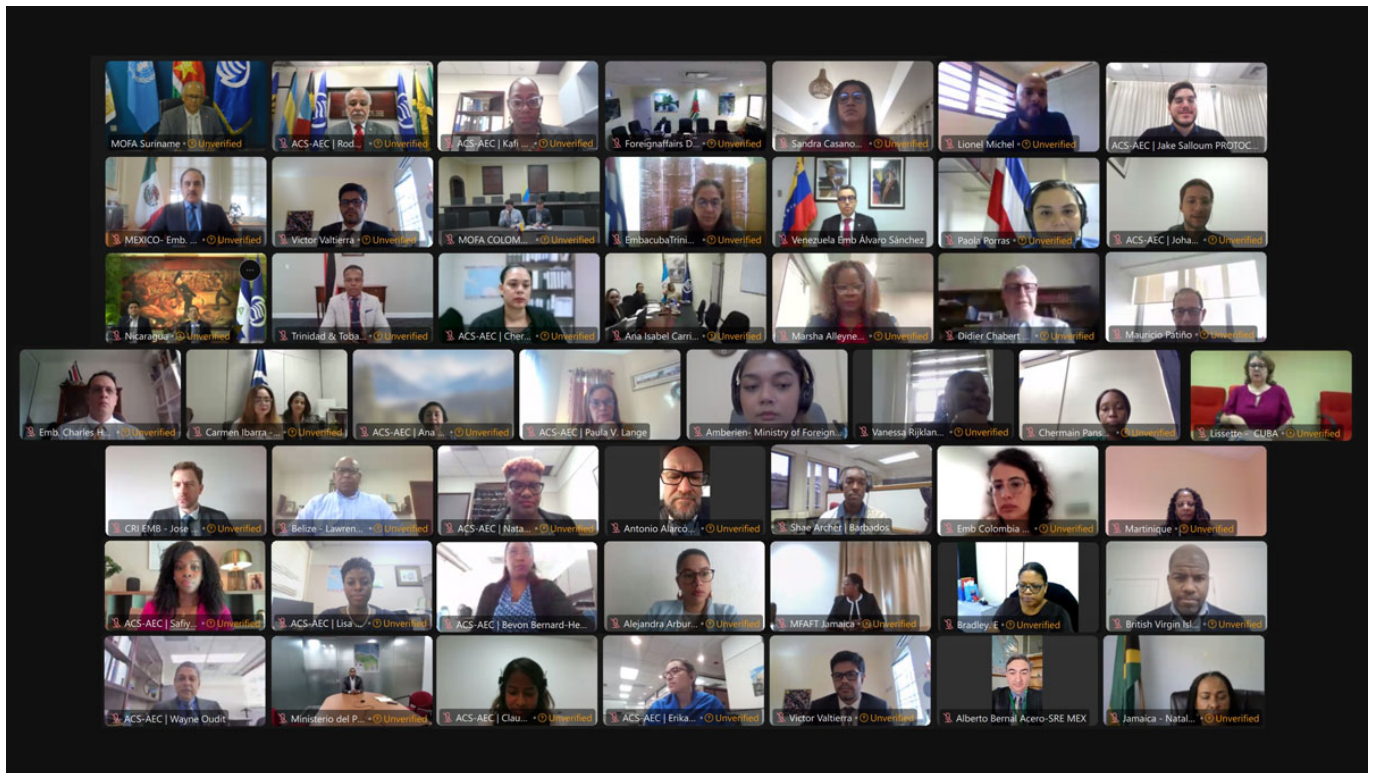


ACS holds its 26th Intersessional Preparatory Meeting for the 29th Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council



The 26th Intersessional Preparatory Meeting for the 29th Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) was held virtually on January 26, 2024 from the Secretariat in Port of Spain, with the participation of 18 Member States and 3 Associate Members.

Senator, the Honourable Dr Amery Browne, Minister of Foreign Affairs and CARICOM Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, ACS Host Country, delivered welcoming remarks and opened the meeting. He commended the Honourable Albert Ramdin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and International Cooperation of the Republic of Suriname as Chairman of the Ministerial Council, leading the Association toward its stated goals in what continue to be challenging times.

Minister Browne noted that the ACS and its members have experienced significant growth and emphasised the efforts to foster intra-regional cooperation with the assistance of key partners, the reactivation of economies and the tourism sector, the protection of our shared Caribbean Sea, as well as the mitigation of the effects of climate change.

Minister Browne also made mention of the issue of Sargasso, a major threat to tourism, the livelihood of the majority of the island states of the region. The Minister commended ACS efforts in this regard, in particular the fact that Secretary General Rodolfo Sabonge had taken the opportunity to raise the issue at COP28 in Dubai. He also highlighted the fact that, thanks to the dedication of the members of the Council, the ACS is poised to meet the challenges of 2024. Minister Browne urged the membership to continue to fulfil its fundamental role in uniting and strengthening the Greater Caribbean.

Subsequently, the Honourable Albert Ramdin, reflected on the importance of being mindful of the challenges facing the region particularly those which arise due to global conflicts. For example, the potential effects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the global financial architecture, as well as the indirect impact on the cost of living and supply chains. The Minister emphasised the importance of

seeking and identifying solutions.

Minister Ramdin expressed his appreciation to those present for their participation in the meeting; taking the opportunity to extend an invitation to the meetings to be held in early May this year in Paramaribo, Suriname. These would be: the 8th ACS Conference on International Cooperation, the 16th Greater Caribbean Business Forum, the Preparatory Meeting for the 29th Ordinary Meeting of the ACS Ministerial Council, and the 29th Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council.

In his opening remarks, Secretary General Rodolfo Sabonge referred to the initiatives undertaken by the Association to position the ACS as a potential recipient of international cooperation, including the Memoranda of Understanding signed with the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea, an MOU and Joint Action Plan with the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and another MOU to be signed in the near future with the World Bank.

The meeting adopted the Report of the Chairman of the Ministerial Council in respect of strategic pillars of action, as well as that of the Secretary General illustrating key efforts and accomplishments, together with those of the Chairs of the ACS Special Committees in the ACS focal areas being: Disaster Risk Reduction, Trade Development and External Economic Relations, Transport, Sustainable Tourism, Cooperation and Resource Mobilisation, Budget and Administration, and of course the Caribbean Sea Commission.

The meeting also received the Secretary General's presentation of the Secretariat's proposal for the Establishment of the Sub-Commission on sargassum to the ACS Caribbean Sea Commission, having regard to the aforementioned concern over the influx of sargassum to the coasts of the Greater Caribbean. This proposal was welcomed by the meeting and will be elevated to the Preparatory Meeting for the 29th Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council.