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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### ***CARPHA and TCI launch TCI CARE Tourism & Health Programme***

**Providenciales, Turks and Caicos, June 22, 2016:** In a determined response to ensuring the health and safety of its visitors and residents, the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) in collaboration with the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) launched the Tourism Health and Safety program (THP), under TCI CARE, on June 22 2016 at Grace Bay Club, Providenciales. Turks and Caicos is the first Caribbean country to officially launch the THP nationally, leading the way regionally for enhancing the health and safety of the tourism in this landmark event.

Premier and Minister of TCI, Dr. Rufus Ewing emphasized that tourism is the mainstay TCI hence his vision of the TCI CARE National Initiative for sustainable tourism. This will ensure the health and safety of both the visitors and residents of TCI. He indicated that TCI CARE represents the fingerprint of tourism in TCI. It promotes the six features of the TCI tourism (Safety, Security, Service and Sun, Sand Sea), and TCI's commitment to providing a unique and the highest quality tourism product in the world. The safety (health) component of TCI CARE will be executed under its national THP, led by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with CARPHA.

Executive Director, CARPHA, Dr. C. James Hospedales indicated that tourism based illnesses are very common and thus has major negative economic impact in the tourism dependent Caribbean economies. However, these events were preventable with good systems of surveillance, training and standards. CARPHA is confident that the THP will result in triple bottom-line returns in health (by having fewer and less costly outbreaks), in environment, and in the economy.

The Permanent Secretary Ministry of Tourism, Mrs Desiree Lewis said that addressing health issues in tourism was critical for protecting and boosting tourism in TCI. She indicated that her Ministry fully supported the national THP initiative and was ready for immediate implementation.

Dr. Lisa Indar, Head of CARPHA's Regional Tourism and Health Programme, stressed that the THP offered the best solution to health, safety and environmental sanitation challenges being faced by Caribbean tourism. The regional THP is a win-win solution for both Tourism and Health, since it included a real time early warning and response system whereby negative health events in the tourism industry would be addressed immediately; health safety and environmental sanitation protocols, standards and certification; and an intense training and education initiative. The key benefit of THP will be fewer, less costly outbreaks and other negative public health events occurring in tourism and thereby a healthier, safer, more reputable Caribbean for both visitors and locals. However, joint implementation from all tourism and health stakeholders was necessary for THP's success.

The highlight of the TCI CARE THP launch was at the end when the Premier indicated, "*I give you TCI CARE*". This triggered a series of wonderful and exciting national infomercials on TCI CARE that demonstrated "*whether you have a cold, headache, hangover, tummy ache, or even a sun burn, security or service issue, rest assured that TCI*

*will CARE'*. This was greeted with loud applause from the audience that included regional and national Government representatives.

*CARPHA is the Caribbean Integrated Public Health Agency, serving 24 member Caribbean countries and territories. CARPHA is mandated by Heads of Government to Prevent disease, Promote Health, Respond to Public Health Emergencies. CARPHA in partnership with the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) and Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) established Regional THP in January 2014. The goal of the regional THP is to enhance the health and safety of visitors and locals and the quality and sustainability of the Caribbean tourism industry, thereby contributing to the industry being more competitive, resilient and sustainable.*

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