ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)

24TH MEETING OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM (SCST-24) AND 2ND PREPARATORY MEETING OF THE 3RD MEETING OF MINISTERS OF TOURISM OF THE GREATER CARIBBEAN (TMM-3)
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, July 16-17, 2013

**ACS-CTO-SITCA RESEARCH PAPER:
REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON TOURISM SAFETY AND SECURITY**

1. An Overview of Tourism Safety and Security Concerns

"Fears of abduction, muggings and unfamiliar surroundings are keeping larger numbers of tourists confined to the ever larger cruise ships that bring them to the Caribbean waters for its marine life, sun and blue skies. Added to those discouraging factors are perceptions that onshore law enforcement is lax and emergency medical treatment non-existent." **UPI, August 2009**

"Crime is having a negative impact on economic activity and growth in the region. Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, Sir Dwight Venner, said. He also cited a 2009 study, which took a "comprehensive look" at the impact of crime in a Caribbean nation. "It reveals the evolution of a system of criminality, which has protruded in every facet of its society. The major problem arises, however, because of the impact of crime on . . . an industry like tourism" **NationNews.com (Barbados), December 2010**

"The beach resort of Okumatsushima was a thriving stop on the Japanese tourist trail until two weeks ago, when a huge tsunami virtually wiped it from the map. On a summer day, thousands would visit the resort's pristine sands, many of them staying in the guest houses that dotted the shoreline on Japan's picturesque northeast coast. They came to gather shellfish or take boat tours of pine-covered islands and eat the oysters produced in the bay. But on March 11 the town's tourist industry was washed away by the huge waves that swept inland, shattering buildings, lives and jobs." **AFP, March 2011**

The above newspaper excerpts, all written within the last two years, highlight the urgency with which systems to ensure the safety and security of visitors to the Greater Caribbean Region are needed.

A proactive approach by the governments of the Region to establish agreements, procedures and best practices with respect to Visitor Safety and Security has now become necessary for the advancement of its tourism product. Such actions will not only equip locals and tourists with the skills, knowledge and tools to utilize in the event of a crisis, but will also aid in propelling the marketing of the region as a safe and visitor-friendly haven.

2. The Contemporary Initiatives in the area of Tourist Safety and Security

From a more global perspective, recognising the need for discussions on Visitor Safety and Security, the Egnatia Academy in June 2010 organised the **First International Summit on Tourism Safety & Security** in Malaysia. With the theme of "Improving Tourism through Improved Safety & Security Measures", the summit provided a medium through which various Heads of Security were able to meet with tourism representatives from the UNWTO, universities, governments and various other related stakeholders. The conference was designed to equip tourism personnel with the knowledge and best practices information so that they could successfully:

- Design security programs to increase awareness level among tourist;
- Create strategies to protect assets, property and personnel;
- Develop partnership with Government agencies to prevent crime;
- Develop and implement Tourism security plans to ensure safety of people and properties;
- Respond to crisis and disaster and handling disaster tactfully;
- Identify and respond to possible terror threats;
- Maximize efforts to ensure healthy and safe environment around;
- Use the latest technologies to improve safety & security by better monitoring and effective management.

Regional and Hemispheric organisations such as the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police (ACCP), the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), the Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (CARICOM IMPACS) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) have, in their capacity and with the aid of international organisations, begun addressing the issues related to safety and security. In addition, the Central American Integration System (SICA) has been working with both CARICOM and the Organization of American States (OAS) to formulate objectives geared towards the strengthening of regional integration processes with specific attention being paid to these issues.

Highlighting some of the initiatives and activities undertaken by the afore–mentioned organisations, the following is observed:

2.1 Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police (ACCP)

On June 24th, 2005, the ACCP issued a media release confirming their commitment to making visitor experiences to the Caribbean incident-free. Citing the training and development that their law enforcement agents have received from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Spain and Holland, the ACCP substantiated their willingness to co-operate with international organisations to ensure that their technology, practices and procedures are of the highest and most recent standards.

In close collaboration with the CTO, CHTA and various tourism stakeholders, the ACCP seeks to promote awareness and best practices by encouraging visitors to the Region to employ common-sense safety practices such as always being aware of one's surroundings, securing valuables, and not opening hotel room doors to strangers, etc. The ACCP also believes that

a responsible approach to the dissemination of facts involving criminal activity within the Region needs to be adopted[1].

In May 2007, the ACCP and the ACS signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the objective of:

> "Conducting activities...which are necessary to examine, encourage and implement on a joint basis, projects and programmes aimed at improving the competitiveness of tourist destinations through improving the environment for tourist safety and security and achieving sustainable tourism development in the Wider Caribbean Region."

Both parties agreed that in achieving the above-mentioned objective, special emphasis should be placed on the following:

- Establishing a focal point for the Regional Network on Tourist Safety;
- A Regional inventory of the existing legal framework and best practices in support of visitor/tourist safety;
- Integrating the philosophy on tourism-oriented policing into the police service training curriculum;
- The design of an inter-sectoral and inter-governmental co-operation mechanism in order to facilitate the formulation of policies in the are of tourist safety and security by the membership of the ACS;
- The exchange of information and coordination of efforts in terms of receiving, analysing, publishing and distributing information relating to the objectives of the Agreement, and in keeping with the rules and regulations of both parties;
- The exchange of information and documentation relating to specific programmes and projects, with a view to carrying out complementary activities and achieving the highest possible level of coordination, and
- The development of any other activities of mutual interest.

The collaboration between the ACCP and the ACS Sustainable Tourism Directorate also materialised the participation of the Director of Sustainable Tourism in the 23rd Annual Conference of the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police held in Ocho Rios Jamaica, on May 16th and 17th, 2008. The objective of this seminar was to propitiate the exchange of views for the development of policies and strategies to manage emerging challenges to regional law enforcement. In 2009, the ACS presented the Regional Tourist Safety and Security Network as a Tourism Policing Support Mechanism for the Greater Caribbean at the 24th Annual Conference of the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police. The commissioners expressed their satisfaction on the advances and the willingness to work with their counterparts from Central America.

2.2 Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (CARICOM IMPACS)

The CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (CARICOM IMPACS), established in 2006 has made considerable advances with respect to border security within CARICOM Member States, the most notable of which was their involvement with Interpol for the issuing of CARICOM Special Visas for the Cricket World Cup held at various locations

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[1] ACCP. Media Release Regarding Crime Against Visitors. 24th June 2005.
http://www.accpolice.org/cms/default.asp?V_DOC_ID=117.

throughout the Eastern Caribbean Region in 2007. Within the first two months of the implementation of the use of Interpol's database and technology, 29 criminal suspects were barred from entering the region as opposed to 97 documents seized in the four-year period of 2002 to 2006. The "MIND/FIND" technology allows airport and seaport officials to thoroughly check the passports of potential visitors against Interpol's database which contains information on more than 13 million stolen and lost documents from over 120 countries.[2]

In conjunction with this collaborative project, the establishment of a Single Domestic Space supported by a clearinghouse for the Advance Passenger Information Systems (APIS) came into effect on February 1st, 2007. The APIS allows for the automated submission of passenger information by aviation and maritime operators to law enforcement officers prior to arrival and departure from CARICOM Member States. With over 55 million persons having been screened from its inception to June 30th, 2010, the system allows for the monitoring of the movements of persons of interest and the detection of fraudulent travel documents. The success of the APIS project has propelled the implementation of the Advance Cargo Information Systems (ACIS) which will allow customs authorities access to clearing documents in advance of their arrival at the ports. This will allow them the time needed to assess if security measures should be taken and/or if customs intervention is needed upon the arrival of cargo.[3]

2.3 Organization of the American States

The Organization of American States (OAS) has developed a Tourism Security program that is aimed at strengthening the capacity of the public and private tourism sectors to prevent and respond to potential terrorist or other security attacks on tourists' sites and facilities. This program provides specialized security training and promotes public-private security partnerships in that regard. The program is being implemented by the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE) of the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security (SMS) of the OAS.

The program was first launched in the Caribbean Region, when CICTE was commissioned to develop and deliver Tourism Security Training in preparation for the region to host the Cricket World Cup. This training **Tourism Crime and Security Training for Security & Law Enforcement Supervisors, Officers and Managers Levels 1 to 3** was delivered in the form of 5 day workshops from August 2006 to February and 2007, and included a special session on **Security Surveys & Risk Assessment Training**.

Since then CICTE has delivered the Tourism Security Training Program in various localities, adapted to the unique national and/or local needs and circumstances. These include delivery of Tourism Security Training in Mexico from 2008-2009 and delivery of the Training to Haiti and Trinidad in 2009, among others.

In 2010, in coordination with the OAS Office of Tourism, the CICTE Secretariat established a strategic alliance with SITCA in order to promote coordinated actions in Central America in the area of Tourism Security. In June 2010, a seminar was organized to facilitate information exchange and to consult officials of tourist safety and security from the public

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[2] CARICOM IMPACS Security Partnership with Interpol Moves Forward. PR Newswire Europe Ltd. 1st Mar,2007
[3] CARICOM IMPACS. Ongoing Practices: Border Security Activity. 31st Aug, 2010

and private sectors, to identify a specialized course on tourism safety and security adapted to the realities and needs of that Region.

The first workshop was held July 27-31, 2010 in Liberia, Guanacaste, one of the major tourist areas of Costa Rica, in collaboration with the Ministry of the Presidency of the Government of Costa Rica and under the auspices of the Costa Rican Institute of Tourism. The course entailed theoretical presentations and exercises on the importance of security in the tourism industry, the management of crises and emergencies, tourism safety communications, safety of hotels and tourist facilities, security evaluations, risk analysis and safety diagnostics. At the same time the workshop sought to promote and strengthen the public-private sector alliance in order to prevent and manage the circumstances and risks that may affect tourism security. The training was attended by 50 security officials from the public and private tourism sectors of Central America and included observers, directors and representatives from the Tourism Police from Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Panama, security managers of hotels and tourist establishments in the area, as well as members of the Tourist Police from the Ministry of Public Security of Costa Rica.

To advocate for a more integrated regional approach to the issue of Tourism Security, on January 3-5, 2011, the OAS in collaboration with the Government of the Dominican Republic, hosted the First International Conference "Tourism Security in the Americas: Quality, Competitiveness, Trends, and Strategies" in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. One of the main outcomes of this event was the **Declaration of Santo Domingo for the Creation of a Network of Tourist Police of the Americas (RCSTA**), which was signed by various Police, Government and Tourism Officials in attendance. The conference is envisioned to be an ongoing annual event for information sharing, policy formulation and dialogue.

3. The Response of the ACS

It is in light of this that ACS discussions on this matter have been previously held during the Visitor Safety and Security Symposium in September 2003 and the Regional Policy Dialogue on Tourism Safety and Security in July 2007, both taking place in Trinidad and Tobago which continue to be relevant.

Recommendations emanating from the above-mentioned forums, urged the ACS to:
  - Establish the Network and facilitate the better management of tourist safety at the national and regional levels.
  - Solicit funding from regional and international donors to support Tourism Safety and Security initiatives and continue research on visitor safety and security in the Caribbean;
  - Secure agreements of individual Member States and Regional institutions in supporting research on visitor safety and security, and the hosting of symposia on visitor safety and security in order to bring national attention to VSS matters;
  - Pursue collaboration with Member States to support the establishment of National and Regional Visitor Safety and Security Networks;
  - Develop co-operation mechanisms with regional and international organizations, including CEDERA, CHA, CARICOM IMPACS, ACCP, UNWTO, CTO, CEPREDENAC, Association of Central American Chiefs of Police, and others, with regard to disaster management and private sector involvement in tourism sustainability.

As discussed and agreed during the 18th Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism (SCST-18), held in the Grand Bahama Island, The Bahamas on December 13th and 14th, 2007, the following issues were identified as needing immediate attention:

- **Communication:**
    - Stakeholder groups must understand each other's role in promoting safety and security;
    - Establish dedicated focal points to facilitate this dialogue;
    - Support and promote data collection for sound safety and security decision making; and
    - Establish national networks as multi-sectoral units.

- **Industry Standards:**
    - Reflect a regional-level approach and incorporate tourist safety and security initiatives and mechanisms;
    - Be developed and maintained through inter-sector agreements; and
    - Include services and personnel matters such as training and be broadly communicated.

- **Community Involvement:**
    - Involve members of the community appropriately in aspects of community policing and tourist policing initiatives;
    - Provide communities with opportunities to experience different tourism activities; and
    - Increase tourism awareness through education sensitization programs

- **Legislative Framework:**
    - Review and update legislation in accordance with the new requirements, including private security;
    - Expedite processing tourist related crimes;
    - Encourage stakeholders to participate in lobbying activities to get needed legislation passed; and
    - Harmonize customs and immigration procedures in order to facilitate processing of tourists through the borders without compromising national security.

- **Policy Development:**
    - At the national and regional levels, the policy framework to address tourist safety and security issues is lacking. National Tourist Safety and Security Policy Frameworks are critical to all stakeholders. Accordingly, Member States must create a more inclusive process and systems based upon a multi-agency framework, as well as develop inter-sectoral cooperation agreements.

By means of follow-up and in an effort to gather information on current individual Member and Associate Member State practices, the DST in 2008, submitted a questionnaire on community involvement initiatives in the area of Tourist Safety and Security. Of the 29 countries that were polled, responses were received from 13. At that time, 12 of the respondents had a national policy guiding Tourist Safety and Security or a similar instrument to guide tourism development on this matter. While the scope of each country's initiative varied, the survey showed that the main actions implemented by the respondents to involve the community in Tourist Safety projects consisted of:

- Providing community members with opportunities to explore and experience different tourism activities; and,
- Increasing the level of awareness through education and a consistent and coherent set of messages.

3.1   ACS DST Proposal: CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS

In an effort to facilitate the advancement of dialogue on Visitor Safety and Security within the Region, the Directorate proposes the convening of Tourism, National Security and Disaster Risk Management policy makers of Member and Associate Member States for a capacity-building workshop. It is believed that a capacity – building workshop, as opposed to a conference or symposium, will be in keeping with a more pro-active approach as it would encourage actions being taken and re-enforce the urgency of these issues to Member and Associate Member States. In addition to strengthening regional commitments to Visitor Safety and Security, the workshops will:

- Provide policy makers with current information and best practices that can be used to build and/or enhance their national tourist safety and security policies;
- Provide participants with a platform from which the sharing of ideas and the discussion of issues relating to their respective practices can be heard and solutions found;
- Provide countries with similar tourism communication and marketing policies, socio-economic and/or geographic situations to form network;
- Demonstrate to international organizations the Region's commitment to dealing with these issues thereby opening up avenues for possible funding and collaboration, and
- Project positive images to potential visitors of the Region's pro-active stance on ensuring that destinations are safe and well prepared should a crisis occur, thereby reducing fear and encouraging repeat visits.

Similar to the above-mentioned First International Summit on Tourism and Safety, participants in the proposed workshop would, after attending be able to:

- Exchange safety and security best practices strategies working within the network of respective ministries and regional and global organizations to minimize crime, terror threats and risks;
- Implement up-to-date security standards and procedures to ensure safety at the destination
- Expand safety and security as well as communication strategies to increase safety awareness among tourism sector stake holders and tourists by working closely with the network of regional and global organizations;
- Develop comprehensive plans for protecting their infrastructure and personnel which would include public-awareness programmes, the distribution of disaster preparedness tools and the formation of public-private partnerships;
- Design comprehensive disaster management programmes and crisis communication strategies by working closely with disaster management agencies in the region and international;
- The workshop is being proposed to be held over a two-day period where, after some initial dialogue, case studies will be presented by invited regional and international organisations from which best practices will be extracted. Previous dialogues on the topic of Visitor Safety and Security identified the multi – dimensional nature of Safety and Security and indicated four components as

needing attention: Physical Safety, Disaster Risk Preparedness, Food Safety and Security and Health/Pandemic Safety and Security.

Tourism Vigilance Programme (TVP)

This initiative is based on a Regional Best-Practice Framework and Curriculum for Tourism Policing, targeted to the engagement of at-risk youth, which will serve as a training tool for the larger project of Tourism Policing. It has been conceived that the Framework will suggest through analysis of regional and institutional best practises the central themes and topics for training and instruction. The Curriculum is to be designed as a Training manual and work book which will provide comprehensive content and illustrations adapted to the Regional experience, and presented in a user-friendly and youth sensitive format and would incorporate aspects of Customer Service, History, Geography, Heritage and Culture, the Environment, First Aid and Safety and Security Procedures, among others.

The **Tourism Vigilance Programme (TVP)** would consist of two levels of certification. The junior level would be to award participants with certificates and recognition as *'Tourism Chaperones'*. This certification will be endowed upon completion of a regional workshop which will deliver the theoretical component of the training. At the senior level, National Law Enforcement Agencies/Tourism Authorities in collaboration with a regional counterpart identified as a bench-mark will facilitate the necessary technical training towards participants' designation as 'Tourism Police/Steward'. Inaugural training at the Regional level will include a Training of Trainers component to build local capacity.

3.2 CARIBSAVE and the Sustainable Tourism Work Programme (STWP) of the DST: Common Statements

CARIBSAVE activities and the Tourism Destination Management initiatives of the ACS STWP complement and expand on the **Climate Change component** of the latter. Additionally, **the linkages** with the ACS Sustainable Tourism Indicators Project and CARIBSAVE are in:

- The development of **destinations management tools and database** to facilitate destination managers and local tourism stakeholders in the development and management of existing and future destinations;
- The measurement of **Climate Change impacts** on **Caribbean Livelihoods** as it relates to Tourism; and
- Facilitating in **Policy development** and **Capacity building exercises** with the government, communities and the private sector.

Due to its multi – sectoral approach, the CARIBSAVE Initiative also links to the STWP programmatic area through the creation a Regional Tourist Safety and Security Network specifically as it relates to disaster risk management activities coordinated for drafting specific plans of action at the regional, national and institutional level. The collaboration on inter–agency level eradicates the possibility of duplication and overlapping of resources and encourages a joint approach towards Climate Change in relation to the Tourism sector.

As mandated by the SCST, the Directorate continued supporting and liaising with the coordinators of the CARIBSAVE Initiative of the Oxford University Centre for the Environment and the Caribbean Community Centre for Climate Change. In this regard, the Directorate was invited to participate in two upcoming symposia for international donors and

regional partners held in June and September 2009 in respectively Oxford and The Bahamas. The Directorate has been offered an advisory position on the CARIBSAVE Advisory Board whose inaugural meeting took place on 13th May 2010.

4. The Response of SITCA

The Regional Tourism Security Programme has been developed since 2010 with the aim of providing safe and satisfactory conditions for tourists and visitors, both national and international, and promoting a positive and attractive image of the region.

The Regional Tourism Security Committee was established to implement this programme. It consists of heads of units and divisions of tourism policing and persons responsible for security in the national tourism administrations of Central American countries and the Dominican Republic.

This regional programme has led to the identification and implementation of various projects:

Approved Curriculum in Tourism Security: Tourism Security Training is one of the priority areas of the Regional Tourism Security Project. The general objective of the training is to professionalize the response of the region's tourist police forces. In this regard, a Curriculum and Training Modules in Tourism Security were developed in 2011, with the participation of the Regional Tourism Security Committee and experts from the public security academies of SICA member countries. The design of this programme has facilitated the exchange of good practices and the systematisation of training experiences in the area of tourism security.

The results achieved to date are as follows: Curriculum and Training Modules in tourism security approved by participating countries. This training programme is being replicated through national training workshops.

Tourism Security and Responsible Tourism: Prevention of the sexual and commercial exploitation of children and adolescents in the tourism sector: The Programme for the Prevention of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Boys, Girls and Adolescents (PESCNNA), with an emphasis on Ethics and Social Corporate Responsibility in Tourism, had as its main objective the reduction of the commercial sexual exploitation of boys, girls and adolescents in the main tourist areas of the countries of the Central American region.

This programme received the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), inclusive of the formulation of the Regional Programme and Plan of Action on PESCNNA in Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala and Panama.

Pilot tests were carried out in the beneficiary countries of the programme, whereby subject matter experts supported the implementation of actions identified in the plan of action at the national level. Promotional, material and public awareness activities were conducted. The latter have allowed for greater involvement by key stakeholders, namely tourism entrepreneurs, police, immigration officers, taxi drivers and teachers, in the prevention of this type of crime.

System for the Processing, Monitoring and Follow-up of Complaints: This began with the implementation of the System in 2012. The first activity was expected to be

coordination meetings with the various tourism chambers, national administrations and tourism ministries, tourist police and state prosecutors in the countries of the region.

With the implementation of this System, Central America will possess a single common model to treat with tourists, sightseers and international, regional and national visitors. It will also have a protocol for the treatment of complaints or accusations, including time, persons responsible and response modalities, information on filing complaints, forms and guidelines for tourists.

Regional Manual of Good Practices in Tourism Security: The Regional Manual of Good Practices in Tourism Security is intended to serve as a guide for national tourism administrations and tourist police, which would lead to improvements in the efficiency of tourism security services.

Additionally, the manual aims to assist in the organisation and coordination of the internal work process of the said institutions and their staff in the area of tourism security. The actions derived from the manual would contribute to the professionalisation of the said institutions, allowing them to achieve greater credibility and leadership in a growing sector of the regional economy.

Media Sensitisation and Training in Crisis Management and Perception regarding Tourism Security: Since 2012, regional training and sensitisation workshops have been held annually, geared toward social media both regionally and internationally, to sensitise it to the impact of the method of presentation of news regarding problems and conflicts in the region, on tourist arrivals.

A Crisis Communication Management Manual is also available and seminars have been organised on the topic and the perception of tourism security in the region, aimed at increasing the current capacity of Central American countries to address the risks that may lead to a tourism crisis situation, strengthening their response capabilities in such situations and reinforcing regional co-operation in this area.

Similarly, in 2012, support was garnered from the Central American Regional Border Security Programme (SEFRO). This will enable improvements to be made to 19 border points in the region, through the training of border officers, the preparation of material for dissemination to tourists and the development of information posters geared toward tourists. This project will commence in September 2013.

With regard to the broader issue of security, SICA, through the Directorate of Democratic Security, implements the Central American Regional Security Strategy (ESCA).

The objective of this strategy is to establish the components and activities required to strengthen the security of persons and their property in the Central American region, allowing the countries of the region to achieve the objectives of sustainable human development.

Its specific objectives include:
- Integration of various efforts undertaken by the region in the area of security to harmonise them and obtain better results.
- Facilitation of the coordination and exchange of information and experiences among the various entities and agencies operating in the region.
- Identification and management of the financial, resource and training needs of institutions responsible for maintaining security.

- Development of violence prevention policies, programmes, strategies and actions.

The ESCA consists of four main components, namely:

1. Combating crime. The priority is to combat in the short term the most visible threats to regional security. It encompasses combating organised crime, drug trafficking, gangs, homicides, illegal arms trafficking, terrorism, corruption, the treatment of deportees with a criminal record or ex-convicts and other police-related issues.

2. Prevention. This focuses on developing policies, programmes, strategies and activities that would allow for the prevention of youth violence, armed violence, gender-based violence, illegal trafficking in migrants and trafficking in persons, the consumption of drugs and the effects of natural disasters.

3. Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Prison Security. The objective is to strengthen, expand and modernise the prison system in Central American countries from a regional coordination perspective, while contributing to the establishment of mechanisms, procedures, infrastructure and institutionalisation, geared toward the social rehabilitation and integration of detainees, and the systematisation and sharing of successful and innovative experiences.

4. Institutional strengthening. The objective is to strengthen, in the area of regional security, the aspects of communication, coordination and follow-up of institutionalisation with respect to justice and security in such areas as crime prevention and punishment, local capacity, femicide and disaster prevention, relief and mitigation.

4.1 Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI)

Related to the issue of security more broadly, SICA in collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and senior officials of the US Department of State and the international community have joined together to advance the progress of the Regional Security Strategy that the countries of Central America, Mexico and the Dominican Republic are developing, to include coordination mechanisms in that regard. This initiative called the **Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI)** seeks to align the multiple actors in the Region, integrate and complement regional efforts, facilitate interagency coordination and manage financial resources jointly to mitigate against the transnational nature of crime.

The priority components of the strategy include reducing crime, violence prevention, rehabilitation, reintegration and prison security, institutional strengthening with emphasis on justice and technological innovation to provide an effective response.

 To advance efforts in this regard, the countries of Central America hosted an **International Conference** in support of the Central American Regional Security Strategy, which was held in Guatemala City on June 22-23, 2011. The European Union has confirmed its support of the formulation of this Regional Strategy through its bilateral and regional cooperation mechanisms as well as its participation at the conference.

4.2 CARICOM - Central American Integration System (SICA) Collaboration

In Belize City, Belize on the 12th May 2007, a joint declaration was signed at the Second CARICOM-SICA Summit of Heads of State and Government in which, inter alia, issues relating to safety and security within the region were highlighted. Specific to this topic, the declaration stated that both parties agreed to[4] is as follows:

1. To commit to a broader vision of CARICOM-SICA relations which would include cooperation and the development of linkages in the areas of economic, social and cultural issues, energy, communications, prevention and mitigation of natural disasters, sustainable development, security and democratic governance.
2. To instruct the Secretaries General of CARICOM and SICA to undertake the necessary coordination leading to the convening of a High Level Meeting on the Environment and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, in Honduras, in order to discuss and analyze a proposal for a joint project in both regions.
3. To promote joint actions in the management, prevention and mitigation of natural disasters, through the relevant bodies established within the framework of CARICOM and SICA that will develop into closer collaboration and the presentation of proposals for implementation in this area.
4. To strengthen cooperation between CARICOM and SICA on the fight against organized crime, including illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, drug trafficking, among others, through the exchange of information and the establishment of mechanisms that will strengthen such cooperation.

5. The Response of CTO

The Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) Secretariat has been partnering with various organizations to enhance safety and security as it relates to the Caribbean tourism industry.

- **Caribbean Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework** which included policy guidelines on key health safety and security issues in the tourism industry such as:
  - Communication and coordination mechanisms for health, safety, security and multi-hazard risk management
  - Health and safety of citizens and visitors
  - Managing security issues to maintain destination reputation
  - Integrating multi-hazard risk management into the tourism sector to reduce hazard vulnerability

- **Media Manual** to help tourism organizations to :
  - Influence policy and communicate with media to deliver effective messages
  - Sell a particular story
  - Act as a valued media source
  - Develop crisis communications skills.

- Promoting **Quality Tourism in the Caribbean**

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[4] www.sica.int

Objective:
To develop **Health, Safety and Environment Standards**, a related Certification System and to address related policy and planning issues. Under this project a **Quality Tourism for the Caribbean Brand** was also developed to recognize standards for health and the environment in the tourism sector including:

- o food safety and sanitation
- o environmental management systems
- o water treatment, management and efficiency
- o sewage treatment management
- o energy management and efficiency
- o integrated pest management
- o solid waste management

Food Safety

With regard to improving food and beverage training, under the Caribbean Tourism Learning System Initiative, a **core curriculum** was developed for an **Associate Degree in Applied Science Food and Beverage Operations.** The objective was to set standards for tourism education and training in this area.

Involvement with Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA)

- The CTO has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with CARPHA - the new single regional public health agency for the Caribbean. "It was legally established in July 2011 by an Inter-Governmental Agreement signed by CARICOM (Caribbean Community) Member States and began operation in January 2013. The Agency rationalises public health arrangements in the Region by combining the functions of five Caribbean Regional Health Institutes (RHIs) into a single agency." The five institutes are:

  - o The Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI)
  - o The Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC)
  - o The Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute (CFNI)
  - o The Caribbean Health Research Council (CHRC)
  - o The Caribbean Regional Drug Testing Laboratory (CRDTL)

Under this MOU, the CTO has an opportunity to engage with CARPHA to enhance the health, safety and well-being of visitors to the Caribbean through joint initiatives, including rejuvenating and enhancing the QTC programme.

CDEMA-CTO: The Comprehensive Disaster Management Coordination and Harmonization Council - Tourism Sub Sector Committee

In 2006, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between **Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA)** and CTO to work together to minimize the negative impact of disasters on the sustainable development of the Caribbean tourism industry. In 2001, CARICOM, through consultations, adopted a Strategy and Results framework for Regional Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) and in 2006 CDEMA reviewed and revised the CDM Strategy to emphasize disaster loss reduction through Risk Management and to follow a more programme-based approach with an emphasis on results-based management. This led to the formation of a CDM Coordination and Harmonization Council (CDM CHC) with sub-sector committees having various focuses.

One of the main initiatives of the Tourism Sub Sector Committee (TSSC) is the creation, execution and implementation of a Regional Disaster Risk Management for Sustainable Tourism in the Caribbean Project which will reduce the vulnerability of the Caribbean tourism sector to natural hazards and disasters, including associated adaptive capacity for climate variability and climate change. Currently in the development stage of its five-year work programme, it is proposed to involve information sharing, analyses, consultations, programme development and resource mobilisation. One of the main objectives of the project is to ensure that a standardised form of best practices that are relevant to each Member State is implemented and adhered to. The project is funded by the Inter American development Bank (IDB) and also includes the University of the West Indies (UWI), The University of Guyana (UG) and The Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre as partners (CCCCC).

Regarding the development of the Disaster Risk Reduction component of the RTSSN, the ACS accepted the invitation to be part of the Technical Advisory Committee on Tourism of the Regional Disaster Risk Management for Sustainable Tourism in the Caribbean Project, being coordinated by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) and CTO. In this regard, the ST Directorate attended the Joint Project Advisory and Technical Advisory Committee Meeting on December 11th, 2008 in Barbados, coordinated by the CDERA and CTO.

The DST continues as a member of the Technical Advisory Committee on Tourism of the Regional Disaster Risk Management for Sustainable Tourism in the Caribbean Project being coordinated by the CDEMA and CTO.

6. Conclusion

Recognizing that tourist safety and security has a multi – dimensional nature, the establishment of the network requires collaboration partnership with organizations such as IICA, FAO, and PAHO among others.

In this respect, the DTS of the ACS, together with CTO and SITCA view the above proposals and projects as vehicles that will enhance regional institutional strengthening initiatives as well as incorporate regional organisations pivotal to the advancement of dialogue, the formation of programmes, the execution of projects and the design of effective public policies pertaining to Visitor Safety and Security that will harmonize the interests of both the local communities and international visitors.