

ACS CONCLUDES THE 18TH INTERSESSIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL



Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 17th November 2015- The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) convened the 18th Intersessional Preparatory Meeting for the 21st Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council on 17th November 2015 at the Hilton Hotel, Port of Spain, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The Honourable Dennis Moses, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs of the Host Country, addressed representatives of the Member and Associate Member Countries of the ACS.

Minister Moses highlighted the dedication of the Secretariat and Secretary General Múnera for the significant contributions to the work of the Association. He further referred to the upcoming First Symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission which will provide the opportunity for discussions on pertinent issues such as the invasion of the sargassum seaweed and the lionfish and other forms of coastal deterioration in the Caribbean.

Also contributing to the panel of speakers delivering introductory remarks were Mr. Madelain Fils-Aime, Chief of Staff of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Haiti in his capacity as Chairman of the Ministerial Council followed by H.E. Alfonso Múnera, Secretary General of the ACS. Mr Fils-Aime mentioned that this meeting presented an opportune moment to analyse the work in the various fields undertaken by the ACS.

Secretary General Múnera thanked the Chair and acknowledged the work of Haiti in the Association. He mentioned that after eight years, the ACS had not hosted a Summit and Haiti launched the process of revitalisation of the ACS in 2013, with this being the central theme of the Fifth Summit. He further praised the Government of Mexico who hosted the Sixth ACS Summit in that country in honour of the twentieth anniversary of the organisation. He mentioned that coming out of this meeting, Mexico sponsored four important projects which redound to the benefit of the ACS membership. Secretary General Múnera also disclosed that the Seventh Summit of the ACS will be held in Cuba in February 2016.

One of the principal objectives outlined for the meeting included an examination of one of the cooperation projects approved by the VI Summit of Heads of State and/or Government of the ACS which was held in Merida, Mexico in 2014. With respect to this, Mr. Efraín Limones García, Director of the Project on the Caribbean, National Institute of Statistics and Geography (MFA México), informed on advances made in the following project: Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management, which is being coordinated in conjunction with the Directorate of Disaster Risk Reduction. He stated that the project had advanced significantly with Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) core stations that will be delivered to ACS Caribbean countries in the region. GNSS is a satellite system that is used to pinpoint the geographic location of a user's receiver anywhere in the world. This system will be used to reduce the geospatial infrastructural gap in the Caribbean and will tie the Caribbean to the Global Geodetic Reference Frame (GGRF). The GGRF is a generic term describing the framework which allows users to precisely determine and express locations on the Earth, as well as to quantify changes of the Earth in space and time and determine positions at a high level of precision.

During the meeting's proceedings, discussions were held surrounding the upcoming Symposium on the Caribbean Sea titled "Challenges, Dialogue and Cooperation towards the Sustainability of the Caribbean Sea" which will take place from November 23rd to 24th, 2015 in Port of Spain. In this regard, the Secretariat updated the Meeting on the status of the preparations for this Symposium.

The 18th Intersessional Preparatory Meeting of the Ministerial Council concluded following preparations for the 20th Ordinary Meeting of the ACS Ministerial Council which will take place in Haiti in January, 2016. Delegates also discussed the upcoming elections to select a new Secretary General as well as Directors to the ACS Secretariat. Secretary General Alfonso Múnera will complete his tenure in April 2016.

H.E. Alfonso Múnera, Secretary General of the ACS reinforced the words of his counterparts by stating that the ACS is a tool that can produce real movement and meeting in the Greater Caribbean. He disclosed that despite challenges faced by the ACS, this organisation continues to move forward in fulfilling its role in the Greater Caribbean.

The Meeting welcomed participation from sixteen Member Countries and 1 Associate Member

Country as well as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organisation of American States (OAS).