

Seventh ACS Summit to take place in Cuba



Petionville, Haiti, January 19th, 2016 - The city of Petionville, Haiti, welcomed Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Vice Ministers, Ambassadors and other delegations, as well as the representatives of international organisations attending the 21st Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), convened on January 19, 2016.

President of the Republic of Haiti, His Excellency Michel Martelly, accompanied by His Excellency Evans Paul, paid a visit to the Meeting and warmly welcomed delegates to his country.

Participating in the meeting in their capacities as Ministers and Secretaries of Foreign Affairs, were the Honorable Fredrick A. Mitchell, The Bahamas; His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, Republic of Cuba; the Honorable Carl Barrington Greenidge, Republic of Guyana; His Excellency Andres Navarro, Dominican Republic; the Honorable Alva Romulos Baptiste, St Lucia, and the Honorable Moses Dennis, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs.

His Excellency Lener Renauld, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Haiti, in his capacity as Chairman of the Ministerial Council inaugurated the Meeting's proceedings. In his opening remarks, he referred to the Fifth Summit of the ACS stating that this Summit had served as a catalyst for the revitalisation of the ACS after so many years. He further praised the Association on their performance and took the opportunity to publicly acknowledge the work of the Secretary General and his team at the ACS Secretariat for their dedication to strengthening ties among the countries of the Greater Caribbean, through joint strategies for cooperation that contribute to sustainable development.

H.E. Alfonso Múnera, Secretary General of the ACS, in his opening remarks, conveyed his gratitude to the Government of Haiti for their excellent leadership throughout 2015 and added that he considered this meeting to be of tremendous significance in light of the issues that were discussed.

There was overall consensus that the Association has yielded extremely positive and concrete results for the benefit of Member Countries. Similarly, the delegations applauded the Secretary General for his decisive leadership in the process to revitalise the Association.

In his report, the Secretary General highlighted the significant achievements of the ACS Secretariat, including the advancements made by the Directorates for Trade Development and External Economic Relations, Transport, Sustainable Tourism and Disaster Risk Reduction with respect to the Work Programme and Plan of Action of Pétion Ville, adopted during the 5th Summit of the ACS Heads of State and/or Government. During his presentation, the Secretary General further pointed out that the Secretariat has fulfilled more than eighty percent of the mandates established in said Plan of Action.

Of significant importance, was the dialogue on the sustainability of the Caribbean Sea pertaining to the recommendations resulting from the I Symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission which was held from 23rd - 24th November, 2015 in Port of Spain, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Ministers and Heads of Delegations made a joint decision for the continued strengthening of the protection and preservation of the Caribbean Sea and approved the implementation of the recommendations put forward by the Symposium.

Following these discussions, the Government of France, pursuant to their hosting of the COP21 in Paris last December, took the initiative and presented to their counterparts a draft proposal on the treatment of the Sargassum Seaweed which has become an overwhelming threat to many Caribbean islands which depend on 'sun, sea and sand' tourism.

The Government of Cuba was elected Chair of the Ministerial Council for the period 2016, and His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla took pleasure in announcing that Cuba would be hosting the VII Summit of Heads of State and/or Government in June 2016.

Decisions were also taken for the appointment of the Chairmanships of the Special Committees of Trade Development and External Economic Relations, Colombia, Transport, Jamaica; Sustainable Tourism, Nicaragua; Disaster Risk Reduction, Mexico, and Budget and Administration, Cuba, as well as the Council of National Representatives of the Special Fund, Panama, for the period 2016-2017.

Furthermore, the Directors of Sustainable Tourism, Mr. Julio Orozco Perez; Trade Development and External Economic Relations, Alberto Duran Espailat received extensions for an additional two

years.

The Government of Panama, represented by H.E. Luis Miguel Hincapié, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs made a presentation on their initiative of a Humanitarian Hub for the Greater Caribbean, given their strategic position in Central America.

Representatives of Observer Countries, viz-a-viz: Argentina, Chile, Egypt, Finland, India, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Korea, Morocco, Peru, Russia, Turkey, Serbia and Spain, as well as several regional organisations, viz-a-viz: the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police; the Caribbean Community (CARICOM); International Organization for Migration (IOM); Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) were also in attendance.

The organization's budget and work programme for the biennium 2016-2017 were approved by the Ministerial Council. Moreover, the International Organization for Migration and the Republic of Belarus were both accepted as Observers to the Association of Caribbean States, bringing the total number to 24.