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## As America Reopens to Tourists, USVI Takes Marketing Push to Italy

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**From left: D.O.T. Commissioner Joseph Boschulte, Asst. D.O.T. Commissioner Alani Henneman-Todman, and USVI Italy representative Olga Mazzoni with travel partners in Milan over the weekend. By. THE V.I. DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM**

As the United States prepares to welcome European visitors once again this November, the V.I. Department of Tourism is taking its marketing messages to Italy, the department announced Monday.

“Italy is one of a select group of international markets in which the territory will strategically focus its marketing activities in the coming weeks and months,” D.O.T. Commissioner Joseph Boschulte said. He added that the department has also identified Canada and Scandinavia as key

markets for the USVI.

According to the release, while in Milan, the commissioner and members of his team had one-on-one meetings with leading Italian tour operators and media partners, including consumer and travel trade writers and influencers.

Industry stakeholders traveled from cities such as Bologna, Florence, Genoa, Rimini, Treviso, Turin, Venice and Varese to engage with Tourism representatives; learn about the territory's experience, challenges and successes in managing the Covid-19 pandemic; and receive updates on the status of the Territory's accommodations, including the burgeoning sharing economy, villa and marine sectors, D.O.T. made known. The commissioner reported that the Territory is committed to expanding its reach and relationship with Italian travelers.

"The stakeholders we met truly honored us with their presence, interest and confidence in the USVI. We are one of the first long-haul destinations to invest in coming to Italy to engage with these professionals and remind them that a warm welcome awaits pandemic-weary Italian visitors," said Mr. Boschulte, who was impressed with the strength of the country's health safety protocols and the incredible progress Italy has made – especially with vaccination efforts – after a very difficult start to the pandemic.

The D.O.T. team also educated their Italian colleagues about the territory's Travel Screening Portal, which has been a critical tool in helping to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 in the territory.

"As restrictions for Europeans seeking to travel to America begin to ease, the U.S. Virgin Islands wants to ensure that we remain a top-of-mind destination in key markets where we already have strong brand recognition. Our efforts in Milan and beyond are part of a comprehensive, concerted effort to attract more international visitors to our shores," said the territory's tourism leader, who added that the U.S. Virgin Islands' marketing messages also remind international travelers about the ease and comfort of traveling under the U.S. flag during the pandemic.

During World Routes 2021, an international conference that brings together decision makers from the global airline route development community, the USVI delegation held discussions with airline representatives to explore opportunities to grow international arrivals into the Territory.

"We experienced strong airlift performance this spring and summer, but we are not resting on our laurels. We must strengthen not only our domestic routes but must also seek opportunities for international carriers to bring guests to the U.S. Virgin Islands, especially the big island of St. Croix," said Mr. Boschulte.

At the conclusion of their business in Italy, Mr. Boschulte and his team will travel to Denmark to meet with travel industry stakeholders and members of the U.S. diplomatic community in Copenhagen.