

balized business venture. We offer legal and financial safeguards to support the most complex operations and we have a highly specialized and highly experienced workforce capable of handling the most elaborate projects.

Puerto Rico offers the lowest operational costs of any jurisdiction in North America, making it the perfect bridge to access a potential market of 500 million people. We are the ideal venue for holding commercial and cultural exchanges between the U.S. and Spanish-speaking countries. There is no doubt that Puerto Rico and its neighboring countries have the capability to create transformative changes at international and hemispheric levels that will influence and shape economic trade policies.

As a step in that direction, I want to propose the development of a regional and cooperative model for tour-

ism that includes Puerto Rico as a strategic partner to propel growth locally and abroad. Our international airport handles thousands of direct flights to all major cities in the U.S. and top destinations in Europe and Latin America. We have reclaimed the position of main hub for the Inter-Caribbean network. In the last two years, Puerto Rico welcomed new regional routes and restored connections to 14 islands in the Caribbean through commercial agreements with Seaborne, Cape Air, InterCaribbean Airways, and Winnair, among others.

Cruise ship visits are also on the rise. Earlier this year we set a new record of 18,000 passengers in one day. In 2016, we will receive the two largest cruise ship boats from the Royal Caribbean line, each with a capacity of 6,300 passengers. This is an opportunity that expands beyond our shores.

