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GLOBAL TOURISM RESILIENCE CONFERENCE AND LAUNCH OF TOURISM RESILIENCE DAY: *The road to global sustainability and development*

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the notion of “tourism resilience” has been thrust to the forefront of the global discourse on the future and sustainability of international tourism. While travel and tourism has been traditionally considered one of the most resilient segments of the global economy, it has also proven to be simultaneously and disproportionately prone to shocks, due to the impact of disruptive events on perceptions of destination attractiveness and security. Such disruptive events include natural disasters, climate change impacts and bio-diversity loss, food insecurity, political instability and conflicts, the threat of terror attacks, cyber-crime and cyber security issues, economic recessions and indeed epidemics and pandemics, as exemplified by the current crisis.

Against the backdrop provided, the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre (GTRCMC) has been working on building tourism resilience in the Americas, Africa and the Middle East. Through our work in these areas we have recognized the need to consolidate learnings and build tourism resilience strategies to prepare for the next disruption to the travel and tourism space. In this regard, the GTRCMC proposes a high-level three-day conference focusing on building tourism resilience globally. The further aim of this conference would be charting the course towards global sustainability and development to consolidate the policy and strategic efforts of established and emergent tourism resilience players, projects and activities, as we prepare for the next major disruption. In this regard, the conference will focus on the following critical themes:

Lessons Learnt from managing COVID-19: Collaborating for the next Disruption

COVID-19 highlighted the need for greater global collaboration among governments, thought leaders and industry experts in the effort to enhance tourism resilience through innovative solutions. The global tourism industry, for the past three years, has been challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic and while it has shown its resilience, the need for stakeholders to reflect more deeply on the future of the industry and to address emerging challenges in a more harmonized way was still prominent. One key outcome of this conference will be an examination of the lessons learned from tourism resilience partnerships/collaborations during the pandemic.



Connecting Africa and the Caribbean: Building Resilience for Tourism Sustainability

Africa's ecological and geological characteristics, as well as its geographical location, have been identified as major factors contributing to the volatility of continental tourism. Many African destinations have traditionally, and more intensely since the emergence of the climate change phenomenon, experienced exaggerated risks associated with droughts, earthquakes, floods, cyclones, food insecurity, biodiversity loss, population displacement and disease outbreaks. The COVID 19 pandemic has further compounded the inherent vulnerabilities of African tourism. Africa recorded a 75 % decline in tourist arrivals in 2020 and an estimated USD 120 billion in GDP contributions from tourism in 2020. This translates to over five times the loss in receipts recorded in 2009 during the global economic and financial crisis. This also translates into the loss of 12.4 million jobs, or 51 % less jobs in the tourism between 2019 and 2020.

Unsurprisingly, many local communities, especially those in the vicinity of wildlife conservation areas and who depend on tourism for their economic livelihoods, are now facing risks of starvation and lack of basic humanitarian services, due to the steep tourism decline experienced over the past several months. The current pandemic has only magnified some of the more traditional, structural challenges facing many African destinations. These challenges have weakened their resilience threshold. They include underdeveloped infrastructure, political instability, lack of security, safety and high crime, difficulty faced by investors in accessing finance, high taxes on tourism investments, low levels of tourism skill, red tape and bureaucracy and low levels of budgetary support from governments, even in destinations where tourism is a major economic contributor.

This conference intends to engage themes that are critical to enhancing the competitiveness and sustainability of African tourism including: cross-sectorial collaborations, international funding and technical assistance, the establishment of resilience barometers, enhanced research, the adaptation of science, technology and innovation, niche market development, human capacity-building, small business support, training and development, incorporating African diasporas into the tourism value chain, multi-destination arrangements, enhancing destination attractiveness and supporting product development among local communities.

The event will culminate with the launch GTRCMCs Tourism Resilience Day – a day which recognizes the importance of global tourism resilience for sustainable growth and development.