

## PRESS RELEASE

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### First Annual Caribbean Tourism Summit Takes Place in Washington, DC

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Political, tourism and investment community leaders from the Caribbean and Caribbean Diaspora with an interest in the future of Caribbean tourism gathered at the First Annual Caribbean Tourism Summit (ACTS) in Washington, DC from June 21-24. Today there is an increasing global competition within the tourism sector and the rising oil and gas prices are resulting in many obstacles to travel. To discuss these issues, representatives from the public and private sector met at the Summit to seek ways of working together to improve and expand the region's tourism industry.

The four days consisted of workshops, expert panel discussions, meetings, networking sessions, and Caribbean exhibitions and celebrations. Panel discussions covered topics including Outbound Travel; Creating Opportunity Through Sustainability; Investing in Caribbean Innovation; Creating the Future through Educational Partnerships; Voluntourism; and Carbon Trading.

The Summit's keynote speaker was Dr. Alan Greenspan, who served as the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for more than 18 years. Dr. Greenspan spoke to a rapt audience about the economic outlook of tourism in the Caribbean. At the Summit there were also representatives from industry and media giants such as Travelocity, Google, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *National Geographic Traveler* and *Budget Travel*.

Guyana was also well represented at the Summit when Judy Karwacki, President of Small Planet Consulting and lead tourism consultant on the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) / Guyana Trade and Investment Support (GTIS) project Guyana Sustainable Tourism Initiative (GSTI), spoke about her successful work in Guyana.

Ms. Karwacki, who was on a panel titled, "Attractions – Differentiation through Authentic Experiences," gave a presentation on how she has been applying lessons learned from sustainable tourism projects she has worked on in Canada to the Caribbean and Guyana. During her presentation, Ms. Karwacki explained the strategy utilized for the Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA) and USAID/GTIS Birding Tourism Program and how it is now being applied to the GSTI.

Ms. Karwacki said key components that have added to the success of the program have included working with small, niche tourism operators; focusing on current tourism market demands; and creating partnerships with funding agencies and non-governmental organizations that have a vested interest in the country. As a result of the Birding Tourism Program initiative, Guyana is now regarded as an exciting new birdwatching destination by birdwatchers and tour operators around the world, with more than 30 companies now selling, designing and bringing birdwatching tours to Guyana.

At the summit it was often noted that because the Caribbean is one of the most tourism-dependent regions in the world, the industry must continue to grow and flourish. Ms. Karwacki said that after listening to feedback from international tour operators and the wider market, the USAID/GTIS project is now using a market-responsive approach that will expand the focus from just birdwatchers to also include wider sustainable tourism initiatives, including eco-indigenous tourism, volunteer conservation tourism and research-based tourism. This is expected to help tourism growth to continue in Guyana.

The Guyana Sustainable Tourism Initiative is receiving support from GTIS, a joint project of the Government of Guyana and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). For more information, please visit [www.guyanabirding.com](http://www.guyanabirding.com).

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