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“Our Culture, Our Heritage, Our Caribbean”

PRESS RELEASE

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WORLD TOURISM DAY: “ONE BILLION TOURIST, ONE BILLION OPPORTUNITIES”

Houston, Texas – The Caribbean American Heritage Foundation of Texas (CAHFT) joins The [World Tourism Organization \(UNWTO\)](#), the United Nations (UN) agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism, in celebrating World Tourism Day. *Under the theme ‘One billion tourists, one billion opportunities’, World Tourism Day 2015 emphasizes the impact of the sector on economic growth, job creation and development.* We particularly extend a Happy World Tourism Day to the Caribbean Basin, whose economies are intertwined with the tourism sector. In this regard, the **UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon** stated in his message on the occasion of World Tourism Day “let us work together to maximize the immense potential of tourism to drive inclusive economic growth, protect the environment and promote sustainable development and a life of dignity for all.”

“Every time we travel we are part of a global movement that has the power to drive inclusive development, to create jobs and to build the sustainable societies we want for our future,” said UNWTO Secretary General, Taleb Rifai in his World Tourism Day message. “This movement also contributes to build mutual understanding and to safeguard our shared natural and cultural heritage,” he added. So, on this occasion of World Tourism Day, CAHFT takes this opportunity to highlight the crucial role that the United States plays in visitor travel to the Caribbean. **According to Aldeth Lewin (2014), writing for the Virgin Islands Daily News, 50 percent of visitors to the Caribbean comes from the United States.**

Associated Press reporter Danica Coto indicated in her February 2015 article that “a record 26.3 million people traveled to the Caribbean last year and spent an unprecedented amount of money in what is considered the world’s most tourism-dependent region.” Coto also indicated that tourists overall spent more than \$29 billion in the Caribbean last year, an increase of more than \$1 billion over the previous year. The region also welcomed nearly 24 million cruise ship passengers last year, an 8 percent increase, though Winfield Griffith, the organization’s research director, said he expected “another shift away from the Caribbean as the

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cruise lines try to diversity their product” in 2015. Hugh Riley, the [Caribbean Tourism Organization](#)’s secretary general, said Caribbean tourism rose by 5.3 percent, while the worldwide tourism growth rate was 4.7 percent.

Aruba reached one million overnight visitors for the first time in 2014 while Jamaica recorded its first year with two million visitors. Already the number one Caribbean destination in terms of arrivals, the Dominican Republic hosted 5,141,377 visitors in 2014, an 8.8 percent increase over 2013. Other Caribbean destinations to post strong arrivals growth figures in 2014 included Belize, the Cayman Islands, Grenada, Haiti Montserrat and the Turks & Caicos, which all posted growth in excess of 10 percent in 2014 according to Caribbean Tourism Organization statistics.

Saint Lucia also reported strong 2014 tourist arrivals, with a six percent year-over year increase to nearly 340,000 visitors. The destination reported record tourist arrival numbers for February, March, April, June, October, November and December. Full-year totals included an 11 percent growth in visitors from North America, who accounted for 42 percent of the island’s arrivals in 2014.

“Thanks to the addition of new routes and increased services from airports around the U.S. in recent months from JetBlue, Southwest Airlines and United Airlines, flights to Puerto Rico are now among the cheapest in the Caribbean,” said Loughlin. The trend is expected to continue through 2015,” said Chris Loughlin, chief executive officer of Travelzoo. Puerto Rico added 931 new hotel rooms in 2014 and posted an average occupancy of 70 percent, said Ingrid Rivera Rocafort, executive director of the Puerto Rico Tourism Company (PRTC). Saint Lucia’s arrivals increases were driven in part by increased airlift. Airline service to Saint Lucia increased 14 percent in 2014, including a 10 percent increase in U.S.-departing flights.

“A transformative force, tourism brings livelihood opportunities and helps alleviate poverty, making a genuine difference in the lives of millions of people. At present, international tourism contributes \$US 1.5 billion to global trade representing 30% of the world’s service exports, a share that goes up to 45% in Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Tourism also plays a key role in fostering multicultural understanding and contributing to the preservation of cultural and natural heritage” (UNWTO).

In observance of World Tourism Day, we invite you to come...and come back and share our rich Caribbean Heritage. We know you have a choice of places to visit; we are thankful for your choice of the Caribbean as your choice destination for business and pleasure!

Happy World Tourism Day.

For more information about the Caribbean Heritage Foundation of Texas and ways to support the organization’s work, visit www.caribbeanheritagetx.org.

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