

CHA's involvement in trade liberalization negotiations and discussions

The CHA was deeply involved in the negotiation and evolution of the recently initialed Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the European Union (EU) and CARIFORUM with particular regard to the liberalization of tourism related services. CHA made input on and defended its positions on the various aspects of the business of tourism including the following which were ultimately reflected in the final agreement:

- a. Competitive safeguards and a prevention of anticompetitive practices
- b. Mutual recognition of tourism professionals
- c. Sustainable tourism development
- d. Technical assistance

The fact that the EPA covers tourism services is itself a noteworthy accomplishment. Although the industry is now the largest contributor to Caribbean economic development, in all previous regional trade agreements tourism has either been ignored or referred to only in passing. However, throughout the EPA there are references to the industry, a chapter on tourism and much detail elsewhere in the accompanying schedules.

As such, the EPA agreement provides a framework for the conduct of the business of tourism between Europe and CARIFORUM territories and identifies some of the industry's development needs.

While it remains to be seen what the effects of the various levels of tariff liberalization and other agreements within the EPA will be, what has certainly been demonstrated is that the region is keen to be a global player and keen to be engaged in negotiations and discussions with trading partners that will affirm the grounds on which we will trade fairly and competitively into the future. The CHA anticipates that it will be intimately involved in the defence and development of tourism related services within all future trade arrangements that the region is involved in.