

Investor confident

SANDALS Resorts is promising to do its part to put Barbados back on a stable footing and to help the country achieve success.

The assurance has come from Chairman of the hotel chain, Gordon 'Butch' Stewart. It came in a message delivered yesterday morning on his behalf by Gary Sadler, Senior Vice President of Sales, Unique Vacations Ltd., worldwide representatives of Sandals Resorts, to those gathered for the Sandals Global Sales Conference 2018 at the Sandals Royal. Addressing the packed room which included Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley, the Jamaican businessman said Sandals will stand "shoulder to shoulder" with her Administration and work together as a "true partner" to help achieve positive gains for Barbados.

With that in mind, he maintained that the resort has full confidence in Barbados' tourism product, evident by the already US\$350 million investment made over the last three and a half years, by way of Sandals Barbados and Sandals Royal and the planned investment for the Beaches Resort in St. Peter. That St. Peter project, he noted, will be their single largest investment in this country to date.

"Less than a year on, we are already expanding Sandals Royal Barbados by adding 50 additional suites, which will open on November 10th providing a hundred new jobs. Let me note here, Prime Minister, that both resorts were built by Bajan contractors and sub-contractors who did a sterling job," he said.

Stewart, who was absent from the proceedings due to the flu, made it clear that Sandals is putting its money where its mouth is, as the company not only raises all the capital itself, but carries all the risk for the investments. That, he said, no doubt sends a powerful message to the world's investing community of the confidence that Sandals has in Barbados. With that in mind, he revealed that at present the two resorts are employing some 1 200 persons and when Beaches is complete, it is anticipated that that figure will move to almost 3 000, the vast majority of whom will be Barbadian. He made the point while indicating that their investment in Barbados also has a knock-on effect for the wider business community.

"Our expansion in Barbados also spells good news for local suppliers and producers. We make it a priority to identify and develop linkages with local suppliers in all of the islands and our internal mandate is to always buy local first. That means more opportunities for farmers, taxi drivers, tour operators, artisans, manufacturers and all local suppliers. It is through these linkages that many small enterprises have been able to flourish and have grown into successful businesses of their own, creating further employment and generating wealth," he stated.

He went on to talk about the Sandals Corporate University, which he explained has rigorous training programmes ranging from courses to undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, which lend to tremendous opportunities for the personal growth and development of team members. The chairman's comments came as he explained that a person, who is Sandals trained, can secure employment at any hotel anywhere in the world. (JRT)



From left: Acting Minister of Tourism, Kirk Humphrey; CEO of Sandals International, Gebhard Rainer; Gary Sadler, Senior Vice President of Sales, Unique Vacations; Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley; CEO Unique Vacations, Tammy Gonzalez; and Ferry Zievinger, General Manager – Sandals Barbados, pose for a photograph yesterday morning.

'We all have to up our game,' says PM

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She made the point after insisting that in respect of tourism, more has to be done to ensure that visitors to these shores fall in love with the experience and the country. She made the point while noting that Barbados has the highest number of repeat visitors in this part of the world, because "people like what they see, what they taste and hold that experience as one they want to repeat over and over and over again", and she is adamant it is her desire to see that continue.

"We have determined that if Barbados is to survive [and] to transform, that we need to recognise that we have to do things a little differently. We all have to up our game, because the day we sit on our laurels is the day we accept that we have nothing left to learn and nothing left to

share. So that the stretching that is necessary to move to the next level is not something that is going to be your preserve alone as salesmen, but I give you the commitment that it will be our commitment too as that product which you are seeking to sell to the rest of the world," PM Mottley said.

The Prime Minister's comments came as she maintained that the way of communicating with and presenting destination Barbados to persons has to keep evolving because people have choices. She is adamant then that if we do not demand attention by how we perform and present ourselves to the world, we will fail to secure the market share that is sought after. She made the point while noting that efforts are on to transform Barbados, given that the country as a result of the "lost decade" 2008 to now, has become the

third most indebted country in the world.

"...We recognise that we can't do it alone and that what we need is each and every one who believes in what we are doing. And we believe that Sandals believes in what we are doing, and we believe that you as individuals in Sandals believe in what we are doing. If each of us now on our part live up to our end of the bargain to make your experience here, to make your communication of that experience, to make our story known to you, to make our story inspire you in your own countries as to what is possible, if we can do that we would not have enough space, like Sandals, to accommodate those who want to come," she suggested.

With that in mind, she highlighted the importance of training, indicating that such is key to get the country where it needs to be. (JRT)



Some of the delegates attending the 2018 Sandals Global Sales Conference.