Global Tourism Resilience Day: Strengthening the Future of Global Travel



Tourism is more than just an industry in the Greater Caribbean, it is the economic lifeblood of the region. From the pristine beaches of Jamaica and the Bahamas to the rich cultural heritage of Cuba and the Dominican Republic, tourism fuels local economies, sustains jobs, and supports millions of livelihoods. The sector directly contributes around 13% of the region's GDP, with some nations relying on it for as much as 50% of their economic activity (Caribbean Tourism Organization, 2023).

However, the industry is also highly vulnerable. Each year, the Caribbean faces increasingly severe hurricanes, causing billions of dollars in damages and leading to significant declines in visitor arrivals. The COVID-19 pandemic was another massive blow, wiping out over 2.4 million tourism-related jobs in Latin America and the Caribbean (WTTC, 2021).

Without resilience, the tourism industry and the millions who depend on it, remain at constant risk. Resilience means preparing for future shocks, investing in sustainable tourism infrastructure, and diversifying economies to avoid over-reliance on a single industry. It is about ensuring that when the next crisis comes whether a hurricane, a pandemic, or an economic downturn the Caribbean can recover faster, adapt smarter, and build back stronger.

The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) plays a vital role in promoting tourism resilience across the region. Recognizing the importance of digital transformation in building a more robust tourism sector, the ACS has launched the Digital Transformation Project for the Productive Sectors of the Greater Caribbean, which includes key components dedicated to enhancing the tourism industry's adaptability and competitiveness.

This initiative aims to assess the current level of digital adoption within ACS member states' tourism sectors and provide a roadmap for future digital transformation. By identifying gaps and opportunities, this assessment will help create a more resilient tourism landscape capable of withstanding future shocks. The project contains segments that focus on equipping tourism enterprises with cutting-edge digital tools such as computer reservation systems and customer relationship management systems to improve efficiency and visitor engagement. Additionally, the adoption of global distribution systems and destination management systems will enhance marketing capabilities and attract more visitors, supporting a quicker recovery from economic disruptions. To

further differentiate Caribbean tourism products, the project promotes the integration of virtual and augmented reality systems, offering immersive experiences that showcase the region's natural and cultural attractions.

The project focuses on digital skills development and capacity building. Resilience in tourism also depends on a skilled workforce. The ACS is addressing this through initiatives such as a train-the-trainer curriculum and technology boot camps held biennially to enhance digital literacy among tourism professionals. By equipping industry stakeholders with digital skills, the ACS ensures that the Caribbean's tourism sector remains competitive and adaptable to global change

The main objective of Global Tourism Resilience Day is to raise awareness about the need for sustainable tourism practices that support resilience. Key goals include encouraging investment in resilient infrastructure, promoting cooperation among stakeholders (governments, businesses, and local communities), and fostering dialogue on effective strategies for building long-term resilience. This day also aligns with the United Nations' commitment to supporting sustainable development, with the UN General Assembly proclaiming 2027 as the International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism.

The United Nations and its agencies, including the UNWTO, play a significant role in recognizing this day, facilitating global cooperation to promote sustainable tourism that benefits both people and the planet.

Several tourism destinations have demonstrated remarkable resilience, adapting to challenges and leveraging innovative approaches to recovery. For example, the Maldives, a nation highly vulnerable to climate change, has invested in eco-friendly tourism practices and infrastructure, including coral reef restoration and renewable energy solutions. Similarly, after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, tourism recovery efforts involved diversifying tourism offerings and emphasizing community-based tourism to rebuild the economy and strengthen resilience.

Technology also plays a critical role in promoting resilience in tourism. Digital tools and platforms enable faster communication, crisis management, and adaptive responses to challenges. Additionally, sustainable tourism practices, such as reducing waste, conserving resources, and promoting local cultures, are essential to ensuring long-term environmental and social resilience.

Building resilience in tourism requires collaboration at all levels. Governments, international organizations, businesses, and local communities must work together to create strategies that improve preparedness and strengthen recovery efforts. One example is the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), which works with countries and tourism operators to create sustainability standards and encourage collaboration.

Conferences and workshops are organized around Global Tourism Resilience Day to facilitate these discussions. For instance, the UNWTO's Global Conference on Sustainable Tourism and similar events provide a space for stakeholders to share insights, experiences, and best practices for building resilience across the tourism sector.

Global Tourism Resilience Day serves as a reminder of the critical importance of resilience in the tourism industry. By promoting sustainable practices, fostering collaboration, and encouraging responsible travel, the tourism sector can overcome adversity and continue to thrive. It is a day to reflect on the collective actions needed to build a more resilient future for global travel.

On Global Tourism Resilience Day, we invite everyone to join in awareness campaigns and events that promote sustainable tourism practices. Whether you are a traveller, industry professional, or

policymaker, your actions contribute to building a more resilient tourism industry for future generations. Stay informed, get involved, and help shape a sustainable and resilient future for tourism.

References:

- UNWTO. (2020). "International Tourism Highlights, 2020 Edition." World Tourism Organization. Retrieved from https://www.unwto.org
- UN General Assembly. (2024). "International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism for Development (2027)." United Nations.