



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Bahamas Remains Zika Free**

#### *Tourism sector implementing preventative measures*

NASSAU, Bahamas (February 5, 2015) -- As the Zika virus continues to spread rapidly across the Caribbean, the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism (BMOT) and local industry partners have put several preventative measures in place and are working closely together to ensure that visitors are fully aware of the country's health status.

To date, there have been no reported cases of the mosquito-borne virus in any Islands of The Bahamas.

Tourism industry stakeholders recognize the importance of being proactive; educating the public and potential visitors about the virus and the proposed measures to help moderate the spread of the virus.

“The Ministry of Tourism is monitoring the situation closely and the destination is taking proactive measures to reduce the threat of a Zika outbreak,” said Tourism Director General, Joy Jibrilu.

The Department of Environmental Health has launched an intensified fogging program in New Providence, Grand Bahama and the Family Islands to prevent the spread of the Zika virus.

The Bahamas Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA) is also putting measures in place to ensure that visitors are protected.

President of BHTA Stuart Bowe said the Bahamas Hotel and Tourism Association continues to communicate with the Bahamas Ministry of Health (MOH) and regional partners such as the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) that are working in collaboration with Caribbean Tourism Organization, (CTO), and the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) to mitigate the impact of the Zika Virus.

“Efforts will continue to educate our sector re the Virus and we will update our Members and Industry stakeholders as Education forums, webinars are made available through our regional partners and health officials. We commend the Ministry of Health on their efforts to deploy mitigation efforts such as fogging and encourage our members to participate in professionally recommended prevention measures described in the varying educational forums deployed by our regional partners through the BHTA,” Bowe said.

The Out Islands Promotion Board has also been active in putting in proactive measures to ensure

visitors to the various Islands of The Bahamas are safe.

“Over the past two weeks, The Bahamas Out Islands Promotion Board (BOIPB), has been in constant contact with its members regarding the Zika Virus. Once information is received from the Bahamas Hotel and Tourism Association, this information is then shared with BOIPB member hotels in all of the islands,” said Board Executive Director Kerry Fountain.

Proactive measures include:

- Providing staff and guests with information on ZIKV so that they are aware of the signs and symptoms, how ZIKV is transmitted and how it can be prevented.
- Having insect repellent available to visitors.
- Avoiding storing water in outdoor containers to prevent them from becoming mosquito breeding sites.
- Covering water tanks or reservoirs so that mosquitoes do not get in.
- Avoiding the build-up of garbage, which can act as a breeding site for mosquitoes. Putting garbage in closed plastic bags and keep it in closed containers.
- Uncovering and unblocking gutters and drains to release stagnant water.

**All travelers are advised to:**

- Stay informed about the ZIKV situation in countries they are travelling to.
- Use insect repellents on exposed skin. Insect repellents that contain DEET, Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) or IR3535 are the most effective and safe when used according to the label. If also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen first and insect repellent second.
- Where possible, wear light colored long-sleeved shirts and long pants, socks and shoes to minimize exposed skin.
- When indoors use air conditioning and keep the doors and windows closed, unless they are screened, to keep out mosquitoes. If this is not possible, sleep under mosquito nets to prevent bites.

**What should you do if you feel sick and think you may have Zika?**

- Consult a healthcare professional if you are feeling ill, especially if you have a fever. If you have returned home, make sure to tell them about your travel to the Caribbean.

- Use acetaminophen or paracetamol to treat fever and pain.  
Get lots of rest and drink plenty of liquids.
- A person infected with ZIKV will have the virus in their blood for the first week of infection. The virus can be passed on to other mosquitoes if they bite you while you are carrying the virus. Therefore, be especially careful to prevent mosquito bites during the first week to avoid spreading the disease.

Travelers are encouraged to visit [Bahamas.com](http://Bahamas.com) for any updates on Zika including messages from hoteliers or properties.