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Tourism development must be done in a sustainable way – Hon. Carlos James

While Caribbean islands rush to develop tourism economies, St. Vincent and the Grenadines's Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Sustainable Development and Culture, the Hon. Carlos James has cautioned that carbon emissions from travel and tourism is forecasted to increase by 25 % in 2030.

Minister James made the point while delivering a keynote address at the Climate Action Zone on the margins of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 28th Conference of Parties held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates last week at the Madinat Jumeirah Conference Centre.

“We have to address this issue firstly at the entry point of the travel and tourism industry. Airlines must move faster to Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), which reduces carbon emissions by some 80 % of jet fuel, and cruise lines ought to adapt immediately the technology of transitional bio-fuel and zero-emission engines. These are the measures we have to take to reduce carbon emissions”, James noted.

He further cautioned that small island nations should consider the risk of over commercializing their tourism product, adding that tourism infrastructure build out should include tighter building codes for coastlines and requirements for hotel development to provide at least 50 % of their energy from renewables. “We have to reduce the carbon footprint on our islands, while at the same time protecting our eco-system through a Ridge to Reef integrated management approach,” said James.

The tourism minister said addressing issues such as grey water leakage from coastal infrastructure and hotels into the marine eco-system is also a major issue of concern for island states.

“Global environmental benchmarks must be set and developed in a way that is sustainable, promoting the build out of protected areas and marine parks, the banning of certain chemical substances in sub blocks to reduce coral bleaching will have a positive impact on our fragile eco-systems,” Minister James said.

As small island economies shift their reliance on travel and tourism, the development within the tourism sector must be done in a sustainable way creating a balance with our fragile eco-systems, Minister James said.