that the resort come with its own money if it was serious about the investment.

He doubled down on that statement yesterday saying, “When I made that statement I was going based on what was and what the proposal was the last time. Now that it is abundantly clear that we are not working on the old proposal and we are starting from new, then I will prefer to get a proposal from Sandals first before making any pronouncement on what can and cannot be.”

Augustine, Hotel Association president Alpha Lord, Tourism Secretary Tashia Burris, Progressive Democratic Patriots (PDP) leader Watson Duke and Tobago Chamber of Commerce chairman Curtis Williams said they welcomed the hotel to approach the island with a fresh proposal that will work for all stakeholders and people on the island.

PNM Tobago Council political leader Ancil Dennis said he was happy to see Tobago leaders come together to agree on a project that would benefit the island.

All Guardian Media spoke to said they anticipated further discussion with the hotel chain after the April 28 General Election.