Cruise Tourism and the BBNJ Agreement (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction):

Importance of the Tourism Sector

Cruise tourism is growing in popularity and this is an expanding sector globally. The Caribbean is one of the most popular cruise destinations in the world, generating economic revenue and creating jobs that contribute to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of many Caribbean countries. According to the Florida–Caribbean Cruise Association, in 2018 within Caribbean and Latin American destinations, cruise tourism generated 3.36 billion USD in direct expenditures and also created 78,954 jobs. Nonetheless, despite the economic benefits, the relative cost-benefit of cruise tourism to the Caribbean has been questioned, especially when compared to other forms of tourism.

Relevance of the BBNJ Agreement to the Cruise Ship Industry

Due to their navigation and nature, cruise ships traverse Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ). However, this industry has been criticised for its high use of energy, emissions (e.g. its use of heavy oil for fuel contributes to sulphur dioxide emissions), wasteful consumption, but also for dumping of grey water, black water and other forms of pollution.
Priorities for negotiation

Many cruise ships operate in ABNJ but avoid international treaties by registering their ships in small islands such as the Caribbean under “flags of convenience”. These countries are often chosen due to available low wages, heap fees and generally laxed regulations, i.e. where there is minimal incentive to enforce international treaties. The BBNJ Agreement should address regulations for cruise ship usage of ABNJ including emissions and illegal dumping.

The Way Forward

The cruise ship tourism sector can consider the BBNJ Agreement as a further step towards a more sustainable industry. This would build on previous efforts to reduce emissions and encourage greener policies that protect biodiversity within Caribbean countries and beyond their territorial waters.

What happens in international waters affects all of us –
CARICOM stakeholders from government, private sector, communities, civil society, academia and regional agencies have rights, responsibilities and interests in the sustainable use and protection of biodiversity in international waters.

Get more information: https://www.un.org/bnj/
Get involved! Contact CANARI: info@canari.org

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