

## PRESS RELEASE

### CARIBBEAN MARINE ASSOCIATION AT INTERNATIONAL TOURISM FAIR

The Caribbean Marine Association (CMA) recently presented a paper on the Economic Importance of Yachting to Caribbean Economies, as part of a panel discussing “Perspectives on Nautical Tourism” at the 26<sup>th</sup> Cuban Annual International Tourism Fair, held in Havana from 10<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2006. Other panelists came from Brazil, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Italy and Mexico. The event was held at the picturesque Morro Cabana Park, an historic Spanish fort.

Quoting from a World Tourism & Travel Council (2003) report, the CMA highlighted that “The Caribbean is the most Tourism-intensive region in the world. However, a vast majority of the Caribbean countries disregard, are unaware of, or are in complete denial about the economic impact of Travel & Tourism. As a result, they fail to realize the full potential that Travel & Tourism can make to their economies as a creator of jobs and development opportunities”. The supreme irony of this statement, or of the report in general, was that yachting didn’t merit a mention! One important consequence of this disregard of the Yachting Sector is that essential economic data is not collected or included in national statistics, and remains generally unavailable throughout the region. Notwithstanding this reality, the report forecasts substantial growth in Tourism jobs up to 2014.

The CMA was however, able to draw on data from ECLAC studies on sustainable marine-based tourism conducted in about 7 islands a few years ago, and a 2004 survey done on St. Lucia’s Yachting sector, to demonstrate that, in St. Lucia’s case, yachting growth had outstripped that of the Hotel & Restaurant sector, and GDP, by substantial margins – in 2000, the sector impact was 33% of Hotel & Restaurant; by 2004, it had risen to 58% of H&R. During the same period, GDP growth was 2.8%, H&R was 10.8%, Yachting 92.3%!

Among the other issues recognized by the panel were: unlike land-based Tourism, Caribbean Yachting destinations do not compete with, but rather compliment, each other, and that is reflected in the CMA’s motto, “*many islands, one sea*”; cruise tourism contributes less to regional economies than yachting – even in Broward, Dade and Palm Beach Counties (Florida), yachting contributed more than the citrus or cruise industries; that the yachting industry’s particular requirements are covered by generalized shipping – as opposed to yachting specific – legislation; that at the top end, yachts are getting larger and larger, and that specialized marinas have to be constructed to accommodate them; that the economic outlook for destinations which cater for the ‘boom’ will be beneficial.

The CMA was invited to participate by Cuba’s Hemingway International Yacht Club and was a guest of the Cuban Ministry of Tourism. The guests of Honour at the Fair were China and Venezuela. Hoteliers, travel agencies, airline operators and other agencies

from 30 countries participated. Commenting on the event, Keats Compton, CMA President and member of the panel, remarked that the recognition afforded the CMA was welcome, as non-English speaking countries in the region were able to get an insight into the purpose of the CMA, which the World Bank has suggested be established to enable the Caribbean yachting product to speak with one voice (see: *A Time to Choose, Caribbean Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*). Compton was able to inform the audience that the CMA had written to the Caribbean Customs Law Enforcement Council, suggesting that the 35-member body recommend to members that they adopt a common Customs Clearance form for yachts traveling in our region, and was optimistic that CCLEC would agree. The panel concluded that the region has the potential to offer a unique product; the territories faced similar challenges, but that the opportunity to work towards common solutions has now been recognised.



Panelists on Perspectives on International Nautical Tourism.

The Caribbean Marine Association was established in Feb. 2006, contact:

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