

Mexico Named as New Chair of the ACS Ministerial Council



MEDIA RELEASE

MEXICO NAMED AS NEW CHAIR OF THE ACS MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

27/05/2021

Santo Domingo

Mexico has assumed the position of Chair of the Ministerial Council of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS). A transfer of the ACS flag from the Dominican Republic to Mexico signalled the beginning of the chairmanship of Mexico at the 26th Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the ACS, which took place virtually, hosted by 2020/2021 Chair of the Ministerial Council, the Dominican Republic.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic Roberto Alvarez said it was an honour for his country to have led the 35-Member Association in a period of global difficulty as “for us, this organism represents a unique space for dialogue and cooperation for the countries of the Caribbean. Our hope is that that our chairmanship is remembered as one in which a fresh breath of air was given to the Association, identifying opportunities for continuous improvement of the processes, finances and activities of the Association and its Secretariat.” Minister Alvarez also extended solidarity to Saint Vincent & the Grenadines Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves and all the people affected by the continuous eruption of the La Soufrière Volcano. “Prime Minister Gonsalves, we follow the dire situation in your country still, so many weeks later... and we hope that this terrible period will come to an end sometime very soon.”

New Chair of the Ministerial Council, Secretary of Foreign Affairs Marcelo Ebrard addressed the meeting and thanked Minister Alvarez for discussions in preparing to take charge of the Association. “Mexico is going to undertake this task with great pleasure. We will do it with great determination, commitment and enthusiasm because it is a project that is very worthwhile given the emergency that

we are experiencing. We also have the great opportunity to coordinate and raise our voice in all current international spaces in common agreement to achieve the best results possible.”

Emphasizing the institutional significance and continuity that the virtual handover ceremony represented, Secretary General Rodolfo Sabonge opined that the event marked, “a turning point in the life of the Association of Caribbean States- a time to pause, reflect and understand the new realities; , and objectively and professionally determine the Association’s future. “The 2022-2025 Plan of Action should perhaps be focused on recovery, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and mitigating the impacts of Climate Change. We think that in the face of new realities, a deeper reflection is warranted that leads to the possible definition of a new vision, mission, values, strategic objectives and that these in turn serve to align the organisation and its processes so that the organism gains relevance and visibility and can attract international cooperation for the benefit of all the regions and sub-regions of the Greater Caribbean.”

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines’ Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign and Foreign Trade Keisal Peters expressed her government’s gratitude for the expressions of solidarity and wishes of a speedy recovery for the people of Saint Vincent following weeks of explosive eruptions of the La Soufrière Volcano. “

The rest of the Executive Board of the Ministerial Council comprises Panama and Barbados as Vice Chairs and Nicaragua as Rapporteur. Established in 1994, the Association of Caribbean States is an organisation for consultation, cooperation and concerted action in the Greater Caribbean. The ACS coordinates the mandates of its 25 Member States and 10 Associate Members. Its work is focused on, but not limited to disaster risk reduction; sustainable tourism, trade, transport and the protection and preservation of the Caribbean Sea.

MEDIA RELEASE

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the Dominican Republic received and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados the Chairmanship from outgoing marked the handover ceremony Chair Barbados at the 25th Ordinary Meeting of the ACS Ministerial Council, which took place virtually today. At the meeting, the ACS Membership also named and ratified Panamanian engineer Rodolfo Sabonge as the incoming new Secretary General of the 25-year-old Association.

Secretary General Sabonge will take office when SG Soomer demits office. While Hher term ends on July 31, 2020, but the Ministerial Council agreed decided to on an extension of an initial period of three months, to ensure in view of the uncertainties that the COVID-19 pandemic that the new Secretary General can enter Trinidad and Tobago and have a smooth hand-over, given the restricted travel caused by has caused the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the Meeting, Membership welcomed the island territory Montserrat as the 11th Associate Member of the ACS. Other matters included the adoption of its 2019-2021 Action Plan, draft work

programmes for engagement with Founding Observer Organisations and negotiation with the Observer Organisations States of Serbia, Italy and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Incumbent Chair Dr. Jerome X. Walcott expressed his thanks to incumbent Secretary General saying, "From the outset, Dr. Soomer, it was clear that you had a full understanding of your role and what was expected and had a clear vision for the ACS. CARICOM is indeed extremely proud of you and you will leave an indelible mark on the ACS that will redound to the benefit of all Members."

In responding, Dr. Soomer quoted one of her favourite poets Jose Martí to describe her tenure said, "___". "But when women are moved and lend help, when women, who are by nature calm and controlled, give encouragement and applause, when virtuous and knowledgeable women grace the endeavour with their sweet love, then it is invincible."

Representative of the new Chair, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Dominican Republic, Hugo Rivera Fernandez thanked Barbados for their its stewardship, "We wish to thank all of the countries for their support and allowing us to assume the chairmanship of the Association. We will do everything we can to ensure the well-being of the peoples of the Caribbean. We will work with you hand in hand, with our Caribbean nations, to ensure the development of our people will be possible in this era of the current pandemic. Together we are stronger."

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