

## Cooperation activities between the ACS and T&T Tourism Authorities



Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago January 22nd, 2015 - A meeting with Tourism Authorities of Trinidad and Tobago was convened by the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) at its headquarters, to facilitate dialogue on cooperation activities between the Association and the Tourism Authorities in their approach to sustainable tourism development.

Mr. Julio Orozco, Director of Sustainable Tourism of the ACS, while delivering introductory remarks, reinforced the importance of cooperation activities and the sharing of achievements in the field of sustainable tourism in order to strengthen the countries of the Greater Caribbean.

The work programmes of the Tourism Authorities; the Ministry of Tourism (MOT), the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) and the Tourism Development Company (TDC), were presented during the meeting with the aim of identifying cross-cutting areas for co-operation.

Ms. Donna Ferraz, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism conveyed best regards from the Minister of Tourism, Senator Gerald Hadeed who was unable to attend the meeting. She emphasised, however, that the Minister and his staff recognise the importance of the morning's discussions, and by extension, the dialogue on sustainable tourism. Mr. Brian Gift, Tourism Advisor II, Ministry of Tourism, subsequently outlined the Ministry's priorities for the current fiscal year, making mention of the collaborative efforts between the Ministry and the Tourism Development Company to implement initiatives towards ensuring the growth of the industry in the twin island state. Among these initiatives was the recent award of the Blue Flag Certification for the Las Cuevas Beach, on-going refurbishment projects of beach facilities to include Maracas Beach, restoration of cultural heritage sites and multi-purpose trails and the expansion of airlift to Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Oscar Brathwaite, Administrator Secretary of the Division of Tourism and Transportation of the

Tobago House of Assembly, highlighted product development initiatives, tourism marketing and promotion and events as key aspects being engaged by the THA in the area of tourism development. Mention was made of familiarisation tours for travel agents and tour providers and the rebranding of promotional material among others. In the area of Transport, Mr. Brathwaite remarked that the THA has successfully negotiated for the return of Virgin Atlantic to Tobago as well as the introduction of Gol Airlines of Brazil with a weekly flight from São Paulo, Brazil to Tobago via Barbados.

Mr. Keith Chin, Chief Executive Officer of the Tourism Development Company gave an overview of the work of his organisation highlighting ongoing initiatives as well as plans to boost Business and Sports tourism and the development of new niche market segments such as medical tourism.

As it relates to cooperation activities between the ACS and the Tourism Authorities, both Mr. Orozco and Ms. Amanda Charles, Sustainable Tourism Adviser of the ACS, emphasized the priority of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean (STZC), the very first of its kind in the Caribbean. The STZC is a proactive and innovative initiative by the ACS and its Member Countries, incorporating the principles of sustainable development in integrated tourism planning; and offers a unique tool to co-ordinate regional efforts in the area of tourism development.

Mr Orozco in his concluding remarks emphasized the willingness of the ACS to foster closer collaboration with the National Tourism Authorities of Trinidad and Tobago as partners in the strengthening of the Zone and to support the efforts of the respective tourism agencies at the national level. In this regard, as an immediate next step the selection of Trinidad and Tobago's STZC destinations would be prioritised. Additionally, a number of activities were identified for joint implementation and it was agreed that a representative from the ACS and the National Tourism Agencies respectively, would be appointed to work towards formalisation of these proposals.