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Territory's Tourism Success in Covid Era Credited to Public-Private Partnerships, D.O.T. Says

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The U.S. Virgin Islands credits its ability to survive and thrive during the worldwide Covid-19 crisis to synergistic public-private partnerships, said the V.I. Dept. of Tourism Friday.

According to the release, D.O.T. Commissioner Joseph Boschulte Wayne Biggs, CEO of the USVI Economic Development Authority, led a delegation representing the territory at the Caribbean Hotel & Resort Investment Summit (CHRIS), which was held last month in Hollywood, Florida.

During a panel discussion on public-private collaboration, Mr. Boschulte recognized the importance of working together with other government entities such as the Department of Health, as well as business owners and employees alike, particularly in the tourism and hospitality sectors,

to ensure that protocols and policies are understood and enforceable, D.O.T. said.

“A big part of our success has been our relationship, led by our governor Albert Bryan Jr., with our private sector people,” said the commissioner. “As government, we can set protocols. However, it's not only the government's responsibility to enforce the protocols; it's the business owners, the hotel owners, the managers, the restaurant and bar managers' job — to keep the entire economy humming.”

He believes the U.S. Virgin Islands has been able to record notable successes such as record numbers of visitor arrivals because of the leadership's decision early in the pandemic to “manage the virus and not run from the virus” and proactive moves to protect both lives and livelihoods, in an economy that is heavily dependent on its tourism sector.

Addressing conference-goers during a presentation on investment opportunities in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Mr. Biggs highlighted the USVI's enviable market access, hotel development incentive program and COVID-19 response.

“We have access to key markets,” Mr. Biggs stated. “If you look at us geographically on a map, we're sort of in the middle of the Caribbean chain. There are 43.6 million consumers in the Caribbean basin, there are 433.6 million in South America and about 370.6 million consumers in North America.”

He went on to note, “[The VI Economic Development Authority is] a one-stop shop and we support development throughout the Territory ... [and] we also offer support in real estate, logistics, supply chain, government regulations, human resources, legal and financial support, and incentives.”

CHRIS featured more than 20 informational sessions and 70 speakers (the large majority of which were C-suite individuals representing Caribbean hospitality and tourism brands and organizations). The Department of Tourism and Economic Development Authority supported the meeting and hosted a trade show booth at the event.