

## ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)

# **PREPARATORY MEETING**

### FOR THE EIGHTH EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Conventions Palace, Havana, Cuba: June 2-3, 2016

## **RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT**

### **<JAMAICA>**

The Preparatory Meeting of the 8th Extraordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), in preparation for the 7<sup>th</sup> ACS Summit of Heads of State and/or Government was held in Havana, Cuba, on June 2, 2016.

At the Head Table, were His Excellency Ambassador Abelardo Moreno, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Chair of the Ministerial Council and host country of the Summit, His Excellency Valdrack Jaentschke, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua, His Excellency Ambassador Colin Murdoch, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, in their capacity of Vice Chairs; His Excellency David Prendergast, High Commission for Jamaica in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Rapporteur, and Secretary General of the ACS, His Excellency Alfonso Múnera.

The Meeting was attended by 25 Member States, 7 Associate Members and 2 Founding Observers. The List of Participants is attached in **Annex I**.

### **OPENING CEREMONY**

The Chairman extended a warm welcome to participants and thanked the Secretary General for his excellent work. He further expressed his satisfaction with the tangible results realized through the process of revitalization. Finally, he urged everyone to address the topics, particularly the Plan of Action and Declaration, with the aim of finalizing same.

The Secretary General expressed his thanks for the support and continuous reception by the Chairman and all the Member States and Associate Member States. Further, he outlined the

importance of addressing all items on the agenda in a manner that would facilitate the Ministerial meeting on the following day.

### **Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was approved without amendments and is appended hereto as **Annex II**.

### **Secretary General's Report**

This Report of the Secretary General summarized the work done during his four year term. Key elements among these highlights were the institutional strengthening of the Secretariat as well as the successful effort to revitalize the Caribbean Sea Commission, culminating in the 1st Symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission.

Additionally, Ambassador Múnera emphasized the ACS' clearing up of the budget, the sound financial standing, steady schedule of work activities, as well as the realization of three Summits of Heads of State and/or Governments in only four years.

The delegations present commended the intense and successful work of Secretary General Múnera and his team. Further, the Delegation of Panama made special mention of those officials due to demit office, in particular, the 20-years' service rendered to the ACS by Mrs. Paula Velasquez-Lange, the Political Adviser, in her fulfilment of various functions.

### **Draft Declaration of Havana**

In order to begin revision of the Draft Declaration, the Chairman instructed the methodology; which would consist of reading paragraph by paragraph of the text under consideration and identifying the areas of consensus to adopt them immediately. Then, the paragraphs which were not agreed upon would be considered in detail.

Following proposals and relevant discussion, changes were made to the texts which in the final version of the Declaration, are numbered: 3, 4, 10, 14, 20, 23, 26, 35, and 37.

New paragraphs were added, such as: 16, concerning the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; 19, presented by the Government of Panama on their initiative of the Regional Logistics Centre for Humanitarian Assistance; 27, concerning the improvement of the electoral crisis in Haiti and the strengthening of democracy; 32, on the expansion works of the Panama Canal; as well as 41, concerning cooperation and development in the areas of culture and education.

The afore-mentioned changes are highlighted for ease of reference on **Annex III** of this report.

With only two matters pending approval, the text proposed by Belize and Guatemala and the suggestions for the reform of a paragraph proposed by Nicaragua, concerning the inclusion of a provision for compensation and redress related to potential losses incurred by the effects of climate change, the Chairman announced that the deliberations on these matters will be resumed the following morning in order to reach a consensus before the Ministerial meeting.

### **Draft Plan of Action of Havana**

The document created by the Sub-Commission to draft the Plan of Action at its five (5) meetings held in Port of Spain, was then considered. After brief discussions, two (2) additional paragraphs were incorporated, viz; one regarding the creation of a working group to study the viability of granting preferential custom duties in the Greater Caribbean and another related to project development in the areas of coastal erosion and coral reef protection. The delegates present immediately approved the proposals.

### **Election of the Secretary General**

Proceeding along the Agenda, the Chairman invited a representative of the CARICOM group of countries to formally announce its candidature for the post of ACS Secretary General, due to be assumed on the basis of rotation.

At this time the delegation of the Bahamas confirmed the nomination of Ambassador Dr. June Soomer for the post. This was subsequently endorsed by the delegations of Belize as the current chair of CARICOM.

The Secretary General took the opportunity to note his own interactions with Ambassador Soomer, and expressed his confidence in her ability to effectively guide the Association of Caribbean States.

### **Election of High Level Official, Director of Transport and Disaster Risk Reduction**

Moreover, the delegation of Mexico, on behalf of the Group of Three, formally presented its candidate for the position of Director for Transport and Disaster Risk Reduction. After the full endorsement and support by the Delegations of Venezuela and Colombia, the nomination of Mr. Ing. Arturo Lopez Portillo was accepted by consensus.

### **Admission of Saint Martin as Associate Member in its own right**

The delegations present also considered the accession of the Overseas Collectivity of Saint Martin as Associate Member in its own right.

They unanimously agreed and recommended that the accession be finalized at the 8<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council.

The Delegation of France expressed their congratulations to the Member States and to the Secretary General for the admission of Saint Martin in its own right.

### **Admission of New Observers**

The Meeting also approved, without issue, the recommendation to the Ministerial Council that the Republics of Kazakhstan, Uruguay, Bolivia be admitted as Observer Countries and ALBA-TCP as Observer Organization to the ACS.

The Secretary General expressed his contentment with this renewed interest in the Association; as a key indicator of its value and relevance.

### **Proposals to follow up on the Process of Revitalization of the ACS**

Following invitation by the Chair, the Secretary General presented his proposals, which had been previously submitted in his report, to follow up on the process of revitalization of the ACS.

These were as follows:

1. The strengthening of the Special Fund toward the hiring of two professionals capable of allowing the Unit to remain effective and self-sustainable;
2. Reconsidering the ACS schedule of events to facilitate greater participation of Member states, especially the small island Members without missions in Trinidad and Tobago;
3. To rearrange the Directorates to create a Directorate combining Trade and Transport, leaving the Directorate of Disaster Risk Reduction to function as a single section, and,
4. Recommending that the necessary importance be placed on the areas of culture and cooperation to allow for the establishment of some sort of coordination in this regard, and on the matter of cooperation;
5. To encourage more effectively, greater coordination with sub regional groups such as the OECS, SICA and CARICOM.

### **PRESENTATION OF MINISTERIAL AGREEMENTS AND SPECIAL COMMUNIQUES**

Delegations present considered the drafts of the Ministerial Agreements and the Special Communiqués and approved them to be finalized by the 8<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council for official approval. These were duly circulated on conclusion of the Summit.

## **PRESENTATION AND APPROVAL OF PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

The Provisional Agenda and the proceedings of the 8<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council were presented and further approved.

## **RESUMPTION OF THE PREPARATORY MEETING TO THE 8TH EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Conventions Palace: June 3rd, 2016

The Preparatory Meeting was reconvened on the morning of June 3rd under the Chairmanship of His Excellency, Ambassador Abelardo Moreno, Vice Minister of External Affairs of Cuba, in order to finalize the two matters previously pending.

On the first matter, the chairman noted that after joint deliberations, the delegations of Belize and Guatemala took the decision to exclude their proposed draft paragraph from the Declaration. This issue will be addressed bilaterally.

Next, the proposal by the delegation of Nicaragua on the inclusion of a provision for compensation and redress related to potential losses incurred by the effects of climate change was discussed. The delegations of Costa Rica, Mexico, Colombia and El Salvador expressed their appreciation for all efforts taken to produce a text on this particular issue. However, they expressed their reservations in that, the conditions were not suitable to support it. The Chairman therefore announced that without the necessary consensus, the paragraph would need to be excluded from the Draft Declaration.

Having thus treated all outstanding areas, the Chairman officially declared the Preparatory Meeting of the Ministerial Council closed.