



CO-HOSTED BY THE BLUE TOURISM INITIATIVE:



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FONDS FRANÇAIS POUR  
L'ENVIRONNEMENT MONDIAL

## SIDE EVENT SUMMARY

# Unlocking Community-Based Blue Tourism in the Caribbean: Trends, Challenges, and Policy Pathways

The Caribbean is known for its breathtaking marine environments, from vibrant coral reefs to pristine beaches. These natural assets are not just scenic wonders but are integral to our identity, culture, and economies. Tourism, the largest economic sector in the Caribbean region, relies on these resources, but can pose significant threats to marine and coastal ecosystems, yet also represent a main source of income for communities.

At the recently concluded 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Small Island Developing States (SIDS4), CANARI, as part of its work under the [Blue Tourism Initiative](#), hosted the side event, ***“Unlocking Community Based Blue Tourism in the Caribbean: Trends, Challenges, and Policy Pathways”***.



Nicole Leotaud, CANARI Executive Director.  
Credit: OECS Commission

Nicole Leotaud, CANARI Executive Director presented the key findings and policy recommendations of the *Regional Diagnostic Study on Community Based Blue Tourism as a pathway to inclusive, sustainable and resilient economies in the Caribbean*. A panel discussion, featuring presentations by key stakeholders, [IDDRRI](#), [OECS Commission](#), [Caribbean Tourism Organisation](#), [SusGren](#) and [Sustainable Tourism International](#) underscored the

importance of tourism to Caribbean SIDS, particularly blue tourism, which centres on marine and coastal activities - representing the largest economic sector in the region's blue economy, valued at US\$47M. However, with leakages of up to 80% for every tourism dollar, climate and human induced impacts, geopolitical influence and COVID-19 there is growing recognition that sustainability and local ownership of coastal and marine tourism in the region is crucial to ensure a more resilient regional future. Additionally, among travellers, there has been an appetite for authentic, immersive and sustainable tourism experiences.

Community-based blue tourism which emphasizes local participation and benefits, ensuring that tourism development supports community livelihoods, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship holds tremendous potential for the Caribbean. This approach, by fostering a more inclusive and sustainable tourism model, can enhance the well-being of our communities while protecting our precious marine ecosystems.

The side event also focused on the necessary policy pathways to support community-based blue tourism to achieve scale, sustainability and impact. Effective policies must address environmental protection, community engagement, and sustainable economic practices. Collaboration between governments, local communities, the private sector, and international partners will be crucial.

It is recognised however, that the Caribbean's reimagining of the tourism sector points to CBT as a potential model to drive a type of BT which is environmentally sustainable while delivering economic benefits to local communities.

Critically, the side event also aligned with the ABAS on tourism, specifically as it calls for

**1. Promoting resilient and sustainable tourism:**

- Protect the environment and cultural diversity and heritage
- De-risking investments
- Cross-sectoral collaboration
- Employment, including informal workers
- Entrepreneurship in cultural heritage and creative industries



*Side event moderator and panelists. From left to right: Anna Cadiz-Hadeed, CANARI Programmes Director; Alice Clarke, Head, Economic Development Unit - Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States; Amanda Charles, Sustainable Tourism Specialist, Caribbean Tourism Organization; Audwin Andrews, Technical Officer, Sustainable Grenadines Inc. and Paloma Zapata, Chief Executive Officer, Sustainable Travel International. Credit: OECS Commission*

2. Pursuing opportunities in **sustainable ocean-based economies**, including coastal and marine tourism
3. Ensuring the **conservation and sustainable use of marine resources**, including by the tourism sector

For more information, read the Policy Note "**Towards Sustainable Blue Tourism in the Caribbean: Policy Pathways to Support Community-Based Coastal and Marine Tourism**" [here](#).

Event co-hosted by the [Blue Tourism Initiative](#):



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