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## PRESS RELEASE

### European travel agents and tour operators meet to ensure that travelers can return to Rhodes and Corfu

*Almost 100 representatives of travel agencies and tour operators from all of Europe participated in a workshop to take stock of the situation in Rhodes and Corfu. Holiday demand in these islands is still strong and the current situation requires a good knowledge of the suppliers and connection with local organizations and authorities.*

Brussels, 2 August 2023 – ECTAA (European Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Associations), HATTA (Hellenic Association of Tourist and Travel Agencies) and FEDHATTA (Federation of Hellenic Associations of Travel & Tourist Agencies) held a joint working session for travel agents and tour operators from across Europe to take stock of the latest developments in Rhodes and Corfu.

George Hatzimarkos, Governor of the South Aegean Region, who has overseen the safe evacuation and care of more than 25.000 holidaymakers, provided a global overview of the developments of last week and provided a simple message: Life is now returning to normal for the entire island of Rhodes, including the few areas that were affected. The residents of Rhodes, who have been heroic and selfless throughout these difficult days, together with the Greek state, are looking forward to continuing to offer their care and unique hospitality to foreign visitors. Out of the 41 hotels, which were evacuated, 35 are already operational again. The situation is being assessed every 6 hours. Reliable and timely information remains a top priority, and Mr. Hatzimarkos urged travel professionals to contact the local authorities with any questions at the following address: [rhodesislandofficial@gmail.com](mailto:rhodesislandofficial@gmail.com).

Konstantinos Zikos, advisor to the Minister for Tourism, as well as Efi Staylidiadi from the Greek National Tourism Organisation emphasised the importance of communicating positively on the destination. The image of Rhodes has clients to enjoy the beauty the island. For media and communication support, travel agents and tour operators can contact their local branch of GNTO or send a message to [marketing@gnto.gr](mailto:marketing@gnto.gr).

During the workshop, tour operators acknowledged the commitments of the Greek authorities as well as the local population for safeguarding visitors, and outlined the concerns they need to address with holidaymakers. Lysandros Tsilidis, president of FEDHATTA, and Eric Drésin, secretary general of ECTAA, highlighted that the close cooperation between FEDHATTA, ECTAA and GNTO for the past three years ensures that travel agents and tour operators can get quick replies to any questions they have. At the same time, Greece can better overcome such tragic developments by connecting, through ECTAA, to more than 80.000 companies located in Europe.

Frank Oostdam, president of ECTAA, concluded the meeting and highlighted that “trust is essential for business. Greece demonstrated that it was able to find solutions to unexpected large scale events in a humane and effective way and this achievement should not be underestimated.” He added “the events of last week question the industry on the impact of climate change on its business model; this is why ECTAA, FEDHATTA and HATTA will hold a meeting in Athens next 28 and 29 September to discuss with the Greek authorities how to adapt to the current and coming challenges and ensure that travel becomes more sustainable.”

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**About ECTAA:** ECTAA (European Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Associations) is the representative body for about 80.000 travel agents and tour operators in Europe, comprising the national associations of travel agents and tour operators from 30 European countries.

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