



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago  
Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts



# ECO TOURISM

SUB-POLICY

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

(WORKING DRAFT)

**MAY 1, 2023**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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BES-Net	Biodiversity and Ecosystems Network
BES-Net TT	Biodiversity and Ecosystems Network Trinidad and Tobago
CAGR	Compound Annual Growth Rate
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARIFORUM	Caribbean Forum
CARPHA	Caribbean Public Health Agency
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CBT	Community-Based Tourism
CCfC	Caribbean Centre for Competitiveness
CEC	Certificate of Environmental Clearance
CNH	Cultural National Heritage
COP 26	Climate Change Conference 26 / Conference of Parties 26
CoP	Community of Practice
COSTAATT	College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CTO	Caribbean Tourism Organization
EDF	European Development Fund
EMA	Environmental Management Authority
EPI	Environmental Performance Index
EXIMBANK	Export Import Bank of Trinidad and Tobago
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FEE	Foundation for Environmental Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GLG	Government Loan Guarantee
GoRTT	Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
GVI	Global Vision International
HSE	Health Safety and Environment
IBA	Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IFPAM	Improving Forest and Protected Area Management
IMA	Institute of Marine Affairs
IPO	Intellectual Property Office
IP	Intellectual Property
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IY2017	International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development
IYE	International Year of Ecotourism
LSA	Land Settlement Agency
MAC	Management Advisory Committee
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation

MEET	Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism
MALF	Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries
MDT	Ministry of Digital Transformation
MFCA	Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs
MHUD	Ministry of Housing and Urban Development
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOL	Ministry of Labour
MNS	Ministry of National Security
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MPD	Ministry of Planning and Development
MPU	Ministry of Public Utilities
MRDLG	Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government
MSE	Micro and Small Enterprises
MSCD	Ministry of Sport and Community Development
MSDFS	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
MTCA	Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts
MOWT	Ministry of Works and Transport
NbS	Nature-based Solution
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NNH	Natural National Heritage
NTP	National Tourism Policy
ODPM	Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
SBTO	Sustainable Boat Tour Operator
SCUBA	Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus
SGP	Small Grants Programme
STC	Sustainable Tourism Conference
SWMCOL	Solid Waste Management Company Limited
TAUP	Tourism Accommodation Upgrade Project
TDA	Tourism Development Act
THA	Tobago House of Assembly
THTI	Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute
TIES	The International Ecotourism Society
TOPS	Tourism Oriented Policing Service
TTAL	Tobago Tourism Agency Limited
TTBIS	Trinidad and Tobago Biodiversity Information System
TTL	Tourism Trinidad Limited
TTDF	Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force
TTFS	Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service
TTPS	Trinidad and Tobago Police Service
T&TEC	Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission
TTITOA	Trinidad and Tobago Incoming Tour Operators Association
TTTBDL	Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Business Development Limited
TVT	Turtle Village Trust

UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO MAB	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Man and Biosphere
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
USC	University of the Southern Caribbean
USD	United States Dollar
UTT	University of Trinidad and Tobago
UWI	University of the West Indies
WASA	Water and Sewerage Authority
WHO	World Health Organization

WORKING DRAFT

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

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<b>Adaptation</b>	The term is generally used for coping mechanisms for the adverse impacts of climate change.
<b>Agrotourism</b>	A form of tourism in which visits are made to a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation.
<b>Avifauna</b>	Birds belonging to a particular region or environment.
<b>Biodiversity</b>	The variability among living organisms from all sources, including terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems.
<b>Carrying Capacity</b>	The maximum number of people that may visit a tourist destination at any given time, without degrading the natural, physical, economic, infrastructural, and social environment and without an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitors' satisfaction.
<b>Climate Change</b>	A change in the state of the climate that can be identified by changes in the mean and/or variability of its properties, and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer as a result of natural variability or human activity.
<b>Co-Management</b>	A partnership in which government agencies, local communities, and resource users, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders negotiate, as appropriate to each context, the authority and responsibility for the management of a specific area or set of resources.
<b>Community-based Tourism</b>	A type of tourism that engages and empowers local residents in the development, management and ownership of tourism products and services in their communities. Community-based tourism (CBT) emphasizes the need to protect, preserve and promote the environment.
<b>Conservation</b>	The protection, maintenance and rehabilitation of native biota, their habitats and life-support systems to ensure ecosystem sustainability and biodiversity.
<b>Dive Centre</b>	A tourism product that includes SCUBA diving and other



recreational water sports.

<b>Domestic Tourist</b>	A resident of the given country travelling only within this country.
<b>Eco Lodge</b>	A tourist accommodation facility that meets the principles and philosophies of ecotourism in that it is developed and managed in an environmentally sensitive manner, affords protection of its operating environment and offers educational and participatory experience to visitors.
<b>Ecological Accounting</b>	It is a system which measures ecological assets, liabilities, costs and benefits in order to assess project/enterprise viability and inform decisions. It considers the collective relationship among resources, environment (including ecological services), socio-cultural factors and economic performance and ascribes value to each.
<b>Eco quality</b>	A concept of quality management that incorporates the design, control and improvement of products and services with environmental sustainability.
<b>Ecosystem</b>	A dynamic complex system of plant, animal, fungal and microorganism communities and their associated non-living environment interacting as an ecological unit.
<b>Ecotourism</b>	Environmentally and socially responsible travel to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas, that conserves the environment, sustains the livelihood and well-being of the local people and involves interpretation and education
<b>Ecotourist</b>	Individuals who travel to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations.
<b>Ecotourism Activities</b>	These are activities that are designed to educate, inform, inspire learning, raise sensitivities about the environment and may include some measure of adventure or recreational experience. These activities are designed to have minimal negative impact on the environment and low or minor consumption of natural resources.
<b>Ecotourism Products and Services</b>	Goods and services which are compatible with the environment and ecology of the area, and which promote a better understanding of the natural, social, environmental and cultural history of an area.
<b>Green Construction</b>	The application and implementation of environmentally-sustainable methods, the use of alternative energy, materials and systems in the

planning, design, construction and use of man-made structures.

**Green Business**

A business functioning in a capacity where no negative impact is made on the local or global environment, the community, or the economy. A green business will also engage in forward-thinking policies for environmental concerns and policies affecting human rights.

**Habitat**

An ecological or environmental area that is inhabited by a particular species of animal, plant or other type of organism.

**Limits of Acceptable Change**

The variation that is considered acceptable in a particular component or process of the ecological character of an ecosystem without indicating change in ecological character that may lead to a reduction or loss in ecosystem health.

**National Park**

A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

**National Resources**

The living plants, animals, organisms and other biological assets within the environment, and the geologic formations, mineral deposits, renewable and non-renewable assets that are of economic value.

**Protected Area**

A geographically defined area which is designated and managed to achieve specific conservation objectives.

**Regenerative Tourism**

Regenerative tourism seeks to balance the economics of tourism with the wellbeing of communities and natural resources.

**Responsible Tourism**

All forms of tourism activity by both tourists and tourism suppliers that minimises negative social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts while generating greater economic benefits for local people and enhancing the well-being of host communities.

**Stakeholder**

Individuals who have a vested interest in development, including community members; environmental, social, and community NGOs; natural resource, planning, and government officials; hotel owners, tour operators, guides, transportation providers, and representatives from other related services in the private sector.

**Sustainable Development**

A pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs (social, cultural and economic) while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also by future

generations.

<b>Sustainable Tourism</b>	Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.
<b>Sustainable Use</b>	The use of a resource in a way or at a rate that does not lead to decline in the availability of the resource.
<b>Tourism</b>	The activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than twelve consecutive months for leisure, business and other purposes.
<b>Visitor Management</b>	A strategy to control or modify visitor behaviour to ensure protection or responsible use when visiting a (natural) attraction.

## Executive Summary

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The Ecotourism Sub-policy seeks to provide a framework to facilitate an enabling environment for the sustainable development and management of the ecotourism sector in Trinidad and Tobago. The establishment of this framework is in accordance with the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago's (GoRTT) Policy Framework (2020), the National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (Vision 2030), and the National Environmental Policy (2018) as well as the guiding principles, goal and policy statements articulated within the National Tourism Policy (2021-2030).

During the 1970s, the concept of ecotourism was established as a mechanism to preserve, protect and conserve critically endangered or fragile ecosystems and rehabilitate altered habitats and declining populations of flora and fauna. Further developments in ecotourism provided opportunities for employment and revenue generation for communities, whilst fostering a greater appreciation for nature and biodiversity through specialised education and awareness programmes and customised ecotourism experiences. In addition, organisations such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in collaboration with the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) have contributed significantly towards the development of policies and programmes aimed at championing governments to support efforts towards the promotion of ecotourism within destinations.

The National Tourism Policy (2021-2030) supports the Government's thrust to diversify the economy through tourism. In light of this, the NTP recommends a regional approach, in which tourism clusters will be established to support the development and promotion of ecotourism products and services. The National Environmental Policy (2018) states that "Trinidad and Tobago has some of the highest levels of biodiversity, being home to a diverse array of ecosystems and native species." Thus, the responsible development of ecotourism can mitigate the loss of biodiversity and degraded habitats while sustainably managing natural assets. Likewise, the National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (Vision 2030) also notes that the destination's terrestrial and marine assets can be used to support socio-economic development while natural resources can be used to enhance the ecotourism product.

The Sub-policy's vision shall be achieved through the seven (7) thematic areas, namely: 1) preservation, protection and conservation; ii) community development; iii) education and public awareness; iv) marketing and promotion; v) investment; vi) sites, attractions and facilities and vii) health, safety and security. To achieve the strategic actions outlined in the seven thematic areas, implementation of the Sub-policy shall be guided by the National Tourism Policy (2021-2030), National Environmental Policy (2018) and other relevant government policies.

The sections of the Draft Ecotourism Sub-policy are as follows:

**Section 1** provides a brief introduction to the Sub-policy and makes reference to the international frameworks for ecotourism, the global economic impact of ecotourism, definition for ecotourism and the policy development process.

**Section 2** provides an insight into the global and regional trends for ecotourism.

**Section 3** articulates the potential of ecotourism and its development in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Section 4** provides some key considerations in the development of ecotourism.

**Section 5** outlines the ecotourism policy framework, which includes the policy statement, vision, guiding principles, goal, objectives and strategic actions.

**Section 6** discusses the need for the establishment of an institutional and regulatory framework and describes the roles of the public sector and other agencies.

**Section 7** identifies the strategic approach for the implementation of the Sub-policy.

**Section 8** addresses the importance of monitoring and evaluation.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities.”<sup>1</sup> Ecotourism has been identified by the UNWTO as a mechanism in which sustainable tourism can be attained. The UNWTO advocates for the adoption of sustainable tourism practices supported by stringent planning and marketing strategies for destinations that are considering the development of ecotourism.

In the 1970s, ecotourism emerged as a new market segment to address global environmental concerns surrounding the loss of biodiversity within terrestrial and marine landscapes and encroachment and damage to ecosystems. In 1998, the United Nations Economic and Social Council designated 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE). This initiative served to build on the efforts of government organisations, international and regional agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to fulfil the aims of Agenda 21 in the promotion and protection of the environment.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore in 2012, the Rio+20 outcome document “*The Future We Want*”, UN Member States were encouraged to support the promotion of investment in sustainable tourism, including ecotourism and cultural tourism, which may include creating small and medium sized enterprises and facilitating access to finance, including through microcredit initiatives for the poor, indigenous peoples and local communities in areas with high eco-tourism potential.<sup>3</sup> In addition, UN Member States were asked to recognise the need to support sustainable tourism activities and relevant capacity-building that promote environmental awareness, conserve and protect the environment, respect wildlife, flora, biodiversity, ecosystems and cultural diversity, and improve the welfare and livelihoods of local communities by supporting their local economies and the human and natural environment as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

At the 70<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly Meeting, 2017 was designated as the International Year for Sustainable Tourism for Development (IY2017), to follow on the initiatives and outcomes emanating from the IYE 2002. The IY2017 sought to commemorate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Priority area 3: Resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change was identified as one of five areas for the promotion of tourism during the IY2017.<sup>5</sup> The following actions aligned to the ecotourism niche recommended under Priority Area 3 were commitment to reducing global carbon emissions by 5%, financing for conservation of heritage, wildlife and the environment and sustainable tourism as a driver for protecting and restoring biodiversity.

These UN initiatives supporting the thrust for sustainable tourism through eco-based tourism efforts have been adopted by several organisations, such as the Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism (MEET) and Ecotourism Australia. An examination of the ecotourism industry across

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<sup>1</sup> Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

<sup>3</sup> Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

<sup>5</sup> 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development

the Mediterranean region by The Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism (MEET)<sup>6</sup> highlighted that protected areas are key ecotourism assets to supporting conservation and protection of natural resources. Likewise, Ecotourism Australia notes that certification, consistent policies and incentives and strengthening partnerships with stakeholders can enhance the value of ecotourism products and experiences.<sup>7</sup>

It is noteworthy, that there are several benefits that can be derived from the adoption of sustainable practices to support the development of ecotourism within destinations, which include:

- Generation of revenue to support conservation of natural assets in protected areas;
- Generation of income for communities involved in ecotourism programmes and projects and ecotourism tours;
- Affixing an economic value to ecosystem assets and services;
- Increase in the number of visitors due to the promotion of sustainable and resource-efficient use of natural resources;
- Promotion of education and awareness campaigns targeting the importance of ecosystems and its associated services; and
- Destination awareness through the establishment of certification programmes and environmental standards.

Therefore, the following requirements should be considered for the development of a robust ecotourism sector:

- Detailed research and market analysis to support marketing and promotion strategies;
- Adoption of sustainable practices within ecotourism operations;
- Identification of criteria and clusters for evaluating the suitability of sites for ecotourism development and investment;
- Development of ecotourism brands within tourism regions;
- Assessment of the economic and commercial viability for ecotourism products and services;
- Coordination and engagement of key ecotourism stakeholders and service providers along the ecotourism value chain; and
- Review of regulatory and accreditation frameworks and the adoption of standards and certification.

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<sup>6</sup> The Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism (MEET) Network is an association of Protected Areas based in the Mediterranean Basin that is dedicated to strengthening conditions for the region to become an internationally recognised ecotourism destination. Formally established in 2018, MEET is born out of two EU-projects, which ran from 2013. Through these projects, the association has established a unique approach to ecotourism development that embraces local, cultural and natural values in Mediterranean Protected Areas.

<sup>7</sup> Ecotourism Australia - Ecotourism Australia (EA) is a not-for-profit, non-government organisation, established in 1991, that promotes and supports the ecotourism industry in Australia and in our near neighbouring countries through building capacity, being ecotourism's authoritative voice and actively promoting high standard tourism operations and systems.

## 1.1 Impact of COVID-19 on Ecotourism<sup>8</sup>

The global ecotourism market was estimated at US\$ 181.1 billion in 2019 and projected to reach US\$333.8 billion by 2027 at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 14.3% from 2021-2027.<sup>9</sup> However, in 2020, with COVID-19 being deemed a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), travel and tourism have been deleteriously impacted, owing in part to the imposition of travel restrictions and full border closures. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a severe decline in international travel following global lockdowns and numerous travel restrictions. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), international tourist arrivals dropped by 73% in 2020, while export revenues from tourism (international tourism receipts and passenger transport) declined by 63% in real terms. In addition, the pandemic cut tourism's direct GDP by more than half in 2020, reducing it by USD 2.0 trillion, to 1.8% of world GDP. In 2022, with the introduction of mass vaccination campaigns and the relaxing of travel restrictions, international tourist arrivals more than doubled (+130%) compared to January 2021, growing by 18 million, thus prompting the recovery of the tourism sector.

Protected areas and national parks play an important role in the conservation of flora and fauna, and through the revenue generated from ecotourism activities within these spaces, funds can be allocated to support law enforcement, monitoring of biodiversity and illegal activities and the payment of salaries. However, due to the pandemic, a number of ecotourism sites and attractions were forced to close, resulting in a significant decline in tourism revenues and numerous job losses. This was evident when Brazil closed its national parks and protected areas, which resulted in a decline of five (5) million visits in 2020 and a loss of USD \$1.6 billion in sales generated directly and indirectly in tourism around protected areas. It also meant that 55,000 permanent or temporary jobs were lost while employees and businesses experienced an expected loss of USD \$410 million.<sup>10</sup> While the pandemic presented an opportunity for the recovery of a number of endangered species, due to the lack of monitoring and surveillance, poaching activities became prevalent.

In light of the positive and negative impacts of COVID-19 on ecotourism, several destinations have adopted innovative and more resilient methodologies to support conservation efforts while promoting ecotourism sites and attractions and their respective, environmental assets.<sup>11</sup> This has resulted in an increase in number of virtual tours to protected areas, national parks or nature trails. Destination management companies and tour operators have noted that these virtual experiences have provided an opportunity for persons to gain exposure to and valuable knowledge whilst observing ecotourism attractions and products at home. For example, "virtual underwater experiences have been created by dive and snorkel tour operators in New Zealand while remote access to Mexico's forests has expanded access to nature-based tourism experiences to new audiences, providing immersive conservation experiences".<sup>12,13</sup> "Virtual 'visits' were promoted to the Grand Canyon, Yosemite and Zion national parks in the US, Mount Everest in Nepal, Phong

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<sup>8</sup> UNWTO. November 2021. The Economic Contribution of Tourism and the Impact of COVID-19

<sup>9</sup> Allied Market Research. 2021. <https://www.alliedmarketresearch.com/eco-tourism-market-A06364>

<sup>10</sup> UNWTO. 2021. Recommendations for the Transition to a Green Travel and Tourism Economy

<sup>11</sup> Dr Anne Spenceley. 2021. The Future of Nature-Based Tourism: Impacts of COVID-19 and paths to sustainability

<sup>12</sup> Booking.com (2020)

<sup>13</sup> Jack of all trades (2020) 'In Mexico's vibrant forests, locals adapt to a year without tourists'. Life euphoria



Nha-Ke Bang National Park in Vietnam, the Perito Moreno Glacier in Argentina, and Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland.”<sup>14</sup> It is expected that the attractiveness of these virtual tours will act as an incentive to encourage persons to travel to these destinations in the future.

The UNWTO in partnership with the One Planet Network noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has stimulated significant interest in the preservation of nature, the promotion of healthy environments as a barrier to future zoonotic diseases and building resilience and greener recovery efforts through conservation initiatives, climate change and the thrust towards a circular economy. In a report published by the UNWTO (2021) entitled *'Recommendations for a greener transition of the tourism sector'*, the following recommendations were noted to support a greener recovery effort<sup>15</sup>:

- Capture the value of conservation through tourism;
- Support conservation efforts through tourism;
- Invest in nature-based solutions for sustainable tourism;
- Monitor and report CO2 emissions from tourism operations;
- Accelerate the decarbonisation of tourism operations;
- Engage the tourism sector in carbon removal;
- Invest in transforming tourism value chains;
- Prioritize sustainable food approaches for circularity; and
- Shift towards a circularity of plastics in tourism.

This is further supplemented by the United Nations Roadmap which recommends the transformation of the tourism sector through six (6) priority areas<sup>16</sup>:

1. mitigating socio-economic impacts of the crisis;
2. building resilience across the tourism sector;
3. maximising technology, with innovation and digital skills;
4. promoting sustainability and green growth;
5. establishing a carbon-neutral tourism sector; and
6. fostering partnerships to responsibly ease or lift travel restrictions and work to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### **1.1.1 Regenerative Tourism**

In 2019, the concept of regenerative tourism that seeks to balance the economics of tourism with the wellbeing of communities and natural resources was introduced by the Local2030 Islands Network. This emerging concept emerged as a measure to address the impact of COVID-19 on the environment and communities within island destinations. Subsequently in 2019, a Community of Practice (CoP) was established to facilitate an exchange of information and networking opportunities among island destinations. Therefore, the concept of regenerative tourism recommends the best practices such as the adoption of nature-based and technology-based solutions, establishment of public private partnerships and community-led initiatives to address

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<sup>14</sup> Wilson, A. (2020) The Guardian: '10 of the best virtual tours of the world's natural wonders'

<sup>15</sup> One Planet Vision For A Responsible Recovery Of The Tourism Sector

<sup>16</sup> Luc Hoffman Institute: The Future of Nature Based Tourism: Impacts of COVID-19 and paths of sustainability

the impact of climate change on islands affected by water and food shortages.

## 1.2 Ecotourism Defined

It is uncertain where the concept of ecotourism was derived. However, some researchers believe that due to the plethora of definitions for ecotourism, trying to define exactly what it is may be an elusive exercise.

Several definitions were examined, for example, Goodwin (1996: 288), Ziffer (1989), Wallace and Pierre (1996), Fennel (1999), UNWTO (2001), Weaver (2008) and The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) (2015). However, common dimensions emerging were: *protection of the environment; conservation of habitats and ecosystems; sustainable development; meaningful participation of the community; low impact visitation of sites and attractions; environmentally and socially responsible travel; interpretation and education, and minimal disruption to natural and cultural setting.*

Specifically, the UNWTO definition for Ecotourism refers to forms of tourism that have the following characteristics:

- 1) All nature-based forms of tourism in which the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and appreciation of nature as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in natural areas;
- 2) It contains educational and interpretation features;
- 3) It is generally, but not exclusively organised by specialised tour operators for small groups. Service provider partners at the destinations tend to be small, locally owned businesses; and
- 4) It minimises negative impacts upon the natural and socio-cultural environment;
- 5) It supports the maintenance of natural areas which are used as ecotourism attractions by:
  - a. Generating economic benefits for host communities, organisations and authorities managing natural areas with conservation purposes;
  - b. Providing alternative employment and income opportunities for local communities; and
  - c. Increasing awareness towards the conservation of natural and cultural assets, both among locals and tourists.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) noted that while ecotourism is a niche market segment that represents tourism activities in natural areas, the growing demands for the adoption of sustainable tourism practices within destinations must be considered. The GSTC refers to sustainable tourism as sustainable practices in and by the tourism industry, it is an aspiration for the impacts of all forms of tourism – all forms of tourism should be sustainable.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Global Sustainable Tourism Council. [Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism | GSTC \(gstccouncil.org\)](https://www.gstccouncil.org/)

In view of the foregoing, and in order to craft a definition that is comprehensive and embraces international standards for ecotourism, the definition that will be adopted for the purpose of this policy will be:

***“Environmentally and socially responsible travel to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas, that conserves the environment, sustains the livelihood and well-being of the local people and involves interpretation and education”.***

### **1.3 The Policy Development Process**

In 2009, the Ministry of Tourism (presently the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts) via the Tourism Advisory Unit was requested to spearhead the development of an Ecotourism Sub-policy to address a number of challenges affecting ecotourism products and services in Trinidad and Tobago. The challenges identified included but were not limited to:

- i. Dated legislation with low fines;
- ii. Poaching within protected areas during the closure of the hunting season<sup>18</sup>;
- iii. Poaching of sea turtles during and outside of the turtle nesting season<sup>19</sup>;
- iv. Lack of data collection by community groups;
- v. Lack of financing to support ecotourism activities in communities, including monitoring activities in protected areas;
- vi. Lack of trained and certified tour guides, as well as instances of ongoing itinerant tour guiding activities;
- vii. Habitat degradation and poor land-use practices;
- viii. Influx of plastic pollution in riverine and marine areas;
- ix. Limited or poorly maintained infrastructure, such as road networks, lighting, Wi-Fi connectivity, access for persons with disabilities, etc.;
- x. Impact of climate change resulting in severe flooding, landslides and coastal erosion; and
- xi. Influx of sargassum along eastern coastal areas.

The first working draft of this Sub-policy was developed in collaboration with a three-member Working Group, comprising representatives from the Ministry of Tourism, Turtle Village Trust (TVT) and the Trinidad and Tobago Incoming Tour Operators Association (TTITOA). Subsequently, a draft Ecotourism Sub-policy was developed by the then Ministry of Tourism.

During 2010-2016, the Draft Ecotourism Sub-policy was amended and revised based on new and emerging developments within the global, regional and national context. This process involved desk research, engagement with ecotourism stakeholders and included a review of case studies, publications, and various reports by UNWTO, The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) and other agencies actively engaged in the development and promotion of ecotourism. Between the

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<sup>18</sup> Hunting Season: The closed season runs from the 1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> September, while the open season occurs from 1<sup>st</sup> October – February 28<sup>th</sup>, each year. A grace period runs during the month of March for the disposal for any prohibited meat leading into the closed season.

<sup>19</sup> The turtle nesting season occurs annually from March to August.

years 2010 - 2014, stakeholder input was provided by representatives from the former Standing Committee on the Sustainable Development of Tourism in Trinidad. Subsequently, between 2015-2016, a Tourism Road Map for Tourism Development in Trinidad (2016-2020) identified ecotourism as a supporting niche.<sup>20</sup>

The Draft Ecotourism Sub-policy was again revised and also updated to include linkages to the Government Policy Framework (2015) and the National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (Vision 2030). Following internal feedback from staff at the Ministry, additional amendments were made. In Fiscal 2017 and 2018, the former Ministry of Tourism invited tourism stakeholders and key subject-matter experts to participate in two (2) national stakeholder consultations hosted in Trinidad and Tobago respectively. Upon the successful completion of these stakeholder consultations, a further revision of the Draft Ecotourism Sub-policy was undertaken to address the feedback provided.

In 2022, the Draft Ecotourism Sub-policy was further revised and strategically aligned to the National Tourism Policy (2021-2030), Government Policy Framework (2020), National Environmental Policy (2018) and an internal Ministry's document: Towards the Acceleration of Recovery and Growth: Initiatives for the Tourism and Creative Sectors in Trinidad and Tobago (2021 – 2023) resulting from the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector. This revision process also incorporated feedback from a selected group of key subject matter experts within the tourism and environmental sectors.

## 2. Global and Regional Trends in Ecotourism

According to a report produced by Million Insights<sup>21</sup>, a market research and consulting company, the global ecotourism market size is expected to reach USD \$385.01 billion by 2028 and expand by 10.3% between 2021 to 2028. The report also stated that the increase in environmental protection and awareness, attractive travelling packages, sustainable development, and affordable prices are the primary factors that will propel the growth of the ecotourism market. The report notes that travellers are seeking more sustainable travel experiences to natural areas that strive to conserve the natural environment, utilising locally sourced food supplies and services that provide economic benefit to local communities and destinations adopting sustainable best practices and recognised certification programmes.

Key ecotourism market trends reported by Million Insights<sup>22</sup> included:

- “Central and South America are expected to register the second-fastest CAGR from 2021 to 2028 owing to the increasing environmental consciousness among tourists in Brazil and Argentina.
- By type, wildlife ecotourism held the largest share of more than 33.0% in 2020. Nature ecotourism is expected to register the second-fastest CAGR from 2021 to 2028.

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<sup>20</sup> Tourism Road Map for Tourism Development in Trinidad (2016-2020) was developed by a reconstituted Standing Committee for the Sustainable and Strategic Development of Tourism in Trinidad.

<sup>21</sup> Million Insights. 2022. Ecotourism Market Size worth \$385.01 Billion by 2028 at CAGR of 10.3%

<sup>22</sup> ibid

- The Asia Pacific region dominated the market by accounting for over 35.0% share in 2020. The rise of social media to create awareness about ecotourism in developing economies, including China and India, has positively influenced the growth of the travel and tourism industry in the region.

The report also noted that travellers favoured remote and unique hotspots where the flora, fauna, and cultural heritage are the major attractions such as India, Thailand, the Philippines, Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan. The core objectives for the key stakeholders were conserving natural resources and accommodating many tourists with minimal impact on nature and the environment.

Similarly, a study conducted by Professor Blamford and colleagues at the University of Cambridge reported that “protected areas received roughly eight billion nature-based tourism visits annually, generating approximately US\$ 600 billion per year in direct in-country expenditures and US\$ 250 billion per year in consumer surplus.”<sup>23</sup>

The Sustainable Travel Report (2022) published by Booking.com on sustainable travel in 2021 indicated an increase in the global awareness of climate change and the need for new innovative and sustainable experiences such as recycling and other waste reduction strategies. The report noted that 50% of global travellers stated that the impact of climate change has influenced their decision to make more sustainable travel choices. Fifty seven percent (57%) of travellers would feel better about staying in a particular accommodation if they knew it had a sustainable certification and 66% want to have authentic experiences that are representative of the local culture. Green products and green certifications have become a marketing tool and some countries have “mandated specific green credentials for travellers, hoteliers and restaurants either by implementing zero-plastic initiatives, promoting organic farming, opting for solar energy and other recycling methods.”

The Sustainable Travel Report (2021) published by Booking.com on sustainable travel in 2020 indicated that there was a trend among travellers who chose a destination after researching social, environmental and cultural issues and the need for greater sustainable tourism experiences. The report indicated that 58% of travellers avoided destinations if their visit contributed negatively to the environment while 49% considered social issues as a main concern in choosing a destination. Eighty three percent (83%) of global travellers think sustainable travel is vital, with 61% saying the pandemic has made them want to travel more sustainably in the future. The report also highlighted the growing demand for sustainable experiences such as green hotels and lodges. Travellers search for accommodation that uses clean energy, water management, recycling facilities and those that offer biodegradable products and zero plastic amenities. Organic farm products and fresh produce used in the preparation of local dishes along with plant-based options, which promotes less food waste has increased. Meanwhile, the Sustainable Travel Report (2018) reported natural sights impressed 60% of global travellers during their travels, which included coral reefs and rainforests.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2019 the travel and tourism industry contributed 13.9% of GDP in the Caribbean, highlighting its relative importance in the region (WTTC, 2020). The

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<sup>23</sup> Balmford, A., Green, J. M. H., Anderson, M., Beresford, J., Huang, C., Naidoo, R., Walpole, M., and Manica, A. (2015) ‘Walk on the wild side: estimating the global magnitude of visits to protected areas’.

Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) notes that the Caribbean region is renowned for its rich diversity of natural assets which includes both endemic and non-endemic species of flora and fauna, its majestic landscapes and ecosystems. Therefore, the CTO seeks to promote this rich diversity of natural assets through the dissemination of information and generation of regional awareness, improved environmental management and consumption practices and the implementation of sustainable tourism policies and programmes within the Caribbean region. At the CTO Caribbean Conference on Sustainable Tourism Development (STC - 2019) held in St Vincent and the Grenadines, presentations and discussions were delivered on “Conservation Matters: Nurturing our Environment” and “The Caring Economy: People, Planet and Profit”. These sessions highlighted the need to conserve the flora and fauna found within the Caribbean, whilst encouraging the use of sustainable and responsible tourism practices and the promotion and marketing of sustainable tourism products and experiences. These initiatives are further endorsed in the Caribbean Sustainable Tourism Policy and Development Framework (2020) which recommends the use of a participatory approach, effective planning, management and monitoring for tourism activities occurring within natural environments.

In 2014, Compete Caribbean and the Inter - American Development Bank (IDB), in collaboration with the Caribbean Centre for Competitiveness (CCfC) of the University of the West Indies (UWI) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat implemented a project entitled “Private Sector Promotion through Value Chain and Cluster Strengthening in CARIFORUM”. This project sought to assess the needs of specific industries while examining the ecotourism value chain for the Caribbean region. An assessment of the ecotourism industry was selected under the project for the Caribbean region, specifically in The Bahamas, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis and Trinidad and Tobago. The project noted that in 2012, ecotourism contributed US\$15.7 billion or 4.6% of total GDP to the Caribbean region and 647,000 jobs or 3.9% of total employment. At that time, underutilisation of technology to facilitate e-commerce transactions and online travel websites, limited education and awareness initiatives, lack of ecotourism-specific industry standards, access to funding and collaboration among stakeholders were identified as some challenges to promoting the ecotourism industry in the Caribbean.

Upon completion of the aforementioned project, the assessment revealed that ecotourism was one of the key market segments for the region due to the abundance of ecotourism products such as unique flora and fauna, rich landscapes and excursion activities such as wildlife spotting, bird watching, hiking, exploring, trekking, kayaking, and diving. The value-chain analysis demonstrated the linkages between the various ecotourism products and specific tourism services utilised by visitors within the ecotourism value chain while emphasising the need for customised ecotourism packages.

## **2.1 Global and Regional Ranking in Environmental Performance**

The environment is a fundamental component in the development of ecotourism and therefore destinations must seek to promote conservation and sustainable management of this natural asset. One global indicator of environmental performance is the Environmental Performance Index (EPI). The EPI was developed by Yale University, Centre for Environmental Law and Policy and Columbia University and is used to measure environmental policy outcomes.

According to the EPI 2022, Denmark is ranked 1<sup>st</sup> while Finland is ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 180 countries. Both destinations have secured top positions due to their commitment in addressing sustainable consumption and production, measures to support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and conservation of protected areas. Designated nature parks and marine protected areas, managed forest reserves, national heritage sites and UNESCO World Heritage Sites have contributed to their effort towards environmental conservation which are enforced by laws and legislation. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom is ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> due to their steadfast commitment and noteworthy progress to attaining climate neutrality by 2050, formulation of stringent policies and legislation to support national parks, the preservation of habitats and biodiversity and the conservation of natural resources.

Costa Rica, a popular ecotourism destination in the global market which has a rich abundance of ecosystems and high-levels of endemism of flora and fauna is ranked 68<sup>th</sup>. Costa Rica's ecotourism industry is noted as one of the most successful in the world due to its active participation and development by the private sector, expansive biodiversity (due to its geographical location) and the partnerships with the comprehensive protected area networks. In 2021, GVI Planet,<sup>24</sup> an award-winning organisation that focuses on high-impact and high-quality conservation and community development programs, ranked the Latin American country in the top five among best ecotourism destinations. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) recognised Costa Rica being the first country to turn pledges from the Paris Climate Agreement into policies to combat climate change and protect natural resources. Costa Rica has implemented the Certification for Sustainable Tourism Program, which encourages sustainable management of natural, cultural and social resources used in businesses as a means to promote sustainable tourism practices in local businesses.<sup>25</sup>

In the Caribbean, Dominica is recognised as one of the leading ecotourism destinations and according to this same index, is ranked 42<sup>nd</sup>. There are three national parks and four protected forest reserves on the island with the Morne Trois Piton, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Ministry of Tourism in Dominica created the Ecotourism Development Programme to develop sustainable tourism and ecotourism which have also been linked with the development of community-based tourism. According to the Central Statistics Office of Dominica, the most recent data showed that with the Government's focus on ecotourism, there has been a growing demand by visitors opting for small-scale accommodations. In addition, a number of hotels are adopting sustainable practices such as conservation of water, installation of green lighting, carbon footprint reduction measures, purchasing local produce and other eco-practices.

Jamaica is ranked 72<sup>nd</sup> and is one of the more popular ecotourism destinations in the Caribbean region. The island is dominated by an abundance of diverse species of avifauna, different species of bats, lizards and frogs. The Jamaican government has taken steps to ensure that their natural resources are protected by the establishment of protected areas for endangered species of flora and fauna. In addition, Jamaica is endowed with several protected areas, which include national parks, forest reserves, marine parks, special fishery conservation areas and protected national heritage sites. At the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Biodiversity Conference hosted in 2021, the government emphasised its commitment to preserving and protecting the country's natural biodiversity through the

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<sup>24</sup> GVI Planet: <https://www.gvi.co.uk/>

<sup>25</sup> Sustainable Tourism CST: Certification for Sustainable Tourism in Costa Rica

development and promotion of ecotourism as a key market segment and further supported by sustainable resource use practices.

Guyana is ranked 105<sup>th</sup> and is one of the emerging ecotourism destinations in the Caribbean. An array of ecosystems from lush rainforests, wetlands, savannahs, riverine systems and waterfalls are some of the natural attractions found in Guyana. Initiatives have been implemented to promote environmental conservation and awareness through educational programmes since more than 80% of the landscape is covered in virgin forests. In 2019, Guyana published the Green State Development Strategy: Vision 2040, a national policy which seeks to leverage the country's natural resources. The policy strives to foster sustained economic growth that is low-carbon and climate-resilient, that promotes social cohesion, good governance and careful management of finite natural resources towards a greener economy. To date, the policy has been used to guide the development of innovative ecotourism products coupled with the implementation of sustainable tourism practices to support green economic growth within the destination.

### **3. THE POTENTIAL FOR ECOTOURISM IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

The destination's plethora of rich biodiversity, ecosystems and a highly evolved tourism value chain creates an enabling environment for the development of ecotourism in Trinidad and Tobago, (refer to **Appendix I**). It is envisaged that ecotourism will be used as a tool for balancing the need for economic development while protecting and preserving the assets of the communities through activities and/or practices that are environmentally friendly and culturally sensitive whilst fostering sustainable livelihoods.

Economic development will include but not be limited to the engagement of rural communities and the utilisation of their natural resources for creating entrepreneurial opportunities such as, agro-tourism, tour guiding, tour operations, arts, craft, food and beverage services, music and culture, and accommodation. A critical component for successful ecotourism development will be capacity building in the aforementioned areas for the citizens within these communities.

The GoRTT is cognisant that any future developments of the ecotourism niche will require a strategic and responsible approach to maximise the benefits and improve the livelihood of all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Communities will be encouraged to partner with the State by engaging in conservation efforts to safeguard its biodiversity.

It is the intent of this Sub-policy to provide the guidance and a strategic framework for development of this niche, whilst addressing the challenges affecting the niche as identified in **Section 1.3**.

#### **3.1 Ecotourism's Role in Developing Trinidad and Tobago's Tourism Sector**

Trinidad and Tobago has immense potential as an ecotourism destination and current market trends



show that the USA, Canada, Germany, Scandinavia and the United Kingdom (UK) are strong source markets for ecotourism travellers, especially in the areas of bird watching (birding), turtle watching and conducting research and scientific studies (refer to **Appendix II**). Furthermore, Trinidad and Tobago is currently ranked 59<sup>th</sup> in the Environmental Performance Index (2022).<sup>26</sup> Although the GoRTT would like to use ecotourism as an impetus for diversification and economic growth, it is cognisant of issues such as site carrying capacity, and potential negative impacts on the delicate ecosystem (refer to **Appendix I**). The GoRTT will therefore ensure that development of the ecotourism niche will be guided by stringent policies, internationally acceptable standards and good practices that are environmentally friendly, culturally sensitive and sustainable.

The country is endowed with a rich array of flora and fauna and has an abundance of landscapes such as forests, marine and coastal, and freshwater habitats that differentiates it from other Caribbean ecotourism destinations (refer to **Appendix III**). Turtle watching opportunities are available at several sites in Trinidad and Tobago which are visited by five (5) species of turtles. Marine turtle conservation activities are estimated at US \$749,800.00 in Tobago due to a continuous flow of international visitor arrivals (Cazabon-Mannette et al., 2017) while turtle conservation group, Nature Seekers reported that turtle watching tours can generate TT \$380,000.00 in Trinidad (Gittens, 2021). Ornithologists and other bird-watching enthusiasts will appreciate the wide variety of species that are common to both islands. Bird-watching activities at the Caroni Swamp have generated an estimated profit worth US \$10,124.00 to the local tour operators (MacKoon, 2013). The Main Ridge Forest Reserve, Nylon Pool and Buccoo Reef provide an ideal terrestrial and marine environment, respectively with a diverse range of species for both study and recreation. The aforementioned diversity provides Trinidad and Tobago with a distinct and competitive advantage for attracting the discerning ecotourist. Some of the more recognised ecotourism sites and attractions in Trinidad and Tobago are listed at **Appendix III** and common ecotourism activities are listed at **Appendix IV**.

Recognising the importance of the country's natural and cultural assets and its contribution to the development and livelihood of the communities, the GoRTT in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, shall support the implementation of existing feasible management plans and the strengthening of protected area governance to restore and protect ecosystems, natural resources and the environment. A sustainable approach for the use of resources will be employed and methods and procedures for conserving the flora and fauna located in terrestrial and marine ecosystems will be implemented. Furthermore, stricter enforcement of conditions stipulated under the Conservation of Wildlife Act (1980) to address the issue of hunting and poaching of endangered and protected fauna will be effected. This effort shall be further endorsed through the access of data shared by community groups using the Trinidad and Tobago Biodiversity Information System (TTBIS) established by the Ministry of Planning and Development in August, 2020.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Sustainable Tourism CST: Certification for Sustainable Tourism in Costa Rica

try-rankings" [https://epi.envirocenter.yale.edu/epi-topline?country=&order=field\\_epi\\_rank\\_new&sort=asc](https://epi.envirocenter.yale.edu/epi-topline?country=&order=field_epi_rank_new&sort=asc)

<sup>27</sup> The TTBIS is a national database of biodiversity data on Trinidad and Tobago. It manages, stores, searches, retrieves published, and presents data about the country's biodiversity, their relationships, and their interaction with the environment of Trinidad and Tobago.

### 3.1.1 Ecotourism Projects and Programmes in Trinidad and Tobago

- **Improving Forest and Protected Area Management Project (IFPAM)**

Management Plans for the conservation and management of biodiversity and protected areas as well as the adoption of ecotourism practices to support the conservation and protection of protected areas were developed for Trinidad and Tobago. These management plans were developed under the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) funded-project entitled Improving Forest and Protected Area Management Project (IFPAM) implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO/UN). This four year project focused on six pilot sites:

- i. Caroni Swamp
- ii. Nariva Swamp and Coastal Zone
- iii. Matura Forest and Coastal Zone
- iv. Trinity Hills and Eastern Extension
- v. The Main Ridge Forest Reserve, Tobago
- vi. North-East Tobago Marine Protected Area, Tobago

Based on the foregoing, Cabinet approval was also granted in 2019 for the National Protected Areas Systems Plan (2018), which proposed the establishment of close to 20,000 km<sup>2</sup> of protected land and marine space in Trinidad and Tobago.<sup>28</sup> Thus, protected areas management can become a revenue generator, engage and empower local residents in the development and management of tourism products and services in their communities and protect, preserve and conserve the natural resources in those communities.

- **Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network (BES-Net)**

The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network (BES-Net) is a consortium of United Nations agencies funded by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety which seeks to address the science, policy and practice of pollination and pollinator management in Trinidad and Tobago. Local pollinators such as birds, bees, bats and butterflies, to name a few, are critical nature-based ecotourism products which attract visitors to the destination as well as contribute to pollination of food crops that are consumed in local restaurants and communities.

Thus, the BES-Net TT launched in December 2021 project shall address several issues facing pollinators in Trinidad and Tobago, which largely stem from a lack of data, lack of public awareness, insufficient information on pollinator-appropriate management and habitat destruction

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<sup>28</sup> The goal of the Plan is to identify areas within the national jurisdiction of Trinidad and Tobago which can enable the protection of the country's biodiversity, to be consistent with national policies for forests, protected areas and wildlife. The new Plan proposes the establishment of 136 Protected Areas. Of these, 92 are terrestrial/freshwater (79 in Trinidad and 13 in Tobago), 40 are coastal/marine (18 in Trinidad, 22 in Tobago) and 4 are deep-seas marine areas. In total, approximately 1,933km<sup>2</sup> (1,866km<sup>2</sup> in Trinidad, 67km<sup>2</sup> in Tobago) of the country's land mass is proposed to be terrestrial/freshwater protected areas. The proposed coastal and marine protected areas approximate to 580km<sup>2</sup> (14km<sup>2</sup> in Trinidad and 566km<sup>2</sup> in Tobago). The proposed open-ocean waters and deep-sea marine areas cover 15,600km<sup>2</sup>.

from quarrying, pollution, deforestation and poor land-use practices. The BES-Net TT project is designed to improve collaboration and coordination among scientific and local research groups, policymakers, and practitioners such as farmers, beekeepers, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders, improve scientific knowledge, strengthen policies and plans, and promote citizen science and public awareness towards conservation and effective management of pollinators and pollination services in Trinidad and Tobago.

The main project outcomes include improved scientific information on local pollinator species, development of a monitoring protocol to enable periodic assessment of the status of pollinators, recommendations towards policy improvement, and educational materials to enhance public awareness and improved actions for pollinator conservation to increase the overall population of local pollinator species.

- **Biodiversity Conservation and Agroecological Land Restoration in Productive Landscapes of Trinidad and Tobago (BIOREACH)**

This project seeks to promote biodiversity conservation, restore degraded lands and improve the livelihoods of rural communities in targeted productive landscapes (agriculture, forestry and other land uses) throughout Trinidad and Tobago.<sup>29</sup> The BIOREACH project's objective is to protect the environment by deterring land degradation and safeguarding the biodiversity required for sustainable agriculture, forestry and other land uses. The key objectives of the project are to promote biodiversity conservation, restore degraded lands, and improve livelihoods of rural communities in targeted productive landscapes of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Project will be jointly executed by the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) and the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO) with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO/UN) as the GEF implementing agency and the Environmental Policy and Planning Division of the Ministry of Planning and Development as the Project Directorate. The project budget is valued at USD 22,454,792 through a mix of grant funding from the GEF and co-financing commitments from the Government of Trinidad & Tobago. The project is expected to last four years and was officially launched on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

The Full-Scale Project has four components:

- i. Biodiversity-supportive land use planning
- ii. Forest and Agricultural landscape restoration and biodiversity protection through agroecology
- iii. Enabling environment for green, biodiversity-friendly value chain development
- iv. Knowledge management and monitoring

The Project includes an output, which seeks to *upscale ecotourism and agrotourism operators in four ecologically vulnerable areas*. The project will therefore directly invest in ecotourism as well as agro-ecotourism endeavours, which support and can further environmental and agricultural sustainability that are community based.

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<sup>29</sup> BIOREACH Information Flyer

Specifically, the Project will seek to:

- i. Identify potential ecotourism or agrotourism opportunities in each of the established clusters and/or developing tourism opportunities in agricultural areas and estates
- ii. Develop plans to promote them via linkages with the foods produced by participating farmers in the cluster
- iii. Support eco-friendly tour operators in standardisation of product
- iv. Support hotels, bed & breakfasts, and tour operators to improve quality and market access
- v. Include partnerships with the private sector to enhance knowledge of sustainability options.

- **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Man and Biosphere (MAB) - North-East Tobago Biosphere Reserve**

The North-East Tobago Biosphere Reserve is situated on a rare but largely intact Caribbean Island Ridge-to-Ocean ecosystem that includes the world's oldest tropical rainforest reserve, the Tobago Main Ridge Forest Reserve, three candidate Natural National Heritage (NNH) Sites, a multitude of proposed Cultural National Heritage (CNH) Sites, a planned marine protected area (MPA) of coral reefs and open ocean, and three Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA). The Main Ridge Forest Reserve was established in 1776 and encompasses 83,488 ha, with a marine area of 68,384 ha that is home to coral reefs and mangroves. The Biosphere Reserve has 1,774 species that have been recorded in its 19 habitat types and it is home to globally unique and endangered plants and animals including 83 International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List species and 41 endemic species as well as 15 communities with rich historical and cultural heritage in North-East Tobago which are home to approximately 10,000 residents.<sup>30</sup>

The UNESCO MAB designation in 2020 has strategically positioned the destination's unique brand and product offerings, thereby strengthening the promotion of ecotourism activities and supports the preservation and conservation of the environment, cultural and heritage offerings in nearby communities and generation of sustainable green and blue economic activities. Moreover, the North-East Biosphere Reserve will provide opportunities for international and regional collaboration through the MAB Network, stimulate revenue and sustainable employment for communities and support the sustainable use of natural resources. Ecotourism products and activities located within the North-East Tobago Biosphere Reserve range from the unique flora and fauna, hiking, bird and turtle watching, diving, yachting, agriculture and fishing.

- **Blue Flag – Tobago**

The Blue Flag programme is operated under the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), an internationally recognised eco-certification label given to beaches, marinas and sustainable boat tour operators (SBTO). In order to attain the Blue Flag Certification, beaches, marinas or sustainable boat tour operators must meet strict criteria covering environmental education, water quality, environmental management, and safety and services. Currently, there are three Blue Flag certified boat tour operator and three beaches having been designated with Blue Flag Pilot

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<sup>30</sup> North-East Tobago declared as UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

Status.<sup>31,32</sup>

- **Green Key - Tobago**

The Green Key award is the leading standard for excellence in the field of environmental responsibility and sustainable operation within the tourism industry. This prestigious eco-label represents a commitment by businesses that their premises adhere to the strict criteria set by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). A defined list of criteria is used to assess applicants seeking Green Key certification. The Green Key certification extends to attractions, conference centres, restaurants, campsites & holiday parks or accommodations (hotels & hostels and small accommodations). Currently, there are five (5) Green Key certified small accommodation facilities.<sup>33</sup>

### **3.2 Ecotourism Policy Context**

The GoRTT is committed to facilitating the diversification of the economy and has acknowledged that tourism is one of the pillars that can enable and support this thrust. Trinidad and Tobago's multifaceted and multidimensional tourism product, including ecotourism has been expounded in the National Tourism Policy (2021-2030), Government Policy Framework (2020), National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (Vision 2030), and the National Environmental Policy (2018) (refer to **Appendix V**).

The National Tourism Policy (2021-2030) seeks to develop ecotourism at the micro level as a supporting niche for tourism development in Trinidad and Tobago. Thus, the establishment of ecotourism clusters and a regional approach shall be adopted for the development and enhancement of ecotourism in Trinidad and Tobago. The Government Policy Framework (2020) identifies specific focus on coastal and marine tourism, by supporting conservation of marine and coastal resources and ecosystems and earmarking Tobago as a Green Tourism Destination building on its ecological and biodiverse resources. Likewise, the National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (Vision 2030) – Theme V: Placing the Environment at the Centre of Social and Economic Development: Goal 5 – Natural resource management are inherently linked to the development of biodiversity and its natural resources. Sub-section 5.4 – Improve the use of natural resources to enhance the ecotourism product was specified as a key strategic initiative for implementation. The National Environmental Policy (2018) – Priority II; 2.8 acknowledges that ecotourism as a biodiversity-related industry can be used as a mechanism to mitigate the loss and degradation of biodiversity in Trinidad and Tobago.

### **3.3 Cluster Development Approach to Ecotourism**

A tourism cluster is defined as a concentration of companies, institutions, authorities, supporting services, infrastructure, attractions and resources, interconnected in tourism and related activities within a specific geographic space. The cluster is characterised by high quality facilities and

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<sup>31</sup> Tobago Boat Operator achieves the international Blue Flag award

<sup>32</sup> International Blue Flag Pilot Status for 3 Tobago Beaches

<sup>33</sup> Green Key TT

services, strategic linkages between productive chains, companies' exchanges and networks, and social cohesion and interdependence among the actors to maximise the destination's competitive advantage. It is usual for those participating in a cluster to display a symbiotic relationship of collaboration and cooperation, however each organisation remains competitive to achieve individual benefits for all visitors.<sup>34</sup>

The cluster development approach for ecotourism will comprise well-developed ecotourism assets and services that lend support to the visitor experience. These ecotourism assets may include but are not limited to protected areas or national parks, wetlands, coral reefs, rainforests, hiking and biking trails, and waterfalls. The services provided to support the ecotourism niche are built into the tourism value chain, which includes community groups, certified tour guides and operators as well as food and beverage, accommodation and transportation service providers. In Trinidad, the Sangre Grande and Chaguaramas Regions and in Tobago, the Main Ridge Forest Reserve/North East Tobago are good examples of well-developed ecotourism clusters within the destination. Specific details on the ecotourism sites and attractions and activities that are examples of ecotourism clusters mentioned above are noted in **Appendix III and IV** and provided within the National Tourism Policy (2021-2030).

Additionally, the ecotourism cluster that provides a holistic visitor experience should encompass elements of environmental and responsible best tourism practices, public education and awareness, sustainable infrastructure, immersive digital technologies and interpretive signage. It should be supported by partnerships and community involvement through the adoption of a participatory approach and facilitating opportunities for co-management of ecotourism sites and attractions, the inclusion of other tourism related product offerings (e.g. visits to sites and attractions, locally produced and retail of food and beverage, local art and craft products and sustainable products, etc.), and the sustainable use of resources, among other elements.

Development of the ecotourism cluster will involve a comprehensive mapping exercise to identify key stakeholders/cluster agents to provide a clear indication of the entire value chain and ecotourism ecosystem.

### **3.4 Key Success Factors**

The GoRTT recognises that there are key factors that will drive the success of the ecotourism sector in Trinidad and Tobago. These include:

- i. An appropriate form and scale of development which takes into consideration carrying capacity, limits of acceptable change, the environment and its natural resources;
- ii. Full engagement and participation of the community and key stakeholders;
- iii. A safe, secure and healthy environment;
- iv. Monitoring and enforcement of legislation in relation to the conservation and preservation of the environment and compliance with international standards and guiding principles;
- v. Authentic ecotourism product and services;

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<sup>34</sup> Trinidad and Tobago National Tourism Policy (2021-2030) developed by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts, 2020

- vi. An attractive and competitive investment portfolio;
- vii. Highly trained and knowledgeable service professionals; and
- viii. A unique, highly differentiated and competitive ecotourism product.

## **4. KEY CONSIDERATIONS IN DEVELOPING ECOTOURISM**

### **4.1 Environmental Legislation and Practices**

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts advocates for the utilisation of best practices for the development, operation and use of all ecotourism sites and attractions in Trinidad and Tobago. Through the collaborative effort of key Government agencies and stakeholders, mechanisms will be put in place to ensure adherence to internationally accepted and agreed upon best practices, standards and guidelines. Any ecotourism development that is being contemplated will be guided by the relevant legislation, regulation, conventions and policies. These include but are not limited to the Environmental Management Act Chapter 35:05 (Act 3 of 2000), the Certificate of Environmental Clearance (CEC) Rules 2001, National Environmental Policy (2018), National Protected Areas Systems Plan for Trinidad and Tobago (2018) and other applicable policies, which are listed in **Appendix V**. Comprehensive environmental assessments will be conducted to determine any long-term impacts of proposed initiatives and permit improved decision-making, planning and management. The current laws and legislation relating to the environment will be enforced through increased patrols and surveillance at sites and attractions.

There are several categories of legally protected areas in Trinidad and Tobago which fall under various pieces of legislation. Protected areas include wildlife sanctuaries, prohibited areas, forest reserves, environmentally sensitive areas, and protected marine areas. Similarly, conservation efforts will be supported to protect and rehabilitate beaches, wetlands, coral reefs and savannas as well as the protected, endangered and endemic species of flora and fauna which inhabit these ecosystems. Protecting the country's natural resources from destruction and degradation is of prime importance when considering any development plans for ecotourism, therefore environmental impact assessments must be conducted to assess the impact of tourism development on the environment.

Key practices including recycling initiatives to reduce the quantity of litter at sites and attractions and use of alternative energy sources, contribute to the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The identification and implementation of buffer zones at protected areas and the identification of potential threats and mitigation systems to deal with these threats, such as fires and invasive species must be given a high priority. Other notable practices include conducting scientific research and biological surveys, monitoring air and water quality parameters against existing international standards, educating domestic and international ecotourists on the importance of ecosystems; and providing capacity building training to communities.

Regarding environmentally sensitive areas with known populations of environmentally sensitive species such as nesting sea turtles and hatchlings, it is a recommended good practice to apply limits on the number of persons allowed access and schedule times that visitors can enter the site. In addition, areas can be designated as restricted and appropriate signage installed to inform visitors

of activities that are permissible or not. Visitor management plans should be developed for each site and only certified tour guides or a well-trained local interpreter should be allowed access for the provision of tour guiding services.

The execution of good environmental practices is sometimes hindered by the lack of enforcement of legislation and prescribed penalties. This may at times be due to limited resources to facilitate monitoring and enforcement, for example the availability of game wardens and supporting ICTs and the regulation of proper waste management. In light of these and other factors, the GoRTT will advocate and enforce legislation pertaining to the environment through the relevant implementation agencies.

## **4.2 Community relationships**

This policy acknowledges that the community must be meaningfully engaged in the planning, development, management of its natural assets and therefore supports community-based ownership of tourism products and services. Communities will need to understand how any planned development will affect their livelihood, their culture and environment, how they can become involved in conservation and protection of the biodiversity and the benefits that will be afforded to them and future generations.

The level of local involvement and the intensity of its participation will depend on many factors such as the resources, skills and know-how of the community, as well as the readiness of their members to accept any planned development in the community. Consideration of these issues at the outset can determine whether or not the planned development will advance and lead to successful outcomes. Close partnerships must be fostered with the community and an avenue made available for its contribution to any planned ecotourism development.

Critical to the building and strengthening of the capacity of the community is the provision of training and development programmes to upgrade the skills of the residents. Programme components that infuse critical thinking, problem solving and innovation will be developed for the community so that individuals will be equipped to commence their own businesses. In addition, private tourism businesses will be encouraged to employ local persons at their enterprises.

Co-management partnerships and agreements will be explored with those organisations or agencies in the communities responsible for the management of the natural resource. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and similar type establishments that focus on the role of women, children and rural groups and the protection of their rights will be aided, where possible, in accessing resources needed to execute ecotourism initiatives.

It is notable that within the last five years, the CTO has increased its focus on developing the capacity of its member states to foster Community-Based Tourism (CBT) experiences. This has been evident in its partnership with organisations such as Compete Caribbean Partnership Facility (CCPF) under the *Innovation for Tourism Expansion and Diversification* project. The CCPF's core objective is to enable more Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to generate increased revenue from tourism, and generally, businesses in communities fall within this category. As part of the project, a toolkit was commissioned, comprising five (5) tools: a tourism assets inventory,



a CBT diagnostic tool, a CBT enterprise handbook, the Euromonitor's Consumer Research conducted in the American Market, and CBT profiles. Member states have been able to access these tools to inventory their CBT assets, assess their readiness for CBT, build business capacity in communities, develop and promote their products and meet consumer demands. Therefore, these tools will be shared with all stakeholders engaged in ecotourism activities, to enhance their product offerings and improve the quality of their service operations.

### **4.3 Marketing and Promotion**

Trinidad and Tobago will be positioned as a destination with a highly competitive ecotourism product. The destination's marketing message will inform the traveller of the area's ecology, culture, how to respect the sensitivities of the local community, its product offering, and the environment.

The internet and social media are pivotal to the marketing and promotional function and present significant potential for reach and message delivery. Booking of ecotourism activities can be effortlessly managed via the internet, and information technology based Destination Management Systems can seamlessly link demand and supply more efficiently. In spite of the growing popularity of the internet, the use of traditional channels should not be discounted. Specialist media, tour operators and familiarisation trips support and complement the use of new media.

Whilst marketing may centre on a profound and attractive message in the right medium, the importance of 'word of mouth' cannot be denied. The majority of persons visiting a destination must have been impacted at some point by feedback from a past visitor and therefore it is critical that marketing efforts include gauging feedback and maintaining post visitor contact. This in turn can engender the creation of committed ecotourists and ambassadors for conservation at the destination.

In marketing and promoting the destination, a range of demographic and economic segments including the mid to high end ecotourists will be targeted. This will allow the destination to benefit from greater spend per traveller as well as provide opportunities to develop products, facilities and services that meet higher standards. Overall, emphasis will be placed on ensuring that international standards and practices for preservation, conservation and management of the environment are upheld as the more discerning traveller will have higher expectations at the destination.

### **4.4 Investment**

In keeping with the National Tourism Policy (2021-2030) framework to attract investment domestically, regionally and internationally, the GoRTT will facilitate and monitor the administration of the Tourism Development Act (TDA), 2000. As such, the GoRTT will ensure that owners/operators of new and existing approved ecotourism-related projects will have access to development incentives. This access will be granted once the owners/operators have satisfied the criteria prescribed by the Tourism Development Act (TDA), 2000: Chapter 87:22; Part 2.

In addition, ecotourism accommodation property owners can access incentives through the Tourism Accommodation Upgrade Project (TAUP), which provides partial reimbursement to

upgrade works conducted on the interior or exterior of properties. The Government, through the Ministry of Finance, established another tourism incentive programme for tourism and tourism-related businesses, referred to as the Government Loan Guarantee Programme (GLG). This programme is managed by the Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Business Development Limited (TTTBDL) and was established to manage the Tobago Tourism Development Fund (TTDF). **Appendix VI** provides details of the incentives offered.

The Policy acknowledges that tourism operators and service suppliers have the option to access other forms of incentives as outlined in the Ministry of Trade and Industry's Investment Policy Statement and Compendium of Incentives. In addition, there are a number of sources for grant funding from public/private sector agencies such as the Ministry of Planning and Development – The Green Fund, the Ministry of Sport and Community Development - The Community Development Fund and international agencies such as the United Nations Development Fund Programme - Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme (SGP), and the European Union - European Development Fund (EDF).

In anticipation of the growth and development of this niche, the GoRTT will review the existing suite of incentives with a view to making it more attractive and competitive to stimulate and encourage investment in this niche. Promotion and facilitation of investment for ecotourism will be supported by relevant research, market intelligence and analysis.

#### **4.5 Health, Safety and Security**

A destination's appeal and image can be negatively affected if it is perceived as an unsafe one. Hence, the GoRTT, will prioritise the safety and security of local and foreign visitors, as well as safeguard the ecotourism assets from vandalism and destruction especially those situated in remote areas. Operators will be required to be trained in First Aid, situation awareness and have the appropriate insurance coverage to conduct their activities. Signage and other safety and security collateral will be utilised to inform visitors about safety precautions and measures that should be adopted at the site/attraction. In addition, emergency preparedness and contingency plans will be established for the local tourism sector.

Similarly, given the advent of vector borne diseases (e.g. COVID-19, Dengue, Chikungunya, Zika and others), additional safety measures to protect the health of visitors and locals alike will be employed. The services of the relevant authorities will be utilised to reduce the incidences of contracting these illnesses and to educate the general public of their role in the reduction and eradication of this threat. In this regard, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts, the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) and the Ministry of Health (MOH) have partnered with the Caribbean Public Health Authority (CARPHA) to improve this country's capacity to provide cost-effective and quality health, food safety and environmental sanitation solutions to Health, Safety and Environmental Sanitation (HSE) threats impacting on sustainable tourism in the country. Compliance with all mandatory health and safety legislation and regulations will be enforced.

In order to address the issue of crime and other anti-social behaviour, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts and the Ministry of National Security (MNS) are collaborating to implement a Tourism Oriented Policing Services (TOPS) unit in Trinidad. This unit, which already exists in

Tobago, comprises Police Officers who are specifically trained to assist and protect visitors against crime and other anti-social behaviour. In addition, an initiative focussing on visitor relations and management will be developed to enhance the visitors' experience at the destination.

## 4.6 Climate Change Resilience

In November 2021, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) launched the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism at COP26, Glasgow. The Glasgow Declaration was developed within the framework of the Sustainable Tourism Programme of the One Planet Network. The main objective is to raise the climate ambition of tourism stakeholders and secure strong actions to support the global commitment to halve emissions by 2030 and reach net zero before 2050. Transforming tourism through climate action is recognised as a crucial step to boost the sector's competitiveness, sustainability and resilience.

The Glasgow Declaration<sup>35</sup> seeks to:

- Define a clear and consistent sector-wide message and approach to climate action in the coming decade, aligned with the wider scientific framework and urgency to act now.
- Outline the pathways and specific actions that will accelerate tourism's ability to transform tourism and achieve net zero emissions as soon as possible.
- Encourage signatories across the tourism industry to demonstrate their public support for scaling up the sector's response to the climate emergency.

As a result, five (5) shared pathways were established to ensure climate action is aligned across the tourism sector. The five pathways are:

- Measure - Measure and disclose all travel and tourism-related emissions.
- Decarbonise - Set and deliver science-based targets to accelerate tourism's decarbonisation.
- Regenerate - Restore and protect ecosystems, supporting nature's ability to draw down carbon, as well as safeguarding biodiversity, food security, and water supply.
- Collaborate - Share evidence of risks and solutions with all stakeholders and our guests, and work together to ensure our plans are as effective and co-ordinated as possible.
- Finance - Ensure organisational resources and capacity are sufficient to meet objectives set out in climate plans.

The Climate Change Policy (2011) and the National Environmental Policy (2018) of Trinidad and Tobago acknowledges that the country is particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change such as those related to temperature increases, changes in precipitation and sea level rise. As an island destination, Trinidad and Tobago is susceptible to negative impacts on its coastal and marine environments, its key assets that are vital for the ecotourism niche.

In addition, the NTP (2021-2030) of Trinidad and Tobago also acknowledges that climate change will have negative impacts on the tourism industry. Section 4.15 of the NTP (2021-2030) identifies

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<sup>35</sup> Glasgow Declaration: Climate Action in Tourism

key policy statements to address the impacts of climate change in the tourism sector. Given that these policies have noted the far-reaching impacts of this phenomenon, it is imperative that strategies involving ecosystem-based approaches and digital technologies are developed to address the potential effects that may arise due to this phenomenon and to build climate change resilience whilst safeguarding the integrity of ecotourism assets in the destination.

Climate mitigation and adaptation planning along with climate financing will be a core response to the anticipated changes. The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts will seek the assistance of the relevant appointed agency to engage in systematic observations, research and climate change modelling. Strategies will be developed to improve the resilience of natural biophysical systems and to address projected climate change impacts through the adoption of international best practice methods and technologies. Research will be undertaken to monitor climate change impacts at the designated ecotourism sites and attractions. Mitigation and adaptation strategies will then be designed based on the threats identified.

## **5. ECOTOURISM POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The development and growth of ecotourism in Trinidad and Tobago will be facilitated by GoRTT Policy Framework (2020) as well as the National Tourism Policy (NTP, 2021-2030), the National Development Strategy 2016–2030 (Vision 2030) and the National Environmental Policy (2018). The NTP, inter alia, emphasises responsible development with due care for the historic, natural and cultural resources in both underdeveloped and environmentally sensitive areas of the country. Additionally, ecotourism development will be aligned with regional and international sustainable tourism guidelines and principles. Moreover, ecotourism activities will be executed in accordance with the country's existing policies and legislative frameworks governing the protection of biological diversity and conservation of the environment.

### **5.1 Policy Statement**

The development of ecotourism will serve as a conduit to enhance the economic and socio-cultural well-being of the citizens, while protecting and promoting the conservation of ecosystems, habitats and landscapes. This shall be pursued in accordance with existing legislation, physical environmental policies and international environmental standards and guiding principles.

### **5.2 Vision**

Trinidad and Tobago as a model ecotourism destination recognised for its commitment to preservation and conservation of its natural resources while delivering high quality, authentic ecotourism experiences.

### **5.3 Guiding Principles**

The principles as espoused by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) are adopted and adapted for guiding the development, management and promotion of ecotourism in Trinidad and

Tobago:<sup>36</sup>

- i) Minimise physical, social, behavioural, environmental and psychological impacts;
- ii) Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect;
- iii) Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts;
- iv) Provide direct financial benefits for conservation;
- v) Protect and enhance natural resources;
- vi) Generate financial benefits for both local people and private industry;
- vii) Deliver memorable interpretative experiences to visitors that help raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climates;
- viii) Design, construct and operate low-impact facilities; and
- ix) Recognise the rights and spiritual beliefs of the Indigenous People in the community (where applicable) and work in partnership with them to create empowerment.

## **5.4 Goal**

The goal of the Ecotourism Sub-policy is to foster the responsible consumption and sustainable development of the ecotourism niche.

## **5.5 Objectives**

The Sub-policy objectives incorporate seven (7) thematic areas: i) preservation, protection, and conservation; ii) community development; iii) education and public awareness; iv) marketing and promotion; v) investment; vi) sites, attractions and facilities; and vii) health, safety and security. The specific objectives are:

- i) To preserve, protect and conserve the biodiversity and natural resources within regions designated for ecotourism development;
- ii) To empower, develop and strengthen the capacity of communities to manage their natural resources and capitalise on the benefits derived from ecotourism initiatives;
- iii) To educate and raise environmental awareness and biodiversity conservation within the destination;
- iv) To market and promote Trinidad and Tobago as a premier ecotourism destination for visitors;
- v) To provide incentives and stimulate investment opportunities aligned to the development of the ecotourism niche;

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<sup>36</sup> Ecotourism: Principles, Practices & Policies for Sustainability. United Nations Environment Programme and The International Ecotourism Society revised, (January 2015)

- vi) To enhance and upgrade ecotourism sites, attractions and facilities to meet international standards; and
- vii) To provide an environment that is healthy, safe and secure.

## **5.6 Strategic Actions**

### **5.6.1 Preservation, Protection and Conservation**

A critical component of a destination pursuing ecotourism is its natural resources. Collaboration with the relevant agencies to preserve, protect and conserve the natural resources at the destination is pertinent to the sustainability of this niche. The Government will:

- i) Support and monitor the enforcement of legislation and regulations where necessary for protected areas inclusive of all natural resources (terrestrial and marine ecosystems, flora and fauna) designated for tourism development;
- ii) Reinforce the adoption of sustainable tourism practices such as energy, water, and waste conservation; and the disposal and use of biodegradable products at ecotourism sites and attractions, events and festivals and at accommodation and meeting venues;
- iii) Collaborate with the Forestry Division, Environmental Management Authority and other relevant authorised agencies to enforce fines and penalties, pollution charges or user fees on activities that negatively impact the environment and natural resources;
- iv) Adopt environmental practices that reduce the carbon footprint of goods and services associated with the ecotourism value chain and the overall tourism sector;
- v) Advocate residents to preserve, conserve, protect and manage ecotourism assets in keeping with existing environmental laws and regulations;
- vi) Promote the conduct of biological surveys of natural resources and habitats to determine and monitor carrying capacities and limits of acceptable change; and
- vii) Support projects, programmes and activities, especially local cultural traditions and indigenous practices that contribute to the conservation of natural resources and habitat regeneration.

### **5.6.2 Empowerment and Capacity Building**

The ability of the community to participate in ecotourism in a meaningful way will require supporting and facilitating structures to be in place. In addition, given the negative impact on climate change on the tourism sector and local communities, the involvement of communities in supporting mitigation and adaptation strategies will be required. The Government will:

- i) Engage in capacity building and skills training that improve business operations, engenders sustainable employment and increase the flow of benefits to the community;
- ii) Include the community as a key stakeholder in the decision-making process for the development of the ecotourism sector;
- iii) Encourage communities to adopt the five (5) pathways recommended under the Glasgow Declaration - Climate Action in Tourism<sup>37</sup>;
- iv) Strengthen linkages in the decision-making process among state agencies, communities, NGOs and the private sector through the establishment of committees and other collaborative mechanisms;
- v) Advocate for a percentage of local persons, particularly women, youths and indigenous persons from the community to be employed at private eco-tourism related businesses;
- vi) Establish mechanisms to support micro, small and medium business owners in accessing finance and funding from international and local donor agencies; and
- vii) Render technical support and advice to communities to organise themselves into independent, communally owned and run enterprises.

### **5.6.3 Education and Public Awareness**

The engagement of the public through sensitisation and public awareness programmes will lead to a more informed public, support for protection and preservation of the environment. The Government will:

- i) Promote environmental awareness that stimulates positive changes in environmental attitudes and halt the loss of biodiversity through educational programmes, research initiatives and scientific studies;
- ii) Collaborate with academia and other institutions of learning to educate the community on its rich biodiversity, its value and ecological significance in the community;
- iii) Conduct sensitisation programmes that are aimed at appreciating and preserving local customs, traditions and practices in communities seeking to develop the ecotourism niche;
- iv) Partner with institutions, agencies, NGOs and other organisations to offer internships and scholarships in tourism with an emphasis on the environment;

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<sup>37</sup> The Glasgow Declaration is a catalyst for increased urgency about the need to accelerate climate action in tourism and to secure strong actions and commitment to support the global goals to halve emissions over the next decade and reach Net Zero emissions as soon as possible before 2050.

- v) Support ongoing training and certification programmes for guides and operators providing interpretative services in ecotourism related activities;
- vi) Encourage the participation in and training of public officers in environmental and ecotourism development programmes;
- vii) Provide information and literature pertaining to ecotourism at visitor interpretation centres, ecotourism sites and attractions, accommodation facilities, libraries, schools and high traffic areas; and
- viii) Facilitate the adoption of digital technologies to disseminate ecotourism information via online platforms such as websites and social media pages and the development of virtual and augmented experiences.

#### **5.6.4 Research, Marketing and Promotion**

The destination will be positioned as one that is unique, diverse and offers high quality, authentic ecotourism experiences. As such, a range of marketing and promotional tools will be employed to transmit the message to the international visitor. The Government will:

- i) Improve the collection, range, quality and comparability of tourism data to inform the development of the ecotourism niche and by extension the tourism sector;
- ii) Utilise digital technologies to conduct market research, gather intelligence and perform analytics to develop and expand the ecotourism niche;
- iii) Design and implement targeted marketing strategies to retain and reclaim its share of existing source markets and adopt measures to penetrate new markets for the future expansion of Trinidad and Tobago's ecotourism products and services;
- iv) Utilise the regional management approach<sup>38</sup> as a mechanism for the promotion of authentic ecotourism experiences, reflecting responsible and sustainable lifestyle practices, customs and culture of the community;
- v) Forge strategic partnerships among ministries, agencies and community ecotourism service providers/suppliers to transmit the ecotourism message nationally;
- vi) Forge strategic alliances with regional and international media to highlight ecotourism practices and initiatives that emphasise conservation and protection of endemic and endangered species and protected areas; and
- vii) Support the development and execution of ecotourism marketing plans for key ecotourism products such as, sea turtles and bird watching activities, as well as

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<sup>38</sup> The regional management approach is recommended by the revised National Tourism Policy (NTP) 2021-2030. The approach seeks to effectively manage tourism development and business activity within the five (5) regional tourism provinces in Trinidad and two (2) in Tobago.



protected areas.

### **5.6.5 Investment**

The regional management approach for the development of ecotourism within the destination is ideally positioned to attract private sector investors to support the protection and management of ecotourism resources. The Government will:

- i) Encourage investments that contribute to the preservation and promotion of the culture and heritage of communities and provide protection of its natural spaces;
- ii) Support ecotourism projects such as the construction and development of eco-lodges and other accommodation facilities, initiatives and ventures that promote environmental conservation, reduce pressure on critical ecological resources and engage in wise use of biodiversity;
- iii) Facilitate ecotourism projects that produce economic benefits for the community, and promote and support linkages with other sectors in the economy; and
- iv) Provide an enabling environment, inclusive of incentives, for investment by local, regional and international interest groups in green businesses, environmentally-friendly accommodation and ecotourism projects.

### **5.6.6 Sites, Attractions and Facilities**

Well maintained and informative sites, attractions and facilities enhance the visitor experience especially when aligned with international standards and best practices. The Government will:

- v) Establish ecotourism clusters through the adoption of the regional management approach for tourism development and supporting infrastructure;
- vi) Promote the use of energy efficient and renewable energy sources as well as the installation of electric vehicle charging ports at visitor information centres and parking areas situated at ecotourism sites and attractions;
- vii) Require operators to establish visitor management strategies to address carrying capacity at ecotourism sites and attractions;
- viii) Promote the development, upgrade and enhancement of suitable sustainably-built ecotourism-related facilities through collaborative efforts with key stakeholders;
- ix) Encourage the adoption of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and ecosystem-based approaches at ecotourism sites and attractions to support adaptation efforts against climate change;
- x) Benchmark destinations with internationally acceptable and environmentally-friendly

standards and certification for ecotourism sites and attractions;

- xi) Utilise digital technologies as a tool for monitoring the use and maintenance of ecotourism facilities and amenities;
- xii) Ensure that environmental impact assessments are conducted for all ecotourism related projects and that strict mitigation measures are enforced wherever applicable;
- xiii) Ensure the rehabilitation and maintenance of nature trails, and the installation of trailheads and appropriate signage;
- xiv) Prescribe management plans and operational guidelines for ecotourism sites and attractions; and
- xv) Advocate for the development of sites, attractions and facilities and integrate into existing ones the provision of access for the differently abled persons, including wheelchair access (where feasible).

### **5.6.7 Health, Safety and Security**

The perception of safety and security at a destination influences its international reputation. A destination that prioritises health, safety and security will enhance its appeal and positively impact visitor experience. The Government will:

- i) Implement public health and sanitation programmes at all ecotourism sites and attractions;
- ii) Support the development of health care facilities that are easily accessible and available at ecotourism sites and attractions;
- iii) Take appropriate action to prevent and minimise the spread of communicable diseases, especially those that have a grave impact on the tourism sector;
- iv) Adopt and implement measures that address visitors' safety and prevent harassment of visitors while also protecting the interests of the local community and the ecosystem at ecotourism sites and attractions;
- v) Implement multi-hazard risk management strategies in collaboration with relevant agencies at ecotourism sites and attractions; and
- vi) Develop and implement a public education and awareness campaign to educate the general public, especially communities offering ecotourism experiences, about their role in the reduction and eradication of threats to health, safety and security.

## **6. INSTITUTIONAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

### **6.1 Roles and functions of key agencies**

Efficient and flexible co-management arrangements and similar structures will be established to allow State agencies which have intersecting responsibilities, to work together harmoniously for the development of ecotourism within the identified ecotourism regions. Such mechanisms shall articulate clear roles and responsibilities of Ministries as well as executing and regulatory agencies.

The roles and functions of the State agencies responsible for executing the goal and objectives of the Sub-policy are listed below:

#### **6.1.1 The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts (MTCA)**

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts (MTCA) is the government agency charged with overseeing the development of tourism, culture and the arts in Trinidad and Tobago. Its purpose is to formulate tourism and cultural policy and strategy and to guide, regulate, oversee and foster the sustainable development of the tourism and cultural sectors. The principal responsibilities of the Ministry as it relates to this Sub-policy are:

- (i) Providing leadership and strategic direction in the development and expansion of ecotourism;
- (ii) Collaborating with relevant agencies, organisations, Ministries, associations and community groups on matters related to ecotourism ;
- (iii) Monitoring the implementation of the Ecotourism Sub-policy and ensuring that strategies and programmes are in sync with the National Tourism Policy (2021-2030);
- (iv) Utilising the provision of environmental legislation, acceptable and recognised practices and principles to guide ecotourism development; and
- (v) Facilitating and monitoring the administration of incentives for ecotourism products and related services in the Tourism Development Act, Chapter 87:22.

#### **6.1.2 The Tobago House of Assembly (THA)**

In accordance with the Tobago House of Assembly Act, 1996, the THA is responsible for tourism and environmental development in Tobago. The Division of Tourism, Culture, Antiquities and Transportation and the Division of Food Security, Natural Resources, the Environment and Sustainable Development are the main implementing agents of the THA. The THA's responsibilities as it relates to this Sub-policy include but are not limited to:

- (i) Formulating specific plans for the ecotourism sector;

- (ii) Conducting ecotourism market research for Tobago;
- (iii) Marketing and promotion of the ecotourism sector in Tobago;
- (iv) Promoting investment opportunities in ecotourism in Tobago;
- (iv) Monitoring and evaluation of the ecotourism niche in Tobago;
- (v) Maintaining ecotourism sites, facilities and attractions in Tobago;
- (vi) Implementing standards for the development and maintenance of ecotourism infrastructure at sites and attractions in Tobago;
- (vii) Administering the provisions of the Tourism Development Act, Chap. 87:22 in respect of ecotourism investment in Tobago; and
- (viii) Collaborating with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts, the Tourism Trinidad Limited (TTL), the Tobago Tourism Agency Limited (TTAL), the Ministry of Planning and Development (MPD), Environmental Management Authority (EMA) and other relevant agencies with regard to the development and promotion of ecotourism.

### **6.1.3 Tourism Trinidad Limited (TTL) and Tobago Tourism Agency Limited (TTAL)**

These agencies will conduct market research, implement policy, develop, market and promote tourism locally, regionally and internationally. In executing this Sub-policy, it is anticipated that the key roles of these agencies will be to:

- (i) Develop and enhance ecotourism facilities/amenities in Trinidad and Tobago, respectively and provide support to the MTCA and the THA in the same;
- (ii) Develop and implement a targeted and robust marketing and promotion campaign to enhance the image and profile of ecotourism clusters within regions across Trinidad and Tobago;
- (iii) Implement national, regional and international standards and certification for ecotourism development in collaboration with relevant agencies;
- (iv) Promote ecotourism investment opportunities in Trinidad and Tobago;
- (v) Administer provisions of the Tourism Development Act, Chap. 87:22, in respect of ecotourism investment; and

- (vi) Measure the impact of ecotourism initiatives with respect to key industry objectives.

## **6.2 Roles of Stakeholders**

The involvement of stakeholders in the planning and development of the tourism sector is critical to its sustainability. The GoRTT shall pursue mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholder groups in an effort to realise the full potential of the country's tourism sector, and to increase the benefits of ecotourism in local communities and the country as a whole. The GoRTT's role remains a facilitating one, while the CSOs, NGOs, CBOs and the Private Sector have implementing roles. Some of the key stakeholders identified in the development of ecotourism are indicated hereunder:

### **6.2.1 The Ministry of Planning and Development (MPD)**

The Ministry of Planning and Development (MPD) is responsible, inter alia, for the National Framework for Sustainable Development of Trinidad and Tobago and has the specific mandate for the planning and administration of the National Spatial Development Strategy for Trinidad and Tobago. The MTCA will therefore collaborate with the MPD and its associated divisions and agencies to ensure effective allocation and optimal use of land resources when planning for ecotourism development and the implementation of projects promoting the development of the ecotourism niche. In addition, the Green Fund Division of the MPD has a critical role to play by providing funding opportunities to stakeholders who are pursuing ecotourism projects that address environmental protection, conservation and capacity building in communities.

#### **6.2.1.1 The Environmental Management Authority (EMA)**

The Environmental Management Authority (EMA) is responsible for establishing and implementing policies for the effective management and wise use of the environment, consistent with the objectives of the Environmental Management Act Chapter 35:05 of 2000. The MTCA will work with the EMA to ensure that ecotourism development is in accordance with environmental laws and good practices. The MTCA will require that ecotourism sites and developments obtain the relevant approvals from the EMA and are established without negative environmental impacts on Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Species. The Ministry will collaborate with the EMA on projects and workshops that sensitise communities on the value of biodiversity and the fragile relationship that exists between the activities of the communities and the environment. The Ministry will provide institutional knowledge and technical advice to support the implementation of protected area management plans through the various Management Advisory Committees (MACs).

#### **6.2.1.2 The Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA)**

The Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA) is a multi-disciplinary marine and environmental research organisation established by Act of Parliament (Chap. 37:01 of the Revised Laws of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, as amended by Act No. 13 of 1990). The Ministry will collaborate with

the IMA on projects relating to marine-based ecotourism, marine spatial planning and coastal zone planning, blue economy and water quality assessments of bathing beaches. The Ministry will partner with the IMA to ensure the protection and sustainable management of coastal and marine resources.

### **6.2.2 The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF)**

The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF) including the Divisions of Forestry, Fisheries, Horticultural Services, Land Management and the Commissioner of State Lands has responsibility for the conservation and protection of this country's biodiversity and sustainable development of food and non-food systems, land-based and fishery resources. In light of the above, and given the MTCA's goal for achieving sustainability in tourism development, partnership and collaboration with this Ministry is critical to the promotion of inter-sectoral linkages necessary for the successful implementation of ecotourism projects. The MTCA will work with the MALF and its agencies to ensure that its land and marine resources are conserved, protected and managed in a sustainable manner.

### **6.2.3 The Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government (MRDLG)**

At the Local Government level, specific functions of policy implementation, environmental planning and land-use and product development, are further supported. Under the Municipal Corporation Act No. 21 of 1990; Chapter 25:04, Section 232, the Municipal (Regional) Corporations have the specific responsibility for the provision, maintenance and control of parks, recreation grounds, beaches, watercourses and other public spaces. The MTCA will collaborate with Local Government entities to ensure community buy-in and involvement in the development and implementation of ecotourism projects within the regions highlighted in the NTP (2021-2030). The appropriate entity under the purview of this Ministry which has the responsibility for waste management, both solid and liquid, would be relied upon to contribute towards initiatives for the development and/or approval of waste management plans for the ecotourism sites.

### **6.2.4 The Ministry of Sport and Community Development (MSCD)**

The Ministry of Sport and Community Development (MSCD) is responsible for facilitating the empowerment of communities through the development and implementation of programmes and initiatives that serve to ensure a better quality of life for its citizens. The MSCD is responsible for the implementation of the National Policy on Sustainable Community Development, which positions Community Development practitioners as the facilitators of community transformation including promoting sustainable livelihoods and economic transformation of communities. This approach will aid in the development of products and services that are in harmony with the ecotourism niche. The MTCA will partner with the MSCD and its relevant divisions to support the development and implementation of ecotourism projects and initiatives in Trinidad and Tobago. Capacity-building and entrepreneurial support will be provided for community groups that wish to establish viable ecotourism projects. The MTCA will collaborate with the MSCD to develop, promote, preserve and protect the country's cultural and heritage assets found within communities.

### **6.2.5 The Ministry of National Security (MNS)**

The mandate of the Ministry of National Security (MNS) is to create an environment which ensures public safety and security through the maintenance of law and order and the commitment of available resources to the protection of life and property. Crime and other societal problems are major deterrents to travellers and hence the destination must have systems in place to address these behaviours. The MTCA will work collaboratively with the MNS and its relevant divisions (e.g. Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS), Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force (TTDF), Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service (TTFS), Immigration Division, Lifeguard Services, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM)) to ensure that the safety and security of both local and foreign visitors are afforded the highest priority at ecotourism sites and attractions in Trinidad and Tobago. Signage and other safety and security will be developed and utilised to inform and advise visitors on safety precautions to be adopted at these sites and attractions.

### **6.2.6 The Ministry of Finance (MoF)**

The Ministry of Finance (MoF) is responsible for the management of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. It is mandated to facilitate revenue collection and revenue management, budget planning, preparation and management; the formulation and promotion of national fiscal and economic policy; trade facilitation and border control; debt management; and the management of the State Enterprise Sectors. The MTCA will collaborate with the MoF to facilitate access to funds for the implementation of ecotourism projects within the various tourism regions.

### **6.2.7 Ministry of Digital Transformation (MDT)**

The Ministry of Digital Transformation (MDT) is responsible for the enhancement of the local Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Policy, Strategy and Management, and National ICT Planning to support digital infrastructure and digital transformation of the country. Additional responsibilities of the MDT include the provision of business continuity services, enhancing digital services within the Government and digital transformation in the areas of cyber security, E-Identity, Government Services Online, Public Service ICT Governance and Systems Inoperability and Information and Data Protection. The MTCA will collaborate with the MDT to ensure that all ecotourism sites and attractions, inclusive of visitor centres and tourism facilities are outfitted with Wi-Fi connectivity and other relevant ICT infrastructure in order to improve the overall digital visitor experience. In addition, the MTCA will liaise with the MDT to engage ecotourism stakeholders in capacity building sessions for the development of business continuity plans to support their business operations.

### **6.2.8 The Ministry of Works and Transport (MOWT)**

The Ministry of Works and Transport's (MOWT) mandate includes construction and maintenance of highways, and major and secondary roads under the jurisdiction of the Ministry; the construction and maintenance of government buildings and facilities and MOWT buildings and facilities; traffic management - the management of vehicular traffic and pedestrian access routes and coastal management in collaboration with stakeholders. Accordingly, the MTCA will collaborate with the

MOWT, the MNS, the MSCD and other relevant stakeholders to provide easy, unhindered, reliable and safe access to ecotourism sites and attractions in Trinidad and Tobago. This will also entail the review of destinations that may have strategic benefit and the review of existing airlifts and code share agreements to create easy access to the destination.

### **6.2.9 The Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs (MFCA)**

The Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs (MFCA) acts as a central channel by which the national interests and national development of Trinidad and Tobago are achieved. It is responsible for the promotion and protection of Trinidad and Tobago's interests abroad primarily through the coordination of this country's relations with foreign governments. The MFCA will be relied upon for establishing contact with the diaspora and collaborating with the MTCA to provide information on ecotourism sites and attractions, projects and programmes.

### **6.2.10 Ministry of Labour (MOL)**

The Ministry of Labour (MOL) is involved in programmes that influence labour market policy both locally and internationally. This Ministry is responsible for implementing national strategies and promoting the goals and objectives of the labour sector and entrepreneurship through Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) and Co-operatives. The MTCA and the MSCD will collaborate with the MOL to provide assistance to micro and small enterprises and to nurture an enabling environment for professionals in the field of ecotourism and assist in ensuring compliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

### **6.2.11 Ministry of Education (MoE)**

The Ministry of Education (MoE) plays a critical role in ensuring that students are academically balanced, well-adjusted socially and culturally and able to achieve their full potential. The MTCA will collaborate with the MoE to develop a continuous programme for ecotourism education and awareness through its integration into the Physical Education Curriculum at the primary and secondary levels, and a volunteer management programme to students and adults. The Ministry of Education will also be instrumental in curriculum reform to assist in the shift of a multi-lingual society to create a wider catchment of potential ecotourists.

### **6.2.12 Ministry of Health (MOH)**

The Ministry of Health (MOH) is responsible for the entire health care system in Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry will be responsible for the establishment of protocols to prevent and treat communicable diseases and vector borne diseases. The MOH is also responsible for ensuring that food safety measures are established and implemented to reduce and treat foodborne and other illnesses that impact on the public health of the visitors especially when sampling street foods. The Ministry is expected to provide medical services, inclusive of ambulance emergency services and well-trained medical staff that are easily accessible and available to cater to the needs of tourists visiting for the purpose of ecotourism. The MOH will also be responsible for the review of any Medical Response Plans and the provision of resources and strategic advice as required.



### **6.2.13 The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD)**

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD) is responsible for the formulation and execution of Government's policy in the Housing and Urban Development sector. The MHUD operates as a facilitator in the implementation of those policies through its various units and affiliated agencies. The MHUD will be responsible for the maintenance of tourism sites and attractions under their remit as well as the construction of facilities using modern and environmentally friendly materials, technologies and practices.

#### **6.2.13.1 The Land Settlement Agency (LSA)**

The Land Settlement Agency (LSA) is responsible for the protection of eligible squatters from being ejected off State Lands; facilitating the acquisition of leasehold titles by both squatters and tenants in designated areas and, providing for the establishment of land settlement areas. The MTCA will partner with the LSA to prevent squatting or other illegal occupation of land designated as an ecotourism site or attraction.

### **6.2.14 The Ministry of Public Utilities (MPU)**

The Ministry of Public Utilities (MPU) is responsible for the effective and efficient management of the utilities sector in Trinidad and Tobago. The utilities sector is made up of agencies responsible for: (1) The delivery of water, electricity, postal, meteorological and telecommunication services; (2) the removal of wastewater and solid waste; and (3) the provision of regulatory services for the water, wastewater and electricity sectors. The MPU also has responsibility for a number of agencies such as the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA), Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) and Solid Waste Management Company (SWMCOL). The MTCA will liaise with the MPU to ensure that the necessary public utility services are available and operational at ecotourism sites and attractions, inclusive of visitor centres and tourism facilities.

#### **6.2.14.1 Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL)**

The Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL) will be engaged to collect, manage and dispose of waste, both solid and liquid produced at ecotourism sites, attractions and facilities. Waste management plans will be developed and approval sought for ecotourism sites, attractions and facilities in Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministries of Tourism, Culture and the Arts, Planning and Development, Public Utilities and Education and other relevant organisations will partner with SWMCOL to promote educational programmes including but not limited to those programmes that address waste management practices and the impacts of waste (solid or liquid) on the environment.

### **6.2.15 The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS)**

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) is the core social sector Ministry with responsibility for coordinating the implementation of Government's social and human development objectives. The MSDFS renders assistance to the vulnerable, through a network of integrated, effective and accessible social services. The MSDFS will also facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities in order to access ecotourism sites and attractions. In addition, the MSDFS will assist in the development of systems, strategies and programmes to realise positive attitudes and behaviour in the citizenry. This can be achieved through capacity building and funding under the Sowing Empowerment through Entrepreneurial Development (SEED) Programme for ecotourism businesses within poor and vulnerable communities and facilitating access to social assistance grants to persons in need.

#### **6.2.16 Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) - Communications**

The Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) - Communications' mandate includes the promotion of open government, through centralized, timely and accurate communication to engage and empower citizens. The OPM is responsible for leading government communications and information; facilitating public access to information; providing archival research services; providing government printing services; and ensuring the security of private data collected by public institutions. Accordingly, the MTCA and the THA and their implementing agencies, the MSCD and the Media will collaborate with the Office of the Prime Minister - Communications in the distribution of ecotourism information for the nation's benefit throughout Trinidad and Tobago as well as the development and implementation of a national ecotourism education and awareness programme to relevant ecotourism stakeholders.

#### **6.2.17 Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs - Intellectual Property Office (IPO)**

The Intellectual Property Office (IPO) is a department within the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs that is responsible for, inter alia, handling the registration of intellectual property rights; making Intellectual Property information available to the public; advising the Government on Intellectual Property matters, e.g. for negotiation in the trade agreements; participating in the development of International Treaties in the area of intellectual property; participating in the development of International Instruments dealing with new and evolving areas of intellectual property. The MTCA will partner with the IPO to ensure the protection of all the Intellectual Property (IP) associated in the creation of signature ecotourism products, services and experiences, use of standards and certification, monetization of locally-manufactured brands and support in the marketing strategy both locally and internationally.

#### **6.2.18 Academic Institutions**

Academic institutions such as the University of the West Indies (UWI), University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), University of the Southern Caribbean (USC), College of Science, Technology, and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT), Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute (THTI) and other similar institutions all have a role to play in the delivery of academic programmes that target tourism management, tour guiding and ecotourism development. The MTCA will

engage the aforementioned academic institutions for the training of persons and development of programmes associated with ecotourism. The MTCA will also partner with the relevant universities to acquire data and studies on ecotourism development within the destination.

### **6.2.19 The Private Sector**

The private sector is critical to the development and promotion of tourism in Trinidad and Tobago. The private sector bears the major risks of tourism investment as well as a large part of the responsibility for satisfying the visitor. The delivery of quality tourism services and provision of value for money to the visitor are largely private sector responsibilities. Furthermore, the private sector is in a position to promote the involvement of local communities in ecotourism by, inter alia, establishing partnership ecotourism ventures and initiatives with communities. The MTCA will collaborate with the private sector and other relevant agencies to facilitate the sustainable development and management of ecotourism initiatives.

### **6.2.20 Civil Society, Non-Governmental and Community-based Organisations**

Civil Society, Non-governmental and community-based organisations, especially those with an environmental and conservation focus, play a vital role in the development and spread of responsible tourism practices, while providing valuable insights at the grassroots level. These agencies also play a critical role in building capacity and assisting local communities to develop new and innovative products and services. The MTCA in collaboration with other Ministries and related agencies will work with these organisations to preserve, conserve and promote community assets for ecotourism development.

### **6.2.21 The Media**

The media is recognized as a key partner in the tourism development process. As tourism operates in a global environment, the messages that are disseminated can have either a positive or negative effect on the destination's tourism market share. The MTCA, the THA and their respective implementation arms will collaborate with the media to promote environmental awareness and develop positive messages that highlight the importance of ecotourism and the potential benefits that can accrue to the communities and the destination as a whole. The media will also be encouraged to provide educational and informative coverage on ecotourism activities and initiatives and to disseminate these messages using a wide range of platforms including social media.

## 7. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts (MTCA), the Tobago House of Assembly (THA), Tourism Trinidad Limited (TTL), the Tobago Tourism Agency (TTAL) and the Ministry of Planning and Development (MPD) will work closely with all relevant Ministries, state agencies, organisations and key stakeholders to ensure that the ecotourism niche is developed and marketed in keeping with the GoRTT's overarching Policy Framework and the National Development Strategy 2016 – 2030 (Vision 2030).

Accordingly, a framework will be established whereby the MTCA will work with these key Ministries and Agencies to devise action and implementation plans, prioritise action items, determine performance indicators, identify responsible persons/organisations, develop budgetary requirements and establish time frames for implementation. Plans developed, would be for the short (1-2 years), medium (3-5 years) and long term (6-8 years). The extent of the implementation plan will therefore be eight (8) years until 2030. The key Ministries and their implementation arms shall include in their strategic plans, the action items and initiatives that will be pursued to meet the goal and objectives identified in this Sub-policy.

It is envisaged that post event research including the long term tracking of the successes or failures of implementing specific eco-tourism activities will aid in the future planning of this niche.

## 8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

It is essential that all policies and plans being implemented for the ecotourism niche are periodically monitored and evaluated. A strong and effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system is necessary to achieve the desired outcomes of this Sub-policy.

The Ministry is guided by a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System which determines whether the Ministry's policies and strategies are aligned to the national goals and whether the performance of the Ministry is achieving the desired strategic outcomes. The System is defined by four key components that are undertaken:

1. **Financial Monitoring** - to determine that funds are used efficiently and as planned (through ratio analysis, budgetary control, etc.); to ensure the State Enterprise is accountable and in compliance with the dictates of the State Enterprise Performance Monitoring Manual;
2. **Activity/Process Monitoring** - to ensure project or policy activities are carried out as planned and determine whether interventions may be required (analysis of Unit work plans, achievements);
3. **Output Monitoring** - to ensure that what is produced by various components of the Policies, Projects or Units are of quality, timely and in keeping with the dictates of the Ministry's strategic plan and associated work plan agenda;

4. **Outcome Monitoring** - determining whether or not the results of the policies and strategies adopted resulted in the achievement of the plan's declared outcomes.

The Monitoring and Evaluation staff of the Ministry will be the key oversight body, tracking the implementation of the Sub-policy and will be responsible for implementing and maintaining the Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System for the Ministry pursuant to the objectives, strategies and actions as set out in this Sub-policy.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix I: SWOT Analysis

**Table 1: SWOT Analysis of the Ecotourism sector in Trinidad & Tobago**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 100 mammals (terrestrial and marine), 433 species of birds, 98 species of reptiles &amp; 38 species of amphibians, as well as over 3,638 species of plants with 53 endemic plant species.<sup>39</sup></li> <li>● 41 species of coral, 5 species of endangered sea turtles and 126 species of freshwater fish and 1,013 species of marine fish.<sup>33</sup></li> <li>● Native to the second smallest hummingbird in the world</li> <li>● Home to the Scarlet Ibis</li> <li>● Easy access to most sites</li> <li>● 3 Ramsar designated sites: Nariva, Caroni and Buccoo Reef/Bon Accord Lagoon</li> <li>● Home to the world famous Asa Wright Nature Centre</li> <li>● Knowledgeable, trained and certified guides</li> <li>● Established eco/nature trails</li> <li>● Low impact on the environment</li> <li>● The tropical climate fosters great birding year long</li> <li>● Nocturnal Oilbird or Guacharo (<i>Steatornis caripensis</i>). Located in Dunston Cave, a beautiful riparian grotto, is perhaps the most easily accessible colony known for this remarkable species.</li> <li>● Largest nesting population of leatherback turtles in the world<sup>40</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Facilities and infrastructure still need developing to be competitive and meet world standards</li> <li>● Insufficient funds allocated to the upgrade of sites</li> <li>● Information located on Ecotourism websites are not regularly updated</li> <li>● Destination's ecotourism potential not as well-known as Brazil, Belize, Venezuela and Costa Rica. This is due to minimal marketing and promotional activities, inclusive of promotion of ecotourism products on social media.</li> <li>● Deficient niche marketing strategy</li> <li>● Slow rate of implementation of special training programmes</li> <li>● Insufficient public education on ecotourism</li> <li>● Lack of concern and interest in ecotourism by the public</li> <li>● Poor physical infrastructure and accessibility in some communities</li> </ul>

<sup>39,33</sup> National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

<sup>40</sup> Nature Seekers. Learn about a Sea Turtle.

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Turtle watching is part of a growing volunteer tourism market where tourists travel for the purpose of protecting endangered species</li> <li>● Tobago has the oldest natural reserve in the western hemisphere</li> <li>● 3 wetlands in Trinidad and 2 in Tobago that are natural habitats for many species of birds</li> <li>● Development of eco-tourism in rural communities can change the distribution in those rural communities, decentralizing the economy</li> <li>● New nature trails have been developed</li> <li>● The <i>Discovering the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago</i> - bird watching guide was launched at the inaugural American Birding Expo (2015)</li> <li>● Conservation measures for biodiversity and protected areas are being implemented under the Improving Forest and Protected Area Management Project as well as rehabilitation and reforestation efforts to swamp lands under the EMA's National Restoration Carbon Sequestration Wildlife and Livelihoods Project</li> <li>● Eco-tourism has the propensity to combat climate change through the development and integration of energy efficient operations, which resultantly lowers carbon emissions.</li> <li>● Increase in industry standards and tourism diversification and product development</li> <li>● Exploration of avenues for further engagement with the private sector</li> <li>● Exploration of options for financing from international donors and the private sector in other countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Loss of biodiversity and habitat to areas of economic development including housing, agriculture and quarrying</li> <li>● Solid competition emerging from Belize, Mexico, Costa Rica, Dominica</li> <li>● Pollution and destruction of wetlands and swamps</li> <li>● Tendency towards development with little regard to preservation of the natural environment in rural areas</li> <li>● Negative impact of climate change</li> <li>● Continued industrialization &amp; quarrying erodes our ability to boast of being a green destination.</li> <li>● Lack of regulation, enforcement of laws &amp; legislation and support of incentives for the sector</li> <li>● Lack of education and appreciation on the importance of ecotourism by the general public</li> <li>● Proliferation of invasive species such as the Lion fish (<i>Pterois volitans</i>)</li> <li>● Declining budgetary funding for eco-tourism projects including infrastructural work</li> <li>● Proliferation of forest fires and littering</li> <li>● Existence of land instability</li> </ul>

## Appendix II: Ecotourism Visitors

### Eco-Tourist Arrivals 2014-2021

Year	No. of Visitors
2014	1,211
2015	933
2016	971
2017	644
2018	575
2019	539
2020*	221
2021*	15

*Source: Immigration Division of Trinidad and Tobago*

\*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic which lead to the closure of national borders to mitigate the spread of the virus, there was a significant decline in the number of ecotourism visitors to Trinidad and Tobago.

While the data illustrates a significant decline in eco-tourist arrivals, the Ministry notes that this may be due to ecotourism not being listed under the purpose of visit section on the Welcome to Trinidad and Tobago Immigration/Customs Form. A visitor's main purpose of visit may be to visit friends/relatives or business but during their stay engage in ecotourism activities in the destination, unless ecotourism is written on the form. As a result, this may reflect limited arrivals to the destination mainly for ecotourism activities.



## Appendix III: Popular Ecotourism Sites and Attractions in Trinidad and Tobago

### Trinidad

- i) **The Asa Wright Nature Centre:** a world-renowned nature conservation and research centre for naturalists and birdwatchers, situated in an area comprising nearly 1,500 acres of largely forested terrain in the Arima and Aripo valleys of the Northern Range. The area is also home to the Oilbirds (Devil birds) and the Golden Bearded Manakin;
- ii) **Brasso Seco:** an agricultural area located in the Northern Range of Trinidad, 16 miles from the town of Arima. This area is well known for its rich biodiversity and ecotourism sites and attractions (e.g. hiking trails and waterfalls - i.e. Double River, Sobo, Madamas, Cipriani and Paria) and cultural heritage (e.g. cocoa and coffee estates from the colonial era);
- iii) **The Chaguaramas Peninsula<sup>41</sup>:** situated in the north-western part of the island, the Peninsula covers a 14,752 acre region, includes five offshore islands and offers numerous opportunities for recreational activities such as cave exploration, bird watching, hiking and mountain biking. The Peninsula is also recognized as a “safe zone” from hurricanes and as a result houses a thriving yachting industry. Examples of the fauna that can be found in this region include deer, agouti, caimans and Environmentally Sensitive Species such as the Ocelot, Trinidad Howler Monkey and the Trinidad White-fronted Capuchin. Examples of the flora found include: bamboo trees, montane forest (Serrette bois-gris), Deciduous seasonal forest (Naked Indian incense poui), Dry evergreen forest (Sea grape manchineel and Palmiste balata) and Semi-evergreen seasonal forest (Purple heart incense poui, Purple heart-bois Lisette, Acurel-moussana-jiggerwood, Acurel-gommier and Moussana-figuier, Balata, Cedar and Cypre).
- iv) **The Caroni and Nariva Swamps** are both designated as Wetlands of International Importance under the RAMSAR Convention. The Caroni Swamp has the largest assemblage of mangrove forest on the island as it contains over 56% of all mangrove cover. The swamps’ assemblages of mangroves, marshes, rivers, estuaries and lagoons provides habitat to a rich array of fauna. The Caroni Swamp serves as a habitat for the Scarlet ibis (*Eudocimus ruber*), Comb duck (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*), White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*), Snail kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*), and the severely threatened Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) while consisting of other commercially harvested such as fish, crabs, oysters and conch.

The Nariva Swamp is the largest and most diverse wetland in Trinidad and Tobago consisting of freshwater marsh, palm swamp (Palmiste, Moriche palms and Roseau), freshwater swamp woods and mangrove. It is also a habitat for species that fall under the

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<sup>41</sup> Northern Range Assessment (NRA). Report of an Assessment of the Northern Range, Trinidad and Tobago: People and the Northern Range. (State of the Environment Report 2004. Environmental Management Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2005

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) listing of threatened and endangered species signed in 1984. These include the West Indian Manatee (*Trichechus manatus*), the Trinidad Howler Monkey (*Alouatta seniculus*), the Ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*), the Blue and Gold Macaw (*Ara ararauna*) and in addition to many other species of waterfowl, turtles, snakes and birds.

- v) **The Point-à-Pierre Wild Fowl Trust** is another nature-based tourism model which promotes environmental and education awareness whilst situated in 30 hectares of land in the heart of Petrotrin's petrochemical and oil refining complex. The Trust is responsible for the management of the wetland habitat, endangered species of wetland birds and other avifauna and the proliferation of endangered flora. Some of these species of fauna and flora include the Blue and Gold Macaw, wild ducks, Scarlet Ibis, Lotus Water Lily and numerous medicinal plants."
- vi) **The Bush Bush Sanctuary:** a wildlife reserve located in the county of Nariva where the Red Howler and Capuchin Monkeys can be found. Trinidad is the only Caribbean island with a natural population of these species;
- vii) **The Tamana Caves:** the caves are situated in the Central Range and possess a diversity that is considered unique by ecologists among cave systems and is home to over 500,000 bats of at least 12 species e.g. the Greater Spare-Nosed Bat and the Long-Nosed Bat;
- viii) **Grande Rivière and Matura Beaches** are two main turtle nesting grounds on the north and north east coasts in Trinidad for the endangered Leatherback Turtle. Some popular beaches where nesting turtles can be found include Maracas, Las Cuevas, Blanchisseuse, Manzanilla and Mayaro.
- ix) **The Royal Botanic Gardens** is located North of the Queen's Park Savannah, Port of Spain, Trinidad. Established in 1818, it is one of the oldest botanic gardens in the World. The Garden is approximately 61.8 acres (25 hectares) and contains some 700 trees. The area is a natural park – like environment that is well landscaped. Trees are also well spaced, some of which have signs indicating the local and botanical names. A plant nursery is also located on the eastern side of the Garden. The Royal Botanic Gardens is protected under the Botanic Gardens Act (1938).

## **Tobago**

- i) **The Main Ridge Forest Reserve** is an area made up of tropical rainforest and is a habitat for numerous flora and fauna including the endemic species, the ocellated Gecko as well as the White-tailed sabrewing hummingbird, a designated environmentally sensitive species;
- ii) **The Grafton Caledonia Wildlife Sanctuary** is a former cocoa estate that is now used as a reserve for bird watching of various species such as the Cocrico, the Blue-backed Manakin and the Blue Crowned Motmot;

- iii) **The Buccoo Reef** a fringing reef and **Bon Accord Lagoon** form part of a wetland system located on the leeward side of Tobago consisting coral reefs, sea grass beds and mangrove forests and habitat for aquatic and terrestrial organisms such as Hawksbill turtle, the endangered Green Turtle and the Nassau Grouper;
- iv) **Speyside Bay** is a bay located on the leeward coast of Tobago and considered to be a very popular dive site;
- v) **Little Tobago** is a small island off the north-eastern coast of Tobago that is a breeding ground for seabirds such as Red-billed Tropicbird, Audubon's Shearwater, Brown Booby, Brown Noddy, Sooty and Bridled Terns;
- vi) **The Black Rock and Grafton Beaches** are nesting grounds where the Hawksbill and Leatherback turtles come to lay their eggs on the south western coast in Tobago.
- vii) **St. Giles Island** located off Castara Point is a diving site for advanced divers due to the rough conditions and a protected game sanctuary. The island is key breeding site inhabited by nesting colonies of Magnificent Frigatebirds, Red-footed Boobies and Brown Boobies. The island consist of a small group of islands known as Melville Island, Marble Island, London Bridge and Three Rock.
- viii) **Brothers Rock and Sisters Rock** located adjacent to each other with Brothers Rock located the closest to Fourmi Bay are separate groups of rocks that are popular amongst divers. Snappers, groupers, turtles, nurse sharks and reef sharks can be found around Brothers Rock while scalloped hammerhead sharks frequent Sisters Rock. Hard and soft corals are located at Sisters Rock while small reefs are found off the southern side of Brothers Rock.

## **Appendix IV: Ecotourism Activities**

The GoRTT in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders shall ensure that all proposed ecotourism activities are carried out in accordance with all applicable national policies and legislative frameworks, as well as, internationally accepted principles of sustainable tourism. Moreover, ecotourism activities shall be based on the identified assets and needs of communities and as far as possible, activities will be undertaken using trained local guides from the community. Some of the activities that ecotourist may engage in include but are not limited to:

### **Nature Trails**

The natural environment will be a key feature of this form of eco-related tourism. Nature trails for walking, cycling and hiking shall be developed and maintained to minimize negative impact in the area.

### **Bird Watching/Observance of Wildlife**

Bird watching and observance of wildlife in their natural habitats e.g. turtle watching on the beaches and/or protected areas shall be undertaken in keeping with established carrying capacity limits. Access to eco-sensitive areas shall require visitors to obtain permits as required from the relevant state authorities.

### **Soft Adventure**

Given that Trinidad and Tobago has a versatile terrain ranging from beaches and rivers to mountains and waterfalls, this variety allows us to participate in many of the forms of nature based outdoor activities. Generally, the destination has marketed activities for soft adventure. The level of physical challenge is normally low, as well as the level of risk to the visitor. These include: hiking, bicycling, snorkelling, diving, bird/animal watching, etc. and shall be undertaken in designated areas. It is important to note that these activities shall be pursued in accordance with the regulations established by the relevant authorities and as appropriate to the environmental sensitivity of the area.

### **Farming Activities and Landscapes**

The main attraction at these sites are the landscapes used for farming purposes. Visitors tour the agricultural sites and walk through trails that have been designed to accommodate them. They can also become involved in planting or reaping related activities and become familiar with local planning patterns and practices. As with trails, efforts must be taken to avoid negative impacts on the area and to prevent exceeding the carrying capacity.

### **Cultural Activities**

Involvement in the local culture of the destination can also fall within this niche. Trinidad and Tobago possess a rich, and diverse cultural heritage which is well maintained and practised within communities. Some of these cultural assets include our festivals, history, monuments, folklore and various heritage sites. These can be offered as ecotourism experiences to visitors with an interest in this area. To prevent the commercialisation of these experiences, communities would need to be educated on the need to preserve authenticity.

## **Educational Component**

Ecotourism also has an educational and scientific component as it allows visitors an opportunity to learn about nature and the local culture and traditions, as well as to respect these elements of the experience. As these visitors interact with nature and/or the community, or engage in research, the necessary precautionary measures will be put in place to ensure that destruction or degradation of the environment is minimised.

## **Appendix V: National Policies, Legislation, Plans and International Agreements**

The following is a list of some of the relevant National Policies, Legislation and Plans and International Agreements that pertain to ecotourism development in Trinidad and Tobago.

### **National Policies**

- National Tourism Policy (2021-2030)
- National Policy on Sustainable Community Development (2019-2024)
- National Environmental Policy (2018)
- National Development Strategy 2016-2030: Vision 2030
- National Integrated Water Resources Management Policy (2016)
- National Waste Recycling Policy (2015)
- National Wildlife Policy (2013)
- National Protected Areas Policy (2011)
- National Forest Policy (2011)
- National Climate Change Policy (2011)
- National Action Programme to Combat Land Degradation in Trinidad and Tobago (2006 - 2020)
- National Wetlands Policy (2002)
- Draft Integrated Coastal Zone Management Policy Framework (2018)

### **Laws and Legislation**

- Sawmill Act, Chapter 66:02 (Act 35 of 1943 Amended by 34 of 1947; 45 of 1979; 24 of 1999)
- Fisheries Act, Chapter 67:51 (1916, amended 1966, 1975) (1980, amended)
- Conservation of Wildlife Act, Chapter 67:01 (1958 amended 1963, 1980)
- Agricultural Fires Act, Chapter 63:02 (Act 20 of 1965)
- Forests Act, Chapter 66:01 (1915)
- State Lands Act, Chapter 57:01 (1969)
- Marine Areas (Preservation and Enhancement) Act, Chapter 37:02 (1970 amended 1996)
- Chaguaramas Development Authority Act, Chapter 35:02 (1972)
- Litter Act, Chapter 30:53 (Act 27 of 1973 and its amendments)
- Town and Country Planning Act, Chapter 35:01 (amended 1974, 1977, 1980, 1985, 1990)
- Municipal Corporations Act, Chapter 25:04 (Act 21 of 1990 and its amendments)
- Tobago House of Assembly Act, Chapter 25:03 (1996 amended 2001), Act 40 of 1996
- Plant Protection Act, Chapter 63:56 (Act 7 of 1997)
- Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act, Chapter 57:05 (Act 25 of 1998)
- National Heritage Trust Act, chapter 40:53 (2000)

- Tourism Development Act, Chapter 87:22 (Act 9 of 2000 and its amendments)
- Land Acquisition Act, chapter 58:01(1994 amended 2000)
- Environmental Management Act, Chapter 35:05 (Act 3 of 2000)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Area Rules (2001)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Species Rules (2001)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Area – Matura National Park (2004)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Species – Manatee (2005)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Species – Pawi (2005)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Species – White Tailed Sabrewing (2005)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Area – Nariva Swamp Managed Resource Protected Area (2006)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Area – Aripo Savannas Strict Nature Reserve (2007)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Species – Ocelot (2013)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Species – Golden Tree Frog (2013)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Species – Green Turtle (2014)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Species – Hawksbill (2014)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Species – Leatherback (2014)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Species – Loggerhead (2014)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Species – Olive Ridley (2014)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Species – Scarlet Ibis (2018)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Species – Trinidad Howler Monkey (2022)
  - Environmentally Sensitive Species – Trinidad White-Fronted Capuchin (2022)
  - Certificate of Environmental Clearance (CEC) Rules (2001)
  - Air Pollution Rules (APR) (2014)
  - Water Pollution Rules (WPR) (2019)
  - Noise Pollution Rules (2001)

## Plans

- A System of National Parks and other Protected Areas (1980)
- National Reforestation and Watershed Rehabilitation Programme Strategic Plan (2004-2009)
- Comprehensive Economic Development Plan for Tobago (2006-2010). *Tobago, Capital of Paradise: Clean, Green Safe and Serene*
- Trinidad and Tobago National Action Programme to Combat Land Degradation in Trinidad and Tobago (2006-2020)
- National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2017-2022) (NBSAP)
- National Protected Areas System Plan for Trinidad and Tobago (2018)

## International Agreements

- Sendai Framework (2016-2030)
- Paris Agreement (2015)
- International Tropical Timber Agreement (2006)
- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (1994)
- United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992)
- Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) (1973)
- World Heritage Convention (1972)
- Convention on Wetlands of international Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention, 1971)
- Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere (Western Hemisphere Convention) (1969)



## **Appendix VI: Investment - Approved Tourism Projects**

The development incentives for approved ecotourism-related projects include tax benefits and exemptions (e.g. tax holidays up to seven years, carry-over of losses from a tax exemption period, capital allowances on approved capital expenditure and accelerated depreciation on depreciable equipment): customs and excise duty exemptions (duty concessions on the importation of vehicles for use in the transportation of guests/visitors at a reduced rate of import duty (10%) and exemption from motor vehicle tax, and duty exemption for building materials and articles of tourism equipment).

The following categories of ecotourism-related activities qualify for consideration for aforementioned incentives, these categories are:

- Tourism Accommodation Projects; under Schedule 4 and 5 of the Tourism Development Act (TDA), 2000: Chapter 87:22 e.g. Accommodation facilities (dive and eco-lodges);
- Tourism Ancillary Facilities; under Schedule 2 and 3 of the Tourism Development Act (TDA), 2000: Chapter 87:22 e.g. dive operations, water sports, charter boats, theme parks, tour operations, cultural centres, and recreational space use; and
- Other Projects; under Schedule 9 of the Tourism Development Act (TDA), 2000 e.g. destination management companies, ground tour operations, recreational space, transportation service, historical landmarks and heritage sites.

### **Tourism Accommodation Upgrade Project (TAUP)**

The Tourism Accommodation Upgrade Project (TAUP) is a tourism incentive project that provides a reimbursable grant for approved upgrade work done to accommodation facilities in both Trinidad and in Tobago. TAUP comprises of two tourism incentive projects, namely:

- i. Upgrade of Small Approved Tourism Properties in Trinidad and Tobago for properties with 1 to 5 guest rooms.
- ii. The Trinidad and Tobago Hotel and Guesthouse Room Stock Upgrade Project for properties with 6 to 150 guest rooms.
- iii. Properties in the 1-5 guestroom category can access maximum reimbursements of \$150,000.00 per property over the three years while the 6-150 guestroom category are allowed a maximum reimbursement of \$1,500,000.00 per property over the three years.
- iv. Hotels and Guesthouses with 6-150 guestrooms can benefit from a reimbursement of 50% of upgrade expenditure per room up to a maximum reimbursement of \$25,000 per room in Trinidad and \$30,000 per room in Tobago.

### **Government Load Guarantee (GLG) of Trinidad and Tobago**

The Government Loan Guarantee Programme (GLG) is another programme geared towards providing assistance to the tourism industry. This is facilitated through the provision of a guarantee

facility to commercial banks on behalf of tourism accommodation and tourism-related businesses experiencing difficulties in servicing their loans with the various commercial banks.

The GLG programme is managed by the Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Business Development Limited (TTTBDL), which falls under the Ministry of Finance. The TTTBDL is assisted by the Export Import Bank of Trinidad and Tobago (EXIMBANK), which provides agency services. The fund was established to assist the affected tourism industry of Tobago where poor occupancy rates, coupled with the global economic downturn made loan financing for tourism or tourism-related projects difficult to access. Since its inception in 2013, the fund has been providing guarantee facilities to the tourism and tourism-related businesses in Tobago.

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