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Mérida, Mexico, May 1st, 2014: In celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Association of Caribbean States, "ACS 20/20: Present and Future," Mérida welcomed and played host to various authorities from Member States and Associate Member States as well as Observers and Founders of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), where they converged for the VI Summit of Heads of State and/ or Government of the Association of Caribbean States on 30th of April, 2014.

Presidents and Prime Ministers from the following Member Countries who were in attendance include: His Excellency Enrique Pena Nieto, President of Mexico; The Honourable Perry Gladstone Christie, Prime Minister of The Bahamas; The Honourable Freundel Stuart, Prime Minster of Barbados; His Excellency Danilo Medina Sanchez, President of the Dominican Republic; The Honourable Keith Mitchell Prime Minister of Grenada; His Excellency Otto Pérez Molina, President of Guatemala; His Excellency Donald Ramotar, President of Guyana; His Excellency Michel Martelly, President of Haiti; His Excellency Juan Orlando Hernández, President of Honduras; The Honourable Portia Simpson, Prime Minister of Jamaica; The Honourable Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis and Luis Guillermos Solís Rivera, President Elect of Costa Rica; the Honourable Ivar Asjes, Prime Minister of Curacao (Associate Member) and the Honourable Sarah Wescot-Williams, Prime Minister of Sint Maarten (Associate Member).

During the opening ceremony, presided by the President of Mexico, His Excellency Enrique Peña Nieto stated that, "the Caribbean Sea is not a border that divides us, but on the contrary, it is without a question a bridge of unity among the countries that share the Caribbean region." It is this quest for unity and increased communication and cooperation within the Caribbean which led to the

formation of the Association of Caribbean in 1994 and with the Association now celebrating its 20th Anniversary in 2014, all participating Members can agree that this quest has been fulfilled.

President Nieto further acknowledged the immense contribution made to the Association by the now deceased Dr. Norman Girvan, who was the 2nd Secretary General of the ACS between the years 2000-2004. Additionally, the Mexican President also welcomed the recent adhesion of Associate Members of the ACS; Curaçao, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Sint Maarten.

He further proceeded with four projects for the Members of the ACS. He emphasized that these cooperation projects will be the most important tool to address common challenges and achieve development of this region. The projects include:

• Participation of regional states in the initiative on management of global geospatial information, to have reliable information in order to boost the development of their societies. The project includes necessary process equipment and provides for an investment of US$4.5 million.

• The Caribbean Territorial Information System, aimed at strengthening institutions of risk management and civil defence by a homogeneous technological platform. That platform will allow for a more precise analysis of the threats, vulnerabilities and risks, which will result in safer planning for nations and people.

• The international carriage of goods by simplifying customs procedures. If approved, this instrument will facilitate trade and reduce the associated costs.

• Trade facilitation, but from the perspective of interconnectivity and promotes short-distance ocean transportation.

These four propositions by the Mexican Government reiterate the country's goal for greater cooperation within the Caribbean Region so as to continue to promote sustainable development for the Greater Caribbean.

His Excellency Ambassador Alfonso Múnera, Secretary General of the ACS, in his presentation at the Sixth Summit, began with a special tribute to two great personalities with whom he had the opportunity to share moments in his life; Dr. Norman Girvan, one of the greatest economist and Gabriel Garcia Marques, Nobel Prize Winner. The Secretary General also presented a report on the advances of the ACS in the areas of trade, sustainable tourism, transport and disaster risk reduction including the Caribbean Sea Commission. He further updated the gathering on the evaluation of the Plan of Action of Petion-Ville, which was approved during the last Summit of the ACS in Haiti. He then expressed gratitude to the Government of Mexico for hosting the Summit.

The President of Guatemala, Otto Pérez Molina, expressed the importance of the ACS as a great tool for achieving the goals of all the Members of the Greater Caribbean. He shared this sentiment with Trinidad's Minister of Foreign Affairs who talked about the Association as leading the way for a system of Caribbean Convergence which he views as "essential to cement a position of sustainability for all the economies in the region, large and small, in the global setting."

Another important contribution to the Summit was delivered by Dr. Mario Molina, Nobel Prize Winner for Mexico who asked Member Countries to be alert and assume actions against climate change. He stated that climate change is indeed "a reality despite being surrounded by myths." He further went on to explain that there is a consensus among up to 97% of experts who agree that the climate is changing. He attributed some of these changes to societal activities. He assured that changes in climate will lead to future problems as one can already see by floods, droughts and rains of great intensity.

The Declaration of Mérida was signed by 31 countries to bring to an end the VI Summit of Heads of State and/ or Government of the Association of Caribbean States on the 30th of April, 2014. The Declaration reiterated "the permanence of the Association of Caribbean States as a special space for dialogue and co-operation in order to make strides in Latin America and Caribbean integration." The Declaration of Mérida also highlighted the importance of work being done in disaster risk management, transport and improved connectivity in the region, trade development and external economic relations as well as sustainable tourism.