

More than 11,000 attend Seatrade

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MIAMI, FLORIDA – Senate President Kenneth L. Gittens said Monday that given the catastrophic hurricanes of 2017 and the rapid changes occurring within the cruise industry that it was critical for Virgin Islands officials to continue to work closely with cruise lines, travel agents, vendors and other tourism partners.

Senator Gittens, who is among the Virgin Islands delegation attending the 2019 Seatrade Cruise Global Conference, said the annual event remains the industry’s most important networking opportunity with the ultimate goal of luring more ships and attractions to the Territory, particularly St. Croix.

“As we continue to rebound from Hurricanes Irma and Maria, our tourism environment and specifically the cruise industry are regaining their stability, but we still have some catching up to do,” he said. “This conference is just one of the ways that we can continue to remain abreast of the changes taking place through innovative workshops and opportunities to network with the top executives in the industry. We must be proactive in driving our tourism product forward.”

There are more than three dozen workshops that focus on all aspects of the cruise industry, with many oriented toward the role that government must play in regulating and supporting tourism.

“This conference is expected to draw more than 11,000 registered attendees from around the world,” the Senate President said. “We want to ensure that the Territory remains at the table and is effectively represented. Having the opportunity to meet one on one with the executives gives us a leg up on our competition.”

The Executive Director of the 33rd Legislature and former Tourism Commissioner, Pamela C. Richards, said at the Seatrade Conference senators have a unique opportunity to meet with industry partners and learn how the Territory can be improved as a destination.

“With the information that they gather, and the relationships built with this face-to-face interaction, they can use this information to develop policies and adjust existing legislation or implement new legislation that can leverage our destination more prominently to these audiences,” Ms. Richards said.

Gittens said he is looking forward to the conference’s keynote address on the State of the Industry Panel which will be moderated by Lucy Hockings from BBC News and include Frank Del Rio of Norwegian Cruise Line, Arnold Donald of Carnival Corporation, Richard Fain from Royal Caribbean Cruises and Pierfrancesco Vago from MSC Cruises.

“We’ve seen the fruits of our attendance at Seatrade in the past and this is another opportunity to connect with the key industry players. There is a great global market out there waiting to come to our Territory and enjoy our rich heritage and natural beauty,” Senator Gittens said.

The conference’s tradeshow and expo floor will feature 800 exhibitors from 83 countries.

“I’m looking forward to having candid discussions with some of the vendors, operators and investors to bring new attractions and investment dollars to the Territory,” Senator Gittens said.

The Legislature’s delegation includes: Senate President Gittens, Senator Kurt Vialet, Senator Oakland Benta, Senator Stephen Payne, Senator Athniel “Bobby” Thomas and Senator Myron Jackson.