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Premier Wheatley Opens CTO Human Resources Conference, Emphasising People as the Core of Tourism

Describing the theme of this year's 11th Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) Tourism Human Resources Conference as one that "could not be more fitting," Premier and Minister of Tourism, Culture, and Sustainable Development, Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley said it captures the essence of Caribbean tourism, an industry built not on infrastructure or technology, but on people.

He made the remark on Tuesday as he addressed the opening ceremony of the 28-31 October conference being held at Maria's By The Sea Hotel. Delegates from the British and US Virgin Islands, Anguilla, St. Maarten, St. Kitts and Nevis, Dominica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, the Cayman Islands, Florida, and Canada, are in attendance.

"Planes, hotels, or technology don't power our industry; people power it," Premier Wheatley stated. "By the front desk agent who greets you with a smile. By the chef who pours love into every dish. By the housekeeper, the tour guide, the taxi driver, by every single person who makes the Caribbean experience what it is."

He said that is why this conference is so important, as it is about putting people, the most valuable resource, front and center. He said it is about celebrating them, training them, and preparing them for a future where human excellence remains the soul of Caribbean tourism.

In her remarks, Interim Executive Director, BVI Yachting, Hotel, and Tourism Association (BVIYHTA), Mrs. Sharon Flax-Brutus, told the attendees, "redefining HR today means looking beyond policies and procedures to focus on our people, their purpose, and their well-being." Chapter President, SHRM Virgin Islands, Dr. Kendra Roach, pointed out that redefining HR excellence in Caribbean tourism is a call, not only to leadership, but to collective responsibility.

The opening ceremony was chaired by Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sustainable Development, Mr. Joseph Smith-Abbott, and featured remarks as well by Chair of the BVI Tourist Board, Mrs. Delma Maduro, and Secretary General & CEO, Caribbean Tourism Organization, Mrs. Donna Regis-Prosper. The keynote speaker was President and CEO of Tourism HR Canada, Mr. Philip Mondor.

Several vendors are on hand during the conference to expose the visiting delegates to their local produce, offering them the opportunity to purchase a souvenir from the Virgin Islands.

Over the next few days, the delegates will engage in plenary sessions, panel discussions, and master classes on topics such as "Reimagining Employee Experience", "Leveraging Talent and Culture", "Artificial Intelligence", "Tech vs Tradition", "Building Trustworthy Workplaces", "Women in Tourism", "Health & Wellness", "Cultural Sensitivity and Diversity for Leadership", and "Unlocking Resilience". They will also be taken on destination field tours.

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About:

The Government of the Virgin Islands is committed to promoting good governance and the sustainable development of the Territory with a view to ensuring a well-informed, prosperous, cohesive and stable society. The Premier's Office serves as the focal point for coordinating cross-sectoral policies and programmes and promoting the sustainable development of the Virgin Islands to ensure a well-informed, prosperous, cohesive and stable society.