



**ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)
DIRECTORATE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

26th MEETING OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, July 23, 2015

RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT

The 26th Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism was convened in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on July 23, 2015. The meeting was led by the Republic of Guatemala, Chair of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism and the Deputy Director of the Guatemala Tourism Institute, Ms. Maruja René Acevedo Orellana, together with the Vice Chairs, the Republic of Panama, represented by Carla Ramírez, acting Deputy Director of International Economic Affairs and the Republic of Costa Rica, represented by Ms. Carmen Gil, Charge d'Affaires of the Embassy of the Republic of Costa Rica and serving as Rapporteur was the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, represented by Ms. Martha Palacio-Longa, Advisor at the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Trinidad and Tobago. The ACS Secretariat was represented at the head table by the Secretary General, His Excellency Ambassador Alfonso Múnera.

The Meeting was attended by approximately fifty (50) participants, among them delegations from fifteen (15) ACS Member States and Associate Members, as well as representatives of important regional and international organisations related to the tourism sector: the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), among others. The complete list of participants is attached to this Report as **Annex A**.

I. OPENING CEREMONY

Ambassador Alfonso Múnera, Secretary General of the ACS, had the honour of delivering the Welcome remarks at the 26th Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism. He conveyed his thanks to all present and indicated that sustainable tourism development is linked to a series of external factors, one of them being climate change, thus, initiatives or meetings are being developed to address the issue in the Caribbean Region. He briefly touched on the methodology with which work is carried out in the ACS and explained that work programmes are prepared and submitted to a Ministerial Council annually for its approval and emphasised that it is possible that the next work meeting would be convened in the Republic of Haiti.

He added that this year, 2015 for the very first time, a meeting was held with observers, during which projects were not presented but rather initiatives geared toward exploring the real possibilities for financing the projects that may be approved. He also made reference to the possibility and hope of being able to convene the ACS Summit in Cuba since that country is

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interested in collaborating and working with the ACS. He made it clear that open discussions and productive comments from the countries of the Greater Caribbean Region are necessary in order to have projects that would produce a veritable impact on the population.

The Chair of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism, Ms. Maruja Acevedo, thanked all those in attendance on the second day of the meeting. She outlined the importance of executing the projects that would be approved during the Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism, as well as the conclusions reached.

Mr. Brian Gift, Second Tourism Advisor of the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, cordially welcomed the Secretary General of the ACS, the Chair of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism, the Ambassadors, Members, Representatives of Organisations and all present. He reported that they are committed to the ACS for the purpose of being able to work together and achieve the objectives established. That day, lunch was provided by the Tourism Development Company (TDC) of Trinidad and Tobago.

II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PROCEDURAL MATTERS

The Participants at the Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism examined the Draft Agenda presented by the Secretariat and dealt with other procedural matters during their deliberations, however, there were no comments on this matter during the work session.

III. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ON THE STATUS OF THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM WORK PROGRAMME OF THE ACS

Mr. Julio Orozco, Director of Sustainable Tourism of the ACS, presented a brief report on the activities undertaken and the progress made since the 25th Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism.

The Secretary General of the ACS commented on the Report of the Sustainable Tourism Director and thanked the entire team of the Directorate for all the work done. He also indicated that the Director's Report has presented a productive result accompanied by a series of activities that have been carried out and based on this, the Secretary briefly mentioned the Tourist Safety Workshop sponsored entirely by Colombia, to which 32 countries were invited, with only 7 actually attending. The Secretary considered it a serious matter that such an activity was not attended, since it demonstrates the lack of interest on the part of countries. In light of this situation, he deemed it necessary that information pertaining to training or workshops be effectively sent not only to persons who are responsible for matters related to Sustainable Tourism, but also to those who are interested in participating, since the benefits are for every country that attends.

In closing, the Directorate acknowledged its members and the Secretary General made special mention of this last year of work of Ms. Amanda Charles, who after five years of serving as International Advisor has completed her tenure at the ACS. He recognised her high level of performance, as well as her professionalism in handling matters, wishing her tremendous success in her future endeavours.

The Secretary General also presented Ms. Amanda Charles with an award on behalf of the ACS and the Sustainable Tourism Directorate.

IV. REPORT OF THE CHAIR ON THE WORK PROGRAMME PROPOSED FOR 2015

The Chair presented considerations to move forward with the Work Programme for 2015.

V. COMPLETION OF THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM WORK PROGRAMME (STWP) FOR THE 2016-2017 BIENNIUM

Mr. Julio Orozco, Director of Sustainable Tourism of the ACS, presented the draft Work Programme for the 2016-2017 Biennium for the approval of the Meeting. The Presentation of the Work Programme for the 2016-2017 Biennium led to a round of comments from the countries in attendance.

The Guatemalan Chair of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism, Ms. Maruja Acevedo, pointed out that the issue of climate change could be incorporated or linked to the Greater Caribbean Zone, since it is important to mention that Honduras has the first climate change observatory, this being a current issue that must be included. Thus, it would be necessary to replicate such experiences, like that of Honduras, in other countries in the Region.

The Ambassador of Mexico, His Excellency Mario Arriola Woog, thanked the Tourism Director for his Report indicating that the Tourism sector is fundamental for Mexico. In this regard, he outlined that in 2014, 29 million tourists visited the country, which means that tourism represents 8.7% of the GDP and is the fourth source of foreign exchange, as well as the highest employer of the youth. He further explained that prior to the entry into force of the Convention establishing the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean, Mexico established a sectorial tourism programme based on sustainable development. . He added that Mexico considers the topic of the Sustainable Tourism Zone a very important regional issue where all countries in the Caribbean Region must work together.

In this regard, the Mexican representative suggested that the new structure of the 2016-2017 Work Programme of the ACS Tourism Committee keep the Sustainable Tourism Zone as the main project and that the other issues or thematic areas be considered as sub-topics of the Sustainable Tourism Zone.

Based on the suggestion made by the Mexican Representative, the members of the Executive Board of the Special Committee (delegates of Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama and Venezuela) met to discuss said suggestion and unanimously agreed to maintain the original scheme presented by the Directorate, since the cross-cutting issue of the Programme is that of Sustainable Tourism and all other areas allow actions to be carried out with concrete results that affect the countries. The Mexican Representative was advised of this decision by the Chair of the Committee.

With respect to the issue of Multidestination Tourism, **Ms. Acevedo, Chair of the Tourism Committee**, indicated that there are two known experiences, one of these is the work done by Central America in Europe to promote the Member Countries of SITCA, as well as the Mundo Maya Regional Project (Mayan World), considered as a Multidestination. She believed that at some point in time, those experiences will be shared, in addition to the possibility of increasing the development of products from those countries, seeking alternatives to put multidestination into practice. In the case of the Islands of the Caribbean, other alternatives will be sought through connectivity, but efforts will continue to boost the issue.

Mr. Julio Orozco, Director of the Sustainable Tourism Directorate, indicated that the suggestions made concerning Multidestination will be taken into account, with the relevant modifications being made, in addition to which, work will be done on the Programme so that it could be proposed next year.

The Representative of the Dominican Republic, Mr. Radhames Martinez Aponte, Technical Vice Minister of the Ministry of Tourism stated that a fast-action mechanism should be created with respect to climate change and that the issue of Seaweed be addressed within same, since it is a cyclical matter for which preventive measures must be implemented, measures that are studied in order to arrive at a solution.

The representative from the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Dr. Lorraine Nicholas requested that the OECS be included as one of the international and regional agencies listed under Section 3.1.5 "Coordination with International and Regional Agencies in the area of Sustainable Tourism" of the ACS Work Programme.

VI. PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY ON TRAINING FOR CAREERS IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM, AN INITIATIVE FINANCED BY THE FRENCH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Mr. Yves Malpel, Director of the French Development Agency (AFD) for the Caribbean, headquartered in Suriname, presented his intervention via Video Conference, during which he explained that it was created in 1941, for the purpose of financing socioeconomic activities. The Agency has spent 75 years working in the area of sustainable development and during this time, it has invested a great deal specifically in the Islands of the Caribbean, starting in the Island of Martinique and growing over the years, and today, it has an office in the city of Bogotá, Colombia.

He explained that regional cooperation and Sustainable Tourism are topics of prime importance since they are the central focus of support for the Islands of the Caribbean. He added that there are two key conditions for sustainable development, one of them being competitiveness and the other training, an example of which is the Dominican Republic.

He indicated that issues such as technical assistance and the formulation of studies can help improve participation in regional cooperation. He also made clear the importance of strengthening relations with the ACS in the area of tourism. Mr. Malpel congratulated Director Orozco's team on its professionalism in the study on Projects and applauded the training, which would prove beneficial for the growth of the Region.

SESSION 1: Official Publication of the Study and Launch of the Results of the Survey

Ms. Carmen Rosa Pérez, Chief Consultant and Manager of the consulting company CERTIFICA, provided a summary of the research process and the survey conducted. The Meeting discussed the results obtained and the main conclusions reached. The Regional Development Framework was presented and recommendations were made on future actions and conclusions.

CERTIFICA performed the consultancy study from October 2014 to April 2015. She indicated that it is a company involved in tourism sustainability that manages a certification programme and which is internationally recognised.

With respect to the study, Ms. Pérez explained that all information pertaining to the technical and professional education that exists in the Region was gathered, in order to strengthen the tourism sector. She indicated that with the training and training by competencies Programme, it's not a question of merely looking for skills and knowledge in the students, but rather achieving productivity for long-term teaching. The objective is to go beyond knowledge and train persons so that they could transform their community and work place.

She informed the participants that within the Programme, persons are being trained with a series of practical tests, which raises the level of competitiveness within companies and consequently that of countries, in addition to which, it gives rise to the integration of the labour and education sectors through TVET systems, connecting sustainability. Ms. Pérez mentioned that it is important to define the roles of the tourism authorities in each country, according to the areas to which they are dedicated, thereby achieving a complete system and one of quality.

The Representative of the Ministry of Tourism of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Brian Gift, indicated that Sustainability has become a key word, since it hinges on several factors, such as the social, economic and environmental, which are deemed vital for the Tourism Industry. It was also taken into account that traditional Tourism produces a negative effect on our environment in the absence of a programme of measures to protect the fauna, flora and reefs, raising the risk index not only in the Greater Caribbean Zone but also at the global level.

VII. PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY ON TRAINING FOR CAREERS IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM, AN INITIATIVE FINANCED BY THE FRENCH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

The Representative of the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ms. Martha Palacio-Longa, indicated that in this regard, an official communication would be forwarded pertaining to her country's law on Sustainable Tourism. There was also a forum for discussion and feedback on the Project and the proposed Regional Framework, so that recommendations could be obtained on their implementation by participants.

VIII. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The relevant Regional and International Agencies delivered brief presentations on initiatives in the area of sustainable tourism, highlighting collaboration from the ACS.

Mr. Patrick Dumirier, Director General of *Guadeloupe Formation of the Regional Council of Guadeloupe*, presented the Guadeloupe International Centre for a Regional Approach on Languages (CIGAREL) Project, known by its French acronym.

He explained that CIGAREL is a Cultural Development Institution that enjoys financial support from the countries of the European Union, whose objective is to have Linguistic Exchanges, so that persons could develop at least one foreign language together with the impetus of scholarships and internships. He emphasised that the programme was established to initially create a centre in Guadeloupe and a Language laboratory, providing a linguistic training option in the Caribbean Region. The first interns are currently in Trinidad and Tobago and the teaching centre will be based on English and French.

Ms. Bonita Morgan, Director of Resource Mobilisation and Development of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation, thanked the ACS for the work being done in the Greater Caribbean Zone and presented the Training Programme for Tourist Guides. She emphasised that as a Tourism Organisation, Tourist Guide training has been promoted in view of the fact that in some islands like Trinidad and Tobago, there is no training for Guides, and as a result, efforts began toward creating certification in that sector.

She pointed out that there must be the assurance that the private sector would be involved in the programmes in order to have greater support for training. The organisation has developed a variety of teaching materials related to careers in Tourism, linked to the fields of Business Management and Languages. Ms. Morgan explained that her institution wants the countries of the Greater Caribbean to be able to establish national Tourist Guide associations, so that contact could be made with federations and this type of training could be offered. She expressed her interest in working with the ACS and sharing the material with the other countries, so that higher quality standards could be achieved in the Region.

IX. DISCUSSION ON THE DATE AND VENUE OF THE 27TH MEETING OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The participants at the Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism did not decide on an exact date for the next Meeting of the SCST, however, consideration will be given to future proposals from countries regarding the convening of said meeting and information on the venue and date agreed to will be released in a timely fashion.

X. CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The **Chair of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism, Ms. Maruja Acevedo**, conveyed her appreciation for the work carried out by the ACS. She stressed that the Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism was a success since the issues agreed to were addressed. She also thanked all representatives of countries present during the two work sessions, particularly Trinidad and Tobago, for its hospitality and for all the activities offered.

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The **Director of Sustainable Tourism, Mr. Julio Orozco**, expressed his thanks to all delegations of the different countries that participated in the Meeting. He mentioned that throughout the year, results have been observed in each of the countries that have participated in this Committee. Thus, he underscored that the focus must be on results, pooling efforts and interacting with organisations where the most tangible and concrete actions could be achieved for the countries of the Greater Caribbean Region. He also thanked the French Cooperation Agencies for their support regarding the study, since it is expected to have a positive impact on the populations of each of the countries belonging to the Caribbean Region.

In closing the session, there was a tour of the surrounding areas of Port of Spain and a social and cultural activity hosted by the Tourism Development Company (TDC) of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

ANNEXE A

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