

JHTA signs child protection code

BY ANTHONY LEWIS Observer writer

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ROSE HALL, St James— The Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association (JHTA) recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU), supporting The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism, according to Nicola Madden-Greig, the association's president.

The MOU signifies the JHTA's desire to adhere to the conventions and actions of The Code.

The Code, which is an industry-driven initiative with a mission to provide awareness, tools and support to the tourism industry in order to prevent the sexual exploitation of children, was established after the first World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in 1996. It was developed by Sweden in partnership with the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and several Swedish tour operators.

Madden-Greig was addressing the opening ceremony of the 25th staging of the JHTA's Jamaica Product Exchange (JAPEX) at the Montego Bay Convention Centre in Rose Hall on Sunday.

"While this particular issue is not a problem in Jamaica, we want to ensure that Jamaica is always seen as a safe place for families and children," she stressed, as she urged other players in the industry to sign unto The Code.

"The JHTA has been actively encouraging our members to join The Code, and already several hotels have signed up, and are in the implementation phase," said Madden-Greig.

"I know that many of our tour operator partners are already signatories to The Code, and together we will ensure that Jamaica's reputation as a place to vacation for families and children remains absolute.

Tourism Minister Dr Wykeham McNeill, in his address, pointed out that the linkages hub of JAPEX has the potential to grow businesses and to create more jobs for Jamaicans.

"The linkages programme can create greater demand for our products, both locally and overseas, and can help to provide sustainable jobs and improve the standards of living of our people," he said.