

DRAFT STRATEGIC DOCUMENT

V Summit Theme: Revitalizing the Vision of the ACS
Towards a Stronger and More United Greater Caribbean

ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)

II Meeting of the Petit Committee to draft the Declaration of Haiti
Port of Spain: October 17th, 2012

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Draft Strategic Document

Introduction

The Fifth Summit was proposed by the Government of Haiti in consideration of the fact that the fourth one had been held in July 2005, that is to say seven years ago. They were of the view that this would have led to a progressive weakening of the organization and the gradual reduction of the dynamic interaction which should exist among member countries. Also in light of the current world scenario and challenges, it was felt that the time had come to establish a new vision and plan of action, fully supported and approved by Heads of State and/or Government. Political dialogue would take place with regard to the founding vision of the ACS, as well as a stronger and more integrated Greater Caribbean region, with a view to taking concerted action in this respect.

In addition to the areas of work currently addressed by the Association, the Government of Haiti held the view that climate change, food security, promotion and conservation of the cultural patrimony of the Greater Caribbean, education, science and technology were also areas in which synergies should be strengthened. The solidarity of Member States towards its fellow Member, Haiti, should also be reaffirmed.

Overview

I Summit 1995 – Port of Spain

Purpose: Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action on Tourism, Trade and Transportation

This Inaugural Summit expressed political consensus on cooperation in the three areas afore-mentioned, with a view to creating an extended Greater Caribbean economic space.

II Summit 1999 – Santo Domingo

Purpose: Analyze the progress of the ACS from 1995 to 1999 so as to determine the projection of the Caribbean Region towards the 21st Century. This Summit analyzed the progress made and outlined a medium to long term strategy to promote functional cooperation and concerted action. It laid the institutional foundations and consultation was forged among the stakeholders. Emphasis was placed on co-operation in culture, education, science and technology.

III Summit 2001 – Margarita Island

Purpose: Strengthen the ACS as forum for consultation, concerted action and cooperation towards the promotion of a Caribbean identity.

It was agreed that the main mission of the Association hence, would be the establishment of the Greater Caribbean as a Zone of Cooperation, an extended economic space, strengthening cooperation in the four priority areas, viz. trade, sustainable tourism, transport and natural disasters. The Convention on the Sustainable Tourism Zone was signed.

IV Summit 2005 – Panamá

Purpose: To reflect on the evolution of the organization; its achievements and challenges; to focus on its future, with a view to giving a new political impetus to the Association.

1. The Mandates, their Advancement, Identification of Major Themes, Short-term Deliverables and The Way Forward

In accordance with the mandate of the 37th Meeting of the Executive Board of the ACS Ministerial Council, the Secretariat hereby provides information in respect of the Mandates, their Advancement, Identification of Flagship Projects and Short-term Deliverables, per Directorate and Unit of the Secretariat.

1.1 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Main Programmatic Areas as per Mandates	Major Themes	Flagship Projects	Short-Term Deliverables
1. Establishment of The Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean (STZC)	Support the identification of the Greater Caribbean "as a geographically determined cultural, socio-economic and biologically rich and diverse unit, in which tourism development will depend on sustainability and the principles of integration, co-operation and consensus aimed at facilitating the integrated development of the Greater Caribbean".	a. STZC Phase III - Setting an enabling environment for the establishment, promotion and further development of the STZC.	<p>Activity: Formalisation of the STZC supports mechanisms to include the Regional Co-operation Mechanism (RCM) in collaboration with and via funding through the Regional Council of Martinique.</p> <p>Activity: Development of the STZC Website to function as an information, marketing and resource tool.</p>
2. Promotion of Multi-Destination Tourism (MDT)	Facilitation and enhancement of cooperation and dialogue among the regional Tourism and Transport Sectors to utilise and promote MDT as a tool to preserve the "Caribbean" destination market share in extra-regional markets and increase intra-regional tourist flows.	<p>a. Cruise Tourism and Entrepreneurial Strengthening in the Greater Caribbean: Opportunities for women</p> <p>b. Forum of Airline and Tourism Executives for the Promotion of Multi-destination Tourism in the Greater Caribbean</p> <p>c. Establishment of the Association Caribbean Cruise-Ship Destinations (ACCD)</p>	<p>Activity: Commissioning of a Study and development of a Training Program focusing on women with MSMEs in the Tourism sector. Subsequently, hosting of a Regional Training Workshop and Symposium.</p> <p>Activity: Hosting of an informal meeting of Airline Executives and Tourism Officials on the margins of the Latin American and Caribbean Commercial Aviation Industry (ALTA) Airline Leaders Forum, to be held in Panama City, Panama, November 14-16th, 2012.</p>

			Activity: The ACCD Ad Hoc Working Group together with the Secretariat prepare a report of the current situation, progress made and agree on the modalities and next steps for the establishment of the ACCD.
3. Promotion of the Languages and Cultures of the Greater Caribbean (CPLC)	Minimization of linguistic barriers and promotion of better knowledge of the various culture of the Greater Caribbean, in order to facilitate and improve Regional cooperation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of the Centre for the Promotion of Languages and Cultures (CPLC) of the Greater Caribbean 	<p>Activity: Operationalisation of the institutional structure of the CPLC and its support mechanisms.</p> <p>Activity: Implementation of student exchange programs among the countries of the ACS for language training and cultural immersion.</p>
4. Establishment of the Regional Tourist Safety and Security Network (RTSSN)	Foster collaboration and dialogue between Tourism, National Security and Disaster Risk Management Stakeholders and Policy makers of ACS Member and Associate Member States to facilitate better management of tourist safety at the national and regional levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of the RTSSN as a regional cooperation mechanism on tourist safety and security 	<p>Activity: Regional Tourist Safety and Security Network Annual Capacity Building Workshop / Seminar.</p> <p>Activity: Initiative on Tourism Policing through Engagement and Employment of Youth.</p>

The Way Forward- Sustainable Tourism

- Expedite the Entry into Force of both the Convention Establishing the STZC, and the Protocol to said Convention.
- To hold the III Meeting of Ministers of Tourism of the ACS (TMM-3) in 2013 under the theme "Enhancing the Global Competitiveness of the Regional Tourism Industry through the Sustainable Development of Niche Markets".
- Operationalisation of the institutional structure of the CPLC to include formalisation of Agreements with the Centres of Excellence. Concurrently, development of mechanisms to secure the sustainability, profitability and international recognition of the CPLC program.
- Development of activities to advance and promote the cultures of the Greater Caribbean.
- Development of initiatives for research, networking and dialogue on Multi-Destination Tourism.
- Implementation of knowledge-sharing and capacity-building activities in the area of Policing and Disaster Preparedness as they relate to Visitor Safety and Security.
- To take a decision with regard to Cruise-ship Tourism Initiatives.

1.2 DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE AND EXTERNAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Main Programmatic Areas (2011-2013) as per Mandate	Major Themes/Flagship Projects	Short-Term Deliverables (July 2012-Feb 2013)
Promote and facilitate the Special and Differential Treatment for Small Economies in the Greater Caribbean. (Trade Liberalization)	Promote the deepening of Trade through preferential tariff concessions.	
Reduction and Gradual Elimination of Barriers to Trade and Investment in the Greater Caribbean	<p>TRADE FACILITATION:</p> <p>i. Harmonization and Simplification of procedures and requirements for customs and customs facilitation.</p> <p>ii. Digitization and electronic transmission of customs procedures between Member State authorities.</p> <p>ii. Expedite Business Visas to business persons of the Greater Caribbean.</p> <p>iv. Promote the UNCTAD E-Regulations Programme within the ACS Countries to facilitate transparency and accelerate business procedures and paper work.</p>	<p>Convening of the I Meeting of the Working Group on Customs Facilitation to be held on January 23rd 2013. to promote initiatives and activities aimed at reducing obstacles to trade in the Region.</p> <p>Convening of the I Meeting of the Working Group on Business Visas to be held on January 25th 2013.</p> <p>Collaboration undertaken with United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNCTAD to Propose the Commencement of E-Regulations Programmes in ACS Countries to promote Transparency and efficiency for business-related procedures.</p>
Promote and encourage trade relations in the Greater Caribbean and develop initiatives to integrate the ACS Region into other regional initiatives for trade convergence and infrastructure.	<p>Bi-Annual Business Forum - of the Greater Caribbean</p> <p>Trade Promotion Organizations Forum of the Greater Caribbean</p> <p>Textile and Fashion Forum of the Greater Caribbean .</p> <p>Promote the Development of Micro, Small and Medium</p>	<p>Regional Symposium on Cruise-ship Tourism and the Strengthening of the Business Initiative in the Greater Caribbean – Opportunities for Women.</p> <p>Seminar on Empowering women through Trade.</p>

	Enterprises in the Greater Caribbean. Promotion of the Economic and Social Development of Women Through Entrepreneurship and the development of SMEs.	
Promote and encourage international trade negotiations and training on trade issues.	Promote trade convergence by strengthening trade capacities in negotiation, management, and dispute resolution matters in regional agreements in the region through training sessions.	

The Way Forward- Trade

Critical steps and strategies that can be initiated at various levels towards enhancing Trade in the Greater Caribbean Region:

- Reform policies to dismantle trade barriers and identify niche markets.
- Promote joint strategies towards the consolidation of such areas as Intra regional foreign direct investment
- Address binding constraints to trade, investment and cross-border business development
- Promote economic and social development of women through entrepreneurship and SME development.

1.3 DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Main Programmatic Areas as per Mandates	Major Themes / Flagship Projects	Short-Term Deliverables
ACS Agreement on Regional Cooperation in the Area of Natural Disasters	Entry into Force of Agreement	Call for the Ratification of this Agreement which needs 3 more deposits, to enter into force.
Promotion of Early Warning Systems	SHOCS Project Phase I & Phase II	The project entitled, " <u>Strengthening Hydro-meteorological Operations and Services in Caribbean SIDS</u> " (SHOCS) – promoted by the Finnish Meteorological Institute with an initial cost of 490,000 Euros. In the short term, its goal is to raise the capabilities of the meteorological services of the Disaster Reduction Agencies, so that they could provide greater safety in the event of threats. In the long term, its fundamental objective is for Caribbean societies to be better prepared to face the adverse effects of Natural Disasters, especially those brought about by Climate Change, which is on the rise throughout the region. The Government of Finland is preparing a project for the Second Phase of the SHOCS, with possible financing in the amount of 1 million Euros.
Promoting a Culture of Prevention	International Virtual Diploma in Disaster Risk Management and Reduction The Rough Season	<u>International Virtual Diploma in Disaster Risk Management and Reduction</u> in English, Spanish and French; Project supported by the Advanced School of Public Administration of Colombia (Escuela Superior de Administración Pública) and presented by the Colombian Government. The idea is to be able to train 120 individuals, with three or four delegates from each country so that they could obtain this virtual diploma, at no cost whatsoever to the ACS. <u>The Rough Season</u> Produced by in conjunction with UWI Arts in Action Phase 1- Production of a radio series "The Rough Season" Phase 2- Dissemination of CD to Talk City 91.1 to be aired during each yearly hurricane season Phase 3- Part of the CD translated into French and disseminated to students.

	<p>Establishment of a Regional Risk Training Centre</p>	<p><u>Establishment of a Regional Risk Training Centre</u> presented by the Government of the Dominican Republic, through its National System Directorate. The Project has a cost of US\$5.3 million, of which the Dominican Republic will provide US \$1.7 million to implement it. The Special Committee is expected to give its approval at its next meeting.</p>
<p>Improvement of Humanitarian Assistance in every stage of a Disaster</p>	<p>Urban Risk</p> <p>Green Response to Disasters</p> <p>Incorporation of the Gender perspective into Disaster Risk Reduction as a Cross-cutting Issue</p> <p>Other activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create an inter regional humanitarian disaster group led by OCHA. • To create strategies for co-operation with regional disaster groups like CDERA AND CEPREDENAC • To map out a logistical plan for coordinating humanitarian assistance in the region <p>The Model act: to create a system of rules and models to coordinate assistance in the region.</p>	<p>Project in collaboration with the Red Cross and based on the MOU in force, presented by the Colombian Red Cross and the National Risk System, at a cost of US \$120,000.00. The approval of the Special Committee is being awaited.</p> <p><u>Green Response to Disasters</u>, to give greater consideration to ecological aspects at the time of response. Project presented by the Organisation for Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation (ODPM) of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Federation of the Red Cross. The ACS has seven additional institutions to handle this matter. Plans are underway for a Seminar in Panama to bring it to fruition. The ACS would mark a global milestone in this issue and the project is expected to be validated by the next meeting of the Special Committee.</p> <p><u>Incorporation of the Gender perspective into Disaster Risk Reduction as a Cross-cutting Issue</u>; Initiative that has components related to Tourism, Trade, Disasters and Transport.</p>

The Way Forward- Disaster Risk Reduction

- Reiterate Mandate 20d of the IV ACS Summit *to foster international cooperation and capacity-building in the area of natural disasters, in enhancing the provision of humanitarian assistance at all states of a disaster, and in promoting a culture of prevention of early warning systems.*
- *It is important that the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction continue the implementation of the Saint Marc Plan of Action.*
- *Include in Plan of Action topics related to the Reduction of Disaster Risk through education and training both formal, and informal (Point 14 of the Saint Marc Plan of Action).*
- *Also include in POA, the transversal integration of gender in the policies, plans and actions regarding disaster risk reduction (Point 6, Saint Marc Plan of Action).*
- *In addition, strengthen international cooperation especially at the regional level instances dedicated to disaster risk reduction.*

1.4 TRANSPORT

Main Programmatic Areas as per Mandates	Major Themes/Flagship projects	Short-Term Deliverables
ACS Air Transport Agreement	Entry into Force of Agreement	The Air Transport Agreement entered into force 19 th Sept, 2008 with the ratification of 12 Member States, and in accordance with the provisions to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Operate commercial air line routes without boundaries between member and associate member states. 2. To regularize the compatibility of airlines and air services.
Uniting the Caribbean by Air	Creation of an Alliance of Commercial Co-operation among airlines of the countries of the ACS	<u>Develop the Total Quality of Air Transport in ACS Countries</u> , a quality control system in regional Airlines and Ports. This project has been promoted and developed by the Ministries of Transport of Colombia and Costa Rica. Support the initiative of the ad hoc working group on air transport created during the 21st Meeting of the SCT.
Uniting the Caribbean by Sea - Mapping a Caribbean Maritime Route	Map of Maritime Routes in the Greater Caribbean Maritime-Port Strategy	<u>Creation of a Map of Maritime Routes in the Greater Caribbean</u> , essential routes that exist in the Greater Caribbean. This project, promoted by the Government of Cuba, Chairman of the Committee, has been in a process of development for three years and was about to enter its Second Phase. It has received significant financial support from the Korean and Turkish Governments. <u>Maritime-Port Strategy of the Greater Caribbean</u> – is an initiative that is in the process of being prepared, headed by the Government of Cuba, with the support and involvement of thirteen fundamental entities. The project will be presented to the Committee's next meeting, which is carded for September 20, 2012.

The Way Forward- Transport

- To encourage more Members to ratify the Air Transport Agreement.
- To formulate a questionnaire to be distributed among member states who have ratified the air transport agreement to get feedback as to the impact of said Agreement.
- It is imperative that the Association dedicate efforts and consider the urgent need for a general aviation policy for the Greater Caribbean, which would establish a judicial framework and cooperation, while ensuring the highest levels of security in international civil aviation.
- To continue with the initiative "Maritime Routes of the Greater Caribbean" so as to identify and compile information in respect of the maritime routes in existence.
- To promote the Initiative, and to attract financing.
- To recommend the incorporation of cruise-ship routes and internal flights.
- To identify strategies to reduce administrative and judicial barriers to transport.

1.5 SPECIAL FUND

Main Programmatic Areas as per Mandates	Major Themes/Flagship projects	Short-Term Deliverables
Promotion of Medium and long-term Programmes beyond specific projects. Strengthening of efforts toward the acquisition of resources.	Coordinating efforts to manage the distribution and financing of projects aimed at fostering regional cooperation among ACS Members and consequently facilitating integration in the Greater Caribbean region.	Source and manage external financing for determined projects, subject to the re-establishment of the Special Fund Unit at the Secretariat.

The Way Forward – Special Fund

- To continue to source technical cooperation to manage issues related to the Fund and to execute externally funded projects and identify new sources of funding.
- To hire a project manager to take charge of the operations of the Special Fund in accordance with Agreement 13/12, 17th Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council, in accordance with the budgetary capacity of the organization.
- To source technical and South-South cooperation, whose importance is essential for the development and management of regional co-operation initiatives.

1.6 LEGAL UNIT

Entry into force of ACS legal instruments

Agreement	Status
Regional Cooperation on Natural Disasters	13 ratified, 4 more needed
Protocol on Privileges and Immunities	11 ratified, 4 more needed
Convention on Sustainable Tourism Zone	12 ratified, 3 more needed
Protocol on Convention est. STZC	9 ratified
Air Transport Agreement	Entered into force 2008

1.7 CARIBBEAN SEA COMMISSION

Main Programmatic Areas	Major Themes/Flagship Sub-Projects	Short -Term Deliverables	Way Forward
Governance Structure		Instituted a Chair, 2 Vice Chairs, three sub commissions (legal, scientific and technical and governance and public outreach	Establish a Secretariat and Budget Committee To develop an ocean governance policy (WCR)
UN Resolutions	A/RES/59/230 A/RES/61/197 A/RES/63/214		Further resolutions to comprehensively manage the Caribbean Sea, contours as well as financial and legal implications. Commitment to an OAS resolution to facilitate work on an implementation of CSI at a hemispheric level
UWI/CSC	Cross Campus network MOU	Implementation of commitments within the context of the ACS/UWI information exchange	Enhanced participation at regional institutions

1.8 POLITICAL UNIT

Main Programmatic Areas as per Mandate	Major Themes/Flagship Projects	Short Term Deliverables	Way Forward
Reaffirmation of Members' commitment and support for the ACS and the validity of its principles and objectives outlined in the Convention Establishing the ACS, and so continue to promote the sustainable development of nations in economic, environmental, social and cultural aspects.	Prove Relevance and Effectiveness of the Association	Greater manifest commitment in 2012 and beyond	<p>Appreciation is expressed to committed member states.</p> <p>Strengthen the communication and political involvement of the small islands and of the OECs.</p> <p>Strengthen ties with Founding Observers SICA CARICOM, SELA, SIECA,CTO AND ECLAC</p>
		Commitment and Support	<p>To increase the highest level of participation at meetings, and to adhere to deadlines for tasks assigned.</p> <p>To encourage political dialogue at Meetings of the Ministerial Council, which is the crux of the Association.</p> <p>To improve the human resource and technical capacities of the Secretariat to so equip it to carry out its mandate.</p>
		Strengthen Ties – Social Actors and Observer Organisations	Encourage dialogue between stakeholders and make a concentrated effort to keep them informed and interested.
		Establish relations with New Organisations- CELAC, UNASUR,ALBA	To establish a culture of cooperation with these new entities, on areas of mutual interest.

1.9 ACS Communications Strategy – Fostering closer ties with Member Countries

The strategies outlined are a roadmap to strengthening our relationship to Member States. In order for this plan to work, members of staff and representatives from Member and Associate Member Countries must pool our resources and synergies for the benefit for the organization.

Based on the foregoing and on an understanding of the vision and mandates of the Association after eighteen years in existence, the following Strategic Communications Plan is proposed. The Secretariat is working to define a budget for said strategy.

STRATEGY	ACTIVITY	TIME	
Member Governments and their Diplomatic Missions accredited to the Host Country, Member Governments' overseas Diplomatic Missions, Founding Observer Institutions, Observer Countries, Social Partners, Regional and International Organizations.			
1.	Constantly update the database on the Ministries of Trade, Sustainable Tourism, Disaster Risk Reduction, Transport and Foreign Affairs and Government Information Services for the purpose of disseminating information relevant to the respective focal areas.	The Unit Assistant – Communications is charged with the responsibility of continuously updating contact information on Ministers of Trade, Transport, Tourism, Disaster Risk Reduction and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs as well as the Government Information Services.	In progress
2.	Produce ACS newsletters/bulletins in which the Secretariat's latest achievements would be profiled.	The Secretariat is encouraged to produce newsletters on its focal areas. These newsletters will be posted on the ACS website as well as disseminated to ACS Member and Associate Member Countries.	In progress
3.	Disseminate features/news items/articles on ACS to Member and Associate Member Countries.	Transmit circular notes to ACS Member and Associate Member Countries whenever the ACS is highlighted in the news. Articles written by the ACS which appear in national, regional and international magazines will also be transmitted to Member Countries.	As soon as possible

	STRATEGY	ACTIVITY	TIME
4.	Host a Meeting of Communications Officers of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Member Countries and Associate Members as well as ACS related organisations to create a group for Cooperation in Communication.	The Secretariat will host a Meeting of Communications, inviting all the Communications Officers of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and ACS related organisations, to encourage information sharing and circulation to national, regional and international contacts.	Every two years
5.	Circulate relevant documents via email, fax and the ACS website to Member Countries.	The Secretariat will transmit information via email, fax and the ACS website. Notes/letters sent by the ACS will indicate that information can be obtained via the website.	In progress

2.0 AN AGENDA FOR THE SUMMIT: THE GRAND THEMES

We are cognisant of the need to arrive at the Summit with clear objectives and projects, producing tangible results and having a social impact. Additionally, it is important, on that basis, that the Heads of State give their full support to a work agenda, which would lead to the revitalisation of the ACS as a great instrument in promoting dialogue and cooperation among the Member States, in accordance with our mandate as a forum for consultation, concerted action and cooperation.

An evaluation of the programmes and projects recorded at the last Summit of Heads of State of the ACS, held in Panama in 2005, enables us to present the following conclusions as key elements in drafting an Agenda for the next Summit, to be held in Haiti in April 2013:

- 1) **The key areas established** to foster cooperation and dialogue among ACS Member Countries, namely Sustainable Tourism, Development of Trade and External Economic Relations, Transport and Disaster Risk Reduction, remain in full force. However, it is necessary to undertake a thorough revision of their programmes in order to strengthen the initiatives that have produced results and incorporate others whose relevance today is acknowledged by all. In this regard, the issue of climate change, under the Directorate of Disaster Risk Reduction; Food Security under the area of Trade and, of no less importance, the integration of a gender perspective as a crosscutting element in all ACS programmes, should be taken into account.
- 2) It is necessary to **revisit the area of the Protection of the Greater Caribbean Cultural Heritage**, as well as Cooperation in Education, Science and Technology. At the very inception of the ACS, and during its subsequent development, particularly at the Second Summit of Heads of State, great emphasis was placed on this issue, which was later relegated to the background or completely disappeared. In the Convention Establishing the Association of Caribbean States in 1994, the very first paragraph of the Preamble stated that Contracting States were:

Committed to initiating a new era characterized by the strengthening of cooperation and of the cultural, economic, political, scientific, social and technological relations among themselves.

We do not believe, in principle, that there is a need to establish a new Directorate. The Secretariat commits to making all the necessary efforts to develop mechanisms for cooperation among the Ministries of Culture, as well as among academic institutions.

- 3) It is crucial that we **arrive at the Summit with definite and tangible ACS work projects**. In this regard, we propose the following:

3.1) **Strengthen mechanisms for cooperation and dialogue** between the ACS and Founding Observer Organizations (CARICOM, SICA, SELA, SIECA, CTO, UNECLAC) as well as other regional organisations such as OECs, CELAC, and others. To this end, meetings are being planned in the first instance with the OECs,

CARICOM, SICA and CELAC, and with a view to arriving at the Summit with concrete work programmes in the process of being executed.

3.2) Work on a **large macro project** geared toward creating jobs in the area of microenterprises, from a gender perspective. Basically, the intention is to create a comprehensive strategy that would strengthen microenterprises led by women, having a great social impact on the fight against poverty, specially designed for Haiti.

3.3) Work on a **concrete project to strengthen the Caribbean Sea Commission** based on the following concepts: i) build pragmatic objectives in the short, medium and long term. In this regard, we should begin by promoting the role of the Commission as a coordinating body for dialogue and cooperation among stakeholders working toward the preservation of the Caribbean Sea, while pursuing efforts to have it declared a Special Area. ii) Design a strategy that would lead to the acquisition of the budget required for the functioning of the Commission, through more systematic approaches to donor countries and international institutions.

3.4) **Strengthen the strategy of the Special Fund.** In order to achieve the objectives of the ACS, it is absolutely necessary that the Special Fund be revitalised as a preferred mechanism for the mobilisation of funds for cooperation projects and dialogue among Member States. The policy of funding the hiring of officers for the Fund with the support of the countries has not worked well. It has not allowed for stability and consistency in the development of a strategy. What is more serious is that today, we have had no officers attached to the Fund for more than one year. It is thus crucial that the Secretariat assume the cost of hiring a Manager for the Fund from its own budget.

3.5) **Strengthen the role of ACS Associate Members and Observer Countries** towards a greater synergy and participation, which will enable us to achieve our objectives as we would be in a position to increase the level of cooperation and dialogue in the region.

3.6) **Strategic projects** that have been duly approved by the Special Committees, some of which have guaranteed funding and others a high probability of being funded, should occupy a prominent place on the agenda. These include: a) the project Strengthening Hydro-meteorological Operations and Services in Caribbean SIDS known as SHOCS, b) the Map of Maritime Routes of the Caribbean Project, c) the Maritime and Port Strategy, d) the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean and e) the Business Forum of the Greater Caribbean.

4) Finally, it is necessary **to reflect** on the possibility of giving instructions to the Ministerial Council so that Ministers may revise at the most opportune and appropriate moment, the matter of the ACS Budget and quota assignments, bearing in mind the preponderance, relations and commitments to be forged by the ACS in light of these new directives.