



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

**MEETING OF THE REGIONAL COOPERATION MECHANISM OF THE SUSTAINABLE
TOURISM ZONE OF THE GREATER CARIBBEAN (STZC-RCM)**

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, July 22, 2015

RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT

The Meeting of the Regional Cooperation Mechanism of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean (STZC-RCM) was convened in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on July 22, 2015. This event was organised by the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), in collaboration with the Regional Council of Martinique, and supported by the Guatemalan Tourism Institute (INGUAT) in its capacity as Chairman of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism. The objective of the meeting was to report on the implementation status and progress achieved in the execution of the project on the Regional Cooperation Mechanism of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean (STZC-RCM), an initiative financed by the INTERREG IV Caribbean Space Programme and the Regional Council of Martinique. The workshop was attended by delegations from seventeen (17) Member Countries and Associate Member States, one ACS Observer Country and representatives of leading Regional International Organisations with a Portfolio in Sustainable Tourism: 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**.

OPENING CEREMONY

The Opening Ceremony began with the welcome remarks delivered by **Ambassador Alfonso Múnera, Secretary General of the ACS**, who welcomed all participants to the meeting.

The ACS Secretary General further indicated, by way of introduction, that a few years ago, the perception of tourism activity was quite different since it was considered an issue that was relevant only to small islands. He reiterated however, that not only are the islands involved in this field, but countries as well, such as Colombia. He recalled this since, ten years ago, no one spoke of tourism in Colombia and today, it is the third generator of foreign exchange revenue and one of the strategic development sectors. In light of this, Tourism has become the focal point of the economy in the Caribbean, presenting challenges and risks.

The Secretary General also made reference to the National Geographic Magazine, which published a special report on Coral Reefs. Throughout the article, the focus is on the impact of

climate change and it emphasises that the majority of such reefs are concentrated in the Caribbean, which makes it a Region with singular beauty.

He indicated that quite often, the millions of dollars earned from the work generated by tourism for the wellbeing of the population come from this type of tourist attraction, hence the reason why work needs to be done in the area of Sustainable Tourism, since this has consequences for the economy of the inhabitants of the region. It's not a question of wanting to develop Sustainable Tourism purely for the love of nature in a superficial way but rather, because it has fundamental implications for the functioning of the economy, since the Tourism Industry in the Region is the highest generator of employment and has become the primary source of revenue for the economy.

He also expressed that the ACS has considered strengthening the area of cooperation in the field of Sustainable Tourism and emphasised that the Greater Caribbean is an ideal, an identity that is being built after Centuries of being separated. Today, issues of this nature are being addressed, issues with which everyone can identify, that is to say, specific Caribbean issues in order to achieve concrete benefits.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism of Trinidad and Tobago, Ms. Donna Ferraz, thanked the participants for their attendance and apologised for the absence of the Minister of Tourism, who was unable to attend this meeting due to pressing commitments. However, he expressed his best wishes for the success of these meetings. During her intervention, Ms. Ferraz indicated that tourism has generated 29.2 billion US dollars in revenue, as a result of the 26.3 million visitors arriving in the Caribbean. With respect to visitor expenses, the Caribbean Region has enjoyed better performance than the rest of the world, recording a growth rate of 4.7% in Trinidad and Tobago. The tourism industry has demonstrated growth, thus, she indicated that this is an opportunity to work in collaboration with the different countries regarding the building of Sustainable Tourism. She stated that Trinidad and Tobago was pleased to host this meeting and reiterated support for the work being undertaken by the ACS, highlighting its interest in working with the Association in all the initiatives that would lead to the reinforcement of economic integration and Regional cooperation, extending a welcome to the Pioneers working for the Region.

She underscored that Trinidad and Tobago continues to believe in Tourism development in the Region, given its diversity of traditions, cultures and renowned destinations. Ms. Ferraz wished all delegates in attendance successful results, recognising the efforts undertaken in projects and strategies that would demonstrate competitiveness in Tourism, with Colombia as a clear example, believing that tourism is the new oil of our Region.

The Chair of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism, Ms. Maruja Reneé Acevedo Orellana, Deputy Director of the Guatemala Tourism Institute, in addressing the participants, reiterated her commitment and support for the Secretary General and the Director of Sustainable Tourism and thanked them for the confidence placed in Guatemala to chair the Special Committee. She emphasised that among the Plans that have been formulated by the ACS, joint efforts will continue toward implementing all sustainability projects, since tourism cannot be developed without being sustainable, hence the reason why she applauded the efforts carried out in this field, given that competitiveness is a key element that will help to fulfil the plans of the tourism industry in this Region.

PLENARY SESSION 1: Presentation on the STZC of the ACS - Project Advancements

Mr. Julio Eduardo Orozco Pérez, Director of Sustainable Tourism of the ACS, welcomed the participants and expressed his satisfaction with the activity, since this meeting would be presented with the results of the “Regional Cooperation Mechanism for the Sustainable Tourism Zone” Project, which has been executed with support from the Regional Council of Martinique and which began some 15 months ago.

The Director indicated that it was crucial to mention that throughout these years, new initiatives and concerns surrounding the Greater Caribbean have emerged, to the extent that this Project has developed several tools. Countries have been encouraged, specifically the Ministries of Tourism, to make full use of said tools in order to implement the indicators in the destinations selected. He conveyed his thanks for the support provided by the consultants, who developed the information and gave the advice needed by countries and with whom tremendous work has been done over the last 15 months. In so far as sustainability is developed, resources are better utilised, seizing the opportunity to generate employment and reduce poverty to some extent.

He also recalled that sustainability is one of the most important issues in this Region and that tourism brings with it the implementation of sustainable measures that will allow its benefits to be enjoyed in the long term. He explained that as a result of the project, 18 countries have nominated 32 destinations, which are in the process of implementing the Indicators, as well as the Webpage that was presented that day and that all manuals will be available to countries virtually. He further stressed that in the case of the Ministries of Tourism, a request has been made for this process to be followed up.

The **Ambassador of Panama in Trinidad and Tobago, H.E. Carmen Gabriela Menéndez González** stated that her country is committed to the area of Tourism, since it is one of the first 5 sources of revenue and represents a significant portion of the Nation’s budget. She also stated that the authorities that were to attend this meeting were unable to do so and thus, only the Ambassador was in attendance. She wished positive results for this meeting and that Tourism could become a strong undertaking in the Region.

The Representative of the Regional Council of Martinique, Ms. Maguy Marie-Jeanne, addressed the participants and indicated that it was indeed a pleasure to see the Greater Caribbean Zone as one of Sustainable Tourism since it was a pleasure for Martinique to be able to create this cooperation mechanism. She congratulated the ACS and thanked it for its patience and collaboration.

Ms. Marie-Jeanne mentioned that everyone is full of hope and that this is the motivation to have an instrument that works to counteract the shortcomings identified by the Project, since it is in a crucial phase. She expressed her gratitude to the consultants, who are committed to providing technical assistance in the coming months since the tools presented will prove useful for the development of Sustainable Tourism. She was also of the view that a consolidation phase is necessary, given that several ideas emerged during development.

She suggested that before a certification phase is developed, the Destinations should be integrated and each of them should have a plan of action that is adjusted to suit their realities, working together with the ACS to bring it to fruition. Lastly, she indicated that this is not the end of the project but rather the beginning of a journey and once again thanked the ACS

Director, Mr. Julio Orozco, for the work done, as well as the team of the Sustainable Tourism Directorate.

PLENARY SESSION 2: Presentation of Results and discussion on the implementation of the Regional Cooperation Mechanism of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean (STZC-RCM) Project

The **Chief Consultant of the STZC-RCM Project, Mr. Marcel Clodion**, voiced his appreciation for the opportunity to address all present at the meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism. Mr. Clodion presented the results of the Regional Cooperation Mechanism of the Sustainable Tourism Zone Project and informed the participants that this is an undertaking to support the Sustainable Tourism Zone that has held political, institutional and strategic importance for several years. It is a Project that was launched in May 2014, during the 25th Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism, which was convened in Guatemala.

He added that initially, it was difficult to have a global vision of the Project, nevertheless, in 2008, several studies related to the sustainability of countries were completed, testing the sustainability indicators. This was done for the purpose of obtaining instruments that would allow for improved communication among countries, an example of which is the Website. During this presentation, the Consultant borrowed a few of the words of the Secretary General, in which he made it clear that they were not speaking about decisions but rather the social awareness of the citizens in the Caribbean Region, since efforts need to be undertaken in order to discover that the issue of Sustainable Tourism is an industrial activity that will have a positive impact on the economies of countries.

Mr. Marcel Clodion further expressed that during the execution of the Project, it was extremely difficult to gather the information needed concerning the Destinations, since, in the case of those countries that failed to provide the information, they had to be contacted for said information to be sent and to taken into consideration. He also mentioned that the word destination did not refer to a city but instead to a geographically delimited zone, taking into account spaces for the exchange of information and the various activities related to the STZC Project. In view of this, it was proposed that the tools created be used as support, especially the Webpage, so that information could be shared among the countries of the region, In addition, he stressed the importance of continuing to work with the ACS and linking said tools. This presentation is annexed as **Annex B**.

The **Representative of the Republic of Suriname, H.E. Ms. Fidelia Graand-Galon, Ambassador**, enquired as to which strengths could assist throughout the area with respect to the environment, which includes the pollution of coastal zones, beach erosion, etc. and how it could help address this type of situation.

The **Consultant of the STZC-RCM Project** responded by saying that there are several strengths, one being that there is a general awareness that something needs to be done in this respect, but that the main point is to show how these situations are handled and how they have been discovered, since the results will define sustainable tourism, despite the fact that it is a complex, multidimensional term and one that involves nature and many macro and micro scales. He also reported that the expectation is to achieve interaction with other Tourism

Ministries in other countries, in order to be able to share information, and get them involved in the STZC Project financed by Martinique. He underscored that recommendations need to be made in order to guarantee the sustainability of the system, exchanging information and agreements with Universities that offer training courses in the field of Sustainable Tourism.

PLENARY SESSION 3: Presentation of the results of the project and Training Workshop on the STZC Website

The Consultant of the STZC-RCM Project, Ms. Jenny Reyes, initially explained that one of the fundamental components of this Project is that it was supported by marketing and communication, basically, in order to, as the first step, create awareness of "The Zone" as a promotion mechanism. She emphasised that it is not a common portal to promote the destinations, but instead, a tool for the evaluation and self-assessment of the destinations; given the diversity of the 32 countries that constitute the Greater Caribbean Zone with different languages, thereby creating a platform that shortens distances and bridges gaps.

The Consultant presented and described the Sustainable Tourism logo, explaining that each of the colours of the logo has a specific meaning: orange represented the culture and people, green represented nature and blue, the sea, with a distinctive centre in the form of flower petals. She also presented a brochure as part of the documents and communication materials containing institutional information on the ACS and the process of the Zone, together with the indicators that have been released.

This presentation also outlined the different mechanisms that are included in a validation process, making use of methods that are based somewhat on Institutionality, such as marketing or advertising efforts carried out in the area of tourism, geared toward selling the Greater Caribbean Zone.

She further added that the other tools that may be used include: Destination Manual, which will define all the steps that need to be followed, for example, how to evaluate, select, implement the destination and improve conditions. She also made mention of the Reference Guide, which has been created from two previous documents resulting from a consultation performed prior to the first phase, one for trainers and the other for technicians in destinations and which is now a combined document.

The important element presented by the Consultant was the Website, describing it as an information, marketing and promotion tool to support Destinations. She added that it is already online and within two or three weeks, it will be operating, at 80%, since changes will be made to it for the general public and also to the Intranet. She indicated that the intention has been for this page to display the entire modern and attractive graphic line beyond the Institutional aspects, with each page having a link that will allow access to information, with a classic design or structure and with appealing visual aspects. She explained that the general public will have access to the web page, however, as for access to the Intranet, the ACS will be responsible for granting such access, specifically the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism.

These presentations are annexed as **Annexes C, D and E**.

DISCUSSION FORUM

There was an open forum for discussion and feedback from participants.

The **Representative and Ambassador of Panama, H.E. Carmen Gabriela Menéndez González**, enquired as to what would be the focal point for managing the Net Work. She also proposed that the web page be managed with the Ministries of Tourism since, in the case of her country, such issues are not handled directly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in addition to which, they are the ones who would be given the passwords and would keep the page updated.

The **Consultant of the STZC-RCM Project, Ms. Jenny Reyes**, indicated that the ACS Tourism Directorate will decide if there will be various levels of access and users on the web page. She further expressed that the Ministry of Tourism of each Country will decide who specifically within the Institution will have access to all information.

The **Representative of Suriname, Ambassador Fidelia Graand-Galon**, congratulated the ACS and asked which specific organisation could manage the page, in addition to the public in general. She also added if it was necessary to clarify the levels of access of the web page.

The **Sustainable Tourism Director, Mr. Julio Orozco**, explained that the focal point assigned by the Ministry of Tourism of each country, will be the one responsible for access to the Intranet, as well as the use of and feedback on the web page. He also mentioned that the ACS has experienced a development since it did not have a web page previously and these are novel tools that will open up another area within the field of Tourism.

The **Chair of the Tourism Committee, Ms. Maruja Acevedo**, indicated that since it is a self-assessment, having performed it themselves, the results would be positive and for that reason, consideration would have to be given to another stage, in which the data entered would be verified and the accuracy of information determined. Based on this, she proposed a second auditing stage.

The **Representative of The Bahamas, Mr. Earlston McPhee**, believed that by publishing countries' Destination statistics on the web page and also, if the figures are low, this could result in visitors to the web page not wanting to travel to that destination in view of the low level with which it appears there. In light of this, the Representative of The Bahamas questioned how the web page could be used in this way without jeopardising the destinations of countries. He stressed however, that the web page would be used as a marketing tool.

The **Guatemalan Chair of the Tourism Committee, Ms. Maruja Acevedo**, indicated that it is not advisable to publish the result of the self-assessment with colours in the first phase and was of the view that it should be done during the second phase and a cooperation project pursued in order to bring countries to the blue level, which is the highest and most sought after for everyone.

The **Representative of The Bahamas, Mr. Earlston McPhee**, believed that it is of prime importance that destinations be allowed to evaluate themselves and seek out the resources necessary for their improvement, while at the same time resolving shortcomings, since it is a marketing tool for resources to be maintained with all the pillars of sustainability. He also

enquired as to what would be the benefits or expectations of being involved in the Pilot Programme.

The **Guatemalan Chair of the Tourism Committee, Ms. Maruja Acevedo**, indicated that one of the benefits for the countries interested in the Pilot Project was the support of the consultants and the step by step follow-up in each of its processes. Ms. Acevedo also confirmed that a second phase should be established for the verification of information and asked the countries in attendance, who would be participating in the Pilot Project as the first five countries to work hand in hand with the consultants over the next two months. The countries added as members of this group were: **Guatemala, The Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Honduras and Martinique.**

The **Representative of Martinique, Mr. Jean Yves Lacascade**, expressed that work is continuing on Regional Diplomacy, in an attempt to conquer new markets, assessing technical knowledge and working together with Caribbean neighbours since Martinique participates with cooperation projects in the zone, where regional integration is pursued and where Sustainable Tourism is being developed today.

CLOSE OF THE MEETING

The **Chair of the Committee on Sustainable Tourism, Ms. Maruja Acevedo**, closed by conveying her appreciation to the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism of the ACS, for the efforts of its team and for the results being achieved. She expressed that they will undoubtedly prove beneficial in the Pilot Project together with the countries that were added during the Committee's work session.

The **Representative of the Regional Council of Martinique, Ms. Maguy Marie-Jeanne**, indicated that the meeting was being convened to finalise the Sustainable Tourism Project and extended her thanks to the team of the Regional Council of Martinique, expressing absolute support for the ACS.

The **Director of the Sustainable Tourism Directorate, Mr. Julio Orozco**, thanked the delegations of the countries in attendance, the Ambassadors and Observers, and explained that the presentation delivered during the session was quite extensive in order to cover all aspects, thus, the participants would be subsequently advised of the next workshops to be held, during which other important issues could be addressed, such as the Sustainability Indicators.

Director Orozco further added that the ACS has undergone a transition, where it wants to make a difference in the area of follow-up, making use of the various strategic channels, such as technology, which allows for contact with the different countries involved in the field. He also explained that in the past, there was talk of studies, but now there were concrete tools for each country in the Caribbean Region. He closed by expressing his thanks for the support received from the consultants and the Regional Council of Martinique.

In closing the work session, all participants were invited to attend a cocktail reception hosted by the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

ANNEX A
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