



**THE ENVIRONMENTAL DIVISION OF  
THE CARIBBEAN HOTEL ASSOCIATION**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**PROMOTING THE ENVIRONMENTAL BEST PRACTICES OF  
THE CARIBBEAN HOTEL SECTOR  
CARIBBEAN ALLIANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM VISITS BAHAMAS TO PRESENT PROGRAM**

Nassau, Bahamas (April 1, 2004) –The Bahamas hospitality industry is taking a good look at its environmental performance, as the destination considers the implementation of the Hotel Environmental Leadership & Performance (HELP Program), an initiative of the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST). HELP’s primary focus will be to recognize and promote the environmental best practices and achievements of hotels and tourism establishments to key markets in the region, North America, and Europe. “The Caribbean is already a recognized leader in environmentally-conscious tourism business, with the largest number of Green Globe 21-certified properties worldwide,” explained Deirdre Shurland, Director of CAST, the environmental division of the Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA). “Through HELP, CAST is driven to make a ‘Positive Impact!’ in the Caribbean hospitality industry, by promoting to trade and consumers the best practices of hotels as they work their way up various levels of environmental performance - not certified hotels exclusively,” added Shurland. She is in The Bahamas this week meeting with the members of the hospitality industry, invited by the Bahamas Hotel Association.

Bahamian properties that commit to the HELP initiative will be required to progress through three levels set by the program: commitment, performance, and leadership – with demonstrable proof of improved environmental performance within a maximum 2-year period. CAST provides each property with a template to prepare a preliminary action plan, as well as guidance on the process. However, the property is responsible for setting out its own objectives and progress targets through the various achievement levels of HELP.

CAST will recognize the successes of those properties at each level – Awareness, Performance, and Leadership - through a targeted promotion and publicity campaign to local, regional, and international markets, with increased emphasis as a hotel reaches greater performance milestones and achievements.

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The foundation of environmental performance is the environmental management system (EMS), which allows properties to control the environmental impact of their operations and to ensure that staff are trained and empowered to be creative and apply sound environmental principles in their day-to-day responsibilities.

Properties have the flexibility to hire their own trainers or consultants based in The Bahamas to assist them in the design and implementation of the EMS, with oversight from CAST. "Properties are able to work with local consultants and/or trainers who are familiar with the particulars of the destination and the product - while doing away with the additional expense of outsourcing expertise from abroad. This is another important aspect of the path towards sustainable tourism," concluded Shurland.

'Positive Impact!' is the driving philosophy of CAST. For more information about CAST or HELP, contact Deirdre Shurland, at 1000 Ponce de León Ave., 5th Floor, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 00907 / T 787.725.9139, F 787.725.9108, E: [dshurland@caribbeanhotels.org](mailto:dshurland@caribbeanhotels.org), or go to [www.cha-cast.com](http://www.cha-cast.com)

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**About the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST) – [www.cha-cast.com](http://www.cha-cast.com)**

CAST, the environmental subsidiary of the Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA), was chartered in 1997 to undertake collaborative environmental efforts within the hotel industry, enhance the practices of the region's hotel and tourism operators by providing high quality education and training related to sustainable tourism; promote the industry's efforts and successes to the traveling public and other stakeholders; and serve as a vital link to all stakeholders with sustainable tourism interests in the Caribbean region.

**About the Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA) – [www.caribbeanhotels.org](http://www.caribbeanhotels.org)**

The Caribbean Hotel Association is dedicated to excellence in hospitality, leadership in marketing, and sustainable growth in tourism, to the benefit of its membership and that of the wider Caribbean community. It aims to be a regional forum that will advance the Caribbean hotel and tourism industry. The members of CHA represent the entire spectrum of hospitality industry's private sector, from 840 member hotels representing some 127,000 hotel rooms in 36 national hotel associations to allied members – airlines, tour operators, travel agents, trade and consumer press, hotel and restaurant suppliers, among others – which account for 520 members. CHA is headquartered in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and maintains a promotion and marketing office in Miami, Florida.

