

# Antigua & Barbuda reassures cruise lines of readiness for increased cruise ship calls

*Twin-Island nation of Antigua and Barbuda takes the lead in convening vital meetings with major cruise lines*

MIAMI, FL, USA, October 6, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Antigua and Barbuda joined forces with St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Lucia in a series of fact-finding meetings with the region's major cruise lines. The country's Tourism Minister, The Hon. Asot A. Michael, along with the Minister of Tourism for St. Kitts, The Hon. Lindsay Grant, and St. Lucia's Minister of Tourism, The Hon. Dominic Fedee led a delegation of cruise tourism officials to meet with several Miami-based cruise lines to include Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines (RCCL), Carnival Corporation, and Norwegian Cruise Lines (NCL). Prime Minister of St. Lucia, The Hon. Allen Chastanet also used the opportunity to briefly join the first meeting via conference call to lend his support to the first of its kind collaborate initiative. The Saint Lucian Prime Minister also thanked Minister Asot Michael for his proactive leadership and initiative in convening this very important meeting.



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*Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Minister, The Hon. Asot A. Michael*

The meetings' objective was to share information about the post-hurricane health of the ports and destination and to seek an update from each cruise line on short and medium term alterations to their cruise itineraries.

The Eastern Caribbean destinations verified that they not only collectively had the capacity to fill some short-term berthing gaps caused by the destruction in neighboring ports, but had already put processes in place to ensure that existing berthing booking details are available to each port to ensure that congestion is minimized. The opportunity was also used to update each cruise line on the latest port and cruise facility

development and the availability of new services such as fuel bunkering and the possibility for provisioning while in the port of St. John's.

Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Minister, The Hon. Asot A. Michael not only thanked the cruise lines for the confidence they had demonstrated by including additional calls for the destination, but also expressed appreciation for the cruise lines' valiant efforts in support of hurricane recovery throughout

the region but more so for Barbuda and Dominica.

“The collective efforts of our collaboration to work with our cruise line partners show that we are stronger and better when we work together to move forward as one, in the interest of all our destinations. The commitment to our cruise line partners is that we will ensure that we offer a superior product by doing everything necessary to improve the guest experience during their visit with us”, said Minister Michael.

Areas of significant interest to each cruise line included the availability of new tours and attractions to ensure that adequate shore excursions were available. This would add to the appeal of the new itineraries and ensure strong customer satisfaction scores.

The cruise lines also reinforced the need to work closely and collectively with the destinations to repair the negative perceptions in the market that the entire Caribbean was devastated. Antigua and Barbuda used this opportunity to share its efforts in using social media and a PR campaign to combat that perception in its overseas markets. The three Eastern Caribbean destinations agreed to collaborate with the cruise lines in an effort to have key influencers and travel bloggers cruise to each destination to share firsthand positive images and messages that the Caribbean is indeed open for business and offers a first class experience to its cruise guests.

The key message from the cruise lines was that it was their intention to maintain the Eastern Caribbean itineraries as much as possible particularly with Puerto Rico resuming its unique operations as a homeport in the very near future. This means that although the itinerary planning situation remains fluid, most of the calls that have been diverted to the destinations post Hurricane Irma and Maria are still and would remain in place.

The destination has already begun the process of planning for the increased cruise ship calls by convening meetings with all relevant support services and cruise tourism partners to ensure that Antigua offers a 1st class experience to all its cruise guests in the days and weeks ahead.

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