

## **MINISTRY OF TOURISM, CIVIL AVIATION, TRANSPORTATION & INVESTMENT SIGNS MOU WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PROFESSIONAL TECHNICAL TRAINING OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC TO ENHANCE HOSPITALITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING**



*(Hon. Charles Fernandez, Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Transportation, & Investment, and Mr. Rafael Santos Badía, General Director of the National Institute of Professional Technical Training (INFOTEP) of the Dominican Republic, alongside Ambassador Racquel Jacobo, members of the INFOTEP delegation, and representatives from The Antigua and Barbuda Hospitality Training Institute)*

**ST. JOHN'S, (December 6, 2024)** — The Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Transportation, & Investment has signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Institute of Professional Technical Training (INFOTEP) of the Dominican Republic. The signing, which took place today at the Ministry of Tourism Conference Room, was attended by key representatives from both countries.

The MOU, signed by Hon. Charles 'Max' Fernandez, Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Transportation, & Investment, and Mr. Rafael Santos Badía, General Director of INFOTEP, aims to strengthen collaboration in hospitality and tourism education. This partnership will benefit both nations through shared expertise, resources, and knowledge. Through specialized short courses and hands-on training, the agreement will directly support those seeking to upskill in the tourism and hospitality sectors, including students of the Antigua and Barbuda Hospitality Training Institute (ABHTI). It will equip them with the necessary skills to thrive in the rapidly growing tourism industry.

"Antigua and Barbuda will in a few weeks, be celebrating a milestone of 1.5 million visitor arrivals by air, cruise and yacht for the year 2024. To bring this into perspective this represents our population multiplied by 15. In addition to this, in 2025, a number of new property developments will be introduced to our product, and this means more rooms and the need for more trained and qualified workers to accommodate the

influx of visitors that comes with increased room stock, cruise visits and airlift to any destination.

This agreement has come at a remarkably opportune time for Antigua and Barbuda's hospitality sector, ensuring that our workforce is equipped with the technical expertise needed to meet the demands of our tourism industry. ABHTI and hospitality workers will directly benefit from the various training programs, enhancing the skills of both students and the local workforce." said Hon. Charles Fernandez.

Rafael Santos Badía, General Director of INFOTEP, noted, "This is an agreement that is born from the understanding that the tourism sector not only requires infrastructure and promotion, but also a highly trained human resource capable of offering memorable experiences to tourists. It is a sector that is constantly evolving, requiring innovation and a professional approach to ensure that tourist destinations remain attractive and competitive in a globalized market."

The MOU is designed to enhance human resources training and institutional development for both Antigua and Barbuda and the Dominican Republic. Key objectives include promoting knowledge exchange, strengthening the training of facilitators to boost their competencies, facilitating the exchange of interns and facilitators, and offering bilingual training in English and Spanish to enhance communication and technical capabilities.

The MOU will have a direct and positive impact on ABHTI, which will play a central role in delivering the training programs. This agreement aligns with the Ministry's ongoing commitment to advancing the skills of the local workforce, ensuring that Antigua and Barbuda remain a competitive destination for tourists.

ABHTI is proud to be part of this initiative, which will not only enhance the capabilities of its students but also contribute to the growth of the broader hospitality community in Antigua and Barbuda.

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