

## Jamaica, China working on direct flights

Jamaica should soon have direct flights to China, the fastest growing market for outbound travelers in the world.

China's newly appointed Ambassador to Jamaica, Zheng Qingdian yesterday gave a commitment to pursue the introduction of direct flights between Beijing and Montego Bay, during a courtesy call on Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett.

Ambassador Qingdian said he would be facilitating discussions with China Air to have the new flight arrangement implemented.

The Chinese diplomat also discussed with Minister Bartlett investment prospects in tourism and extended an official invitation to the Minister to meet with his counterpart in China in September to explore areas for increased collaboration.

Minister Bartlett expressed enthusiasm about the opportunities for greater collaboration with China, particularly in tourism.

"China represents one of the target markets for increasing tourist arrivals to the island and establishing direct flights between us and them is a major step in having Chinese visitors coming here," the Minister said.

China is the top destination in Asia and the Pacific region. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), it is forecast to provide more than 100 million visitors for other destinations by 2018. Chinese visitors are particularly attractive as they are likely to spend during their travels, as indicated by statistics compiled by the WTTC.

Fresh from his trip to Russia last week and South America last month, Minister Bartlett stressed that "Brazil, Russia, India and China, commonly referred to as the BRIC countries, represent strong potential for growing visitor arrivals to Jamaica. As a result, these countries will increasingly become important points of focus for Jamaica's marketing efforts."

Some 10,000 additional air seats have been secured to bring in visitors from South America over the next six months. This is expected to boost arrivals from the usually colder southern continent during the summer period in Jamaica, which is traditionally the off season for the tourism industry.