

Stewart welcomes move to diversify tourism market

MONTEGO BAY, St James — Chief executive officer of Sandals Resorts International Adam Stewart has welcomed the recent announcement by Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett that Cabinet has approved an easing of travel restrictions for Colombians visiting Jamaica.

The decision by the Cabinet comes soon after the Government of St Lucia announced the lifting of visa requirements for Russians and Australians visiting that Eastern Caribbean island.

Speaking against the background of economic difficulties in the Caribbean's traditional markets, the Sandals CEO believes the decision is a move in the right direction for the region to look to new emerging countries for muchneeded growth.

“The slow pace at which the American and UK economies are recovering from the global economic crunch is a great time for the Caribbean to diversify its tourism marketing efforts,” Stewart said in a news release. “Emerging economies like Brazil, Russia, China and other evolving ones have a rapidly expanding middle class with great spending power.”

In making the announcement for the easing of travel restrictions for Colombians visiting Jamaica last week, Bartlett noted that the initiative, which is aimed at boosting tourist arrivals, affects Colombians on visits to the island for 30 days or less and for tourism purposes.

“This move makes sense for Jamaica, given the Ministry of Tourism's push in the South American market,” said Stewart. He urged the Caribbean governments to review their visa regimes — some of which he believes are rooted in long-settled politics — with a view to opening up the channels that can help grow business to the region.