

ACS and Europe strengthen relations



Port of Spain (November 26, 2010) – The Secretary General of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Ambassador Luis Fernando Andrade Falla made an official visit to France and Spain during the period 1-12 November 2010 in order to promote and strengthen the ACS agenda.

The highlight of the visit to Paris were meetings between the Secretary General, and several high level officials from the French Government to review regional issues of importance including the situation in Haiti and ACS relations with the Central American and Caribbean sub-regions and French Overseas Territories in the Caribbean.

In this regard, Ambassador Andrade met with Mrs Béton-Delegue, Director for the Americas and the Caribbean at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. Also in attendance were Mrs. Alix Francoise, Project Officer at the French Development Agency (AFD); Mr. Jacques Le Marec, General Directorate for Competitiveness, Industry and Services, Ministry of the Economy, Industry and Employment; Mr. Philippe Létrilliart, Deputy Director, Americas Directorate; Mr. Guy Christophe, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Americas Division.

The ACS Secretary General also held intensive discussions with the Minister for Overseas Territories, Mrs. Marie-Luce Penchard at the Ministry of Interior, Overseas Territories and Territorial Collectivities in Paris. The Minister was accompanied by Mr. Huberson, Diplomatic Adviser to the Minister and Mr. Stéphane Diémert, Ambassador, Regional Cooperation Delegate for the French West Indies-French Guyana zone

The ACS Secretary General meets with the Minister for Overseas Territories, Mrs. Marie-Luce Penchard.

Ambassador Andrade used the opportunity to elaborate on the ACS agenda, activities and projects related to the major focal areas of the Association: trade, tourism, transport, disaster risk reduction and the Caribbean Sea. The meeting also centred on the relationship and participation of the French territories (Martinique and Guadeloupe) in the ACS agenda.

While in Paris, the Secretary General (above) participated at the Solemn Session of the Bicentenary of the Latin American and Caribbean Independence at the French Senate.

Ambassador Andrade held meetings with the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Mr. Mateo Sorinas at its Headquarters in Strasbourg.

The ACS Secretary General delivered a presentation on “The Security Arc in the Caribbean Region” at the Institut des Hautes Etudes de Défense Nationale (IHEDN).

The Secretary General also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) involving the ACS, the Assembly of French Chambers of Commerce & Industry (ACFCE), the International Francophone and Economic Intelligence Organisation (AIFIE) and the Observatory of Strategic Studies of the Greater Caribbean and the Amazon Basin (OESGC-BA). Mr Philippe Clerc, Director of Economic Intelligence, Innovation and ICTs signed on behalf of the ACFCE, while Mr. Mario Sandoval, Head of Department and Promotion represented the OESGC-BA.

The objective of this MOU is to explore the feasibility of strengthening the strategic analysis and forecasting capabilities of the ACS services, and promoting the exchange of knowledge and expertise in the areas of competitive and strategic intelligence, experiences and information. The Secretary General expressed his appreciation to the ACFCE and the OESGC-BA who co-financed the official visit and thanked both Mr. Clerc and Mr. Sandoval for their valuable support throughout the period.

The ACS Secretary General also participated at the 11th Biarritz Forum from 3-5 November. This Summit offered the potential for the ACS to act as a liaison so as to develop cooperation relations between the Latin American and Caribbean zone and Europe. The sessions and workshops covered areas such as- economic: integration process, political: governance and democracy; social: new economic policies for employment in the European Union and Latin America; prospects for European investments in Latin America and European cooperation in Latin America.

On the final day of the Forum, the Secretary General participated in the panel of the closing session.

In his intervention, Ambassador Andrade stated that it was a privilege to have the opportunity to reflect on the relationships between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union. He stressed that these relations are developed through the sub-regional groupings of CARICOM and SICA (Central American Integration System), and he highlighted the fact that both sub-regions had negotiated partnership agreements with the European Union. In this context, the European Union should consider the process of integration in both sub-regions. He also highlighted the important role in this process for the French Caribbean territories (Martinique and Guadeloupe) with their potential as hubs of connectivity with Europe. In conclusion, the Secretary General expressed his congratulations to the Forum organisers and offered his full support for the next Forum scheduled to take place in the Dominican Republic, which is part of the ACS Greater Caribbean region.

Following Biarritz, the Secretary General attended several meetings and conferences in Madrid, Spain. He participated in conferences at the Institute of International Affairs and Foreign Policy (INCIPE) and at the University of Complutense. Final activities in Madrid included meetings with Mr. Carlos Vogeler Ruiz, Regional Representative for the Americas at the World Tourism Organization, and another with Mr. Juan María Alzina, Director General of the multilateral organizations in Iberoamerica from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain. In this last meeting,

they discussed the integration process in the region and the role of the ACS, as well as areas of cooperation in which Spain expressed interest.