

About the ACS



Headquarters of the Secretariat of The Association of Caribbean States

How and Why it All Began

The Association of Caribbean States is a product of the desire of the 35 Contracting States, Countries and Territories of the Greater Caribbean to enhance cooperation within the region, an initiative aimed at building upon obvious geographic proximity and well-documented historical linkages. As stated in the Convention Establishing the ACS, its primary purpose is to be an organization for “consultation, cooperation and concerted action” for its member countries. Its framework provides a forum for political dialogue that allows Members the opportunity to identify areas of common interest and concern that may be addressed at the regional level, and the solutions for which can be found through cooperation. The ACS Membership has identified 5 areas of concern for the attention of the Association:

The preservation and conservation of the Caribbean Sea. The preservation and conservation of this natural resource is a mandate of primordial importance for the ACS; a manifestation of the duty of all Caribbean citizens to protect this very tangible shared birthright.

Sustainable Tourism. The importance of the tourism industry to the economic development of all the Members of the ACS transcends questions of physical size or language.

Trade and Economic External Relations. The ACS provides a framework for the dialogue and activity necessary to further advance economic integration and intra-regional trade and investment, thereby improving the economic competitiveness of the Greater Caribbean region.

Natural Disasters. The continued vulnerability of all countries and territories of the Greater Caribbean to the physical ravages and economically crippling consequences of natural disasters is a theme of the utmost importance on the regional agenda

Transport. The proper functioning of efficient and viable intraregional air and maritime routes not only facilitates closer intraregional relations, but represents a fundamental base in the achievement of cooperation in the aforementioned areas

Current Secretary General: His Excellency Ambassador Rodolfo Sabonge

Chairman of the ACS Ministerial Council 2023/2024: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation of the Republic of Suriname

Association of Caribbean States (ACS)

The Convention Establishing the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) was signed on 24 July 1994 in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, with the aim of promoting consultation, cooperation and concerted action among all the countries of the Caribbean, comprising 25 Member States and three Associate Members. Eight other non-independent Caribbean countries are eligible for associate membership.

Full text of the ACS Convention

Functions: The objectives of the ACS are enshrined in the Convention and are based on the following: the strengthening of the regional co-operation and integration process, with a view to creating an enhanced economic space in the region; preserving the environmental integrity of the Caribbean Sea which is regarded as the common patrimony of the peoples of the region; and promoting the sustainable development of the Greater Caribbean.

Organisation: The main organs of the Association are the Ministerial Council, which is the principal organ for policy-making and direction of the Association, and the Secretariat.

There are five Special Committees on:

Trade Development and External Economic Relations

Sustainable Tourism

Transport

Disaster Risk Reduction

Budget and Administration

There is also a Council of National Representatives of the Special Fund responsible for overseeing resource mobilisation efforts and project development.

Members: The Member States shall have the right to participate in discussions and to vote at meetings of the Ministerial Council and Special Committees of the Association.

The list of Member States is as follows:

Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El

Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela.

Associate Members: Associate Members shall have the right to intervene in discussions and vote at

meetings of the Ministerial Council and Special Committees on matters which affect them directly, falling within their constitutional competence.

The list of Associate Members is as follows:

Aruba, British Virgin Islands, Curacao, France on behalf of (French Guiana and Saint Barthelemy), Guadeloupe, Martinique, Monsterrat, Saint Martin, Sint Maarten and The Netherlands Antilles on behalf of (Saba and Sint Eustatius).

Founding Observers: In view of the emphasis upon promoting, consolidating and strengthening the regional cooperation and integration process and in recognition of the unique role envisaged in the Convention for the sub regional integration organisations in the fulfilment of the purposes and functions of the Association, the Secretariat entered into special arrangements with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, the Latin American Economic System (SELA) , the Central American Integration System (SICA) and the Permanent Secretariat of the General Agreement on Central American Economic Integration (SIECA) to facilitate their participation in the works of the Ministerial Council and the Special Committees.

The CARICOM Secretariat, the Latin American Economic System (SELA), the Central American Integration System (SICA) and the Permanent Secretariat of the General Agreement on Central American Economic Integration (SIECA) were declared Founding Observers of the ACS in 1994. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) were admitted as Founding Observers in 2000 and 2001 respectively.

Observers: Observers may be admitted to the Association on terms and conditions as may be determined by the Ministerial Council, in accordance with Article V of the Convention Establishing the Association of Caribbean States. The Observer Countries to the ACS are:

Argentina, Belarus, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, India, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kingdom of Netherlands, Korea, Morocco, Peru, Palestine, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Saudi Arabia, State of Kuwait, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, and the United Arab Emirates.

Observer Organisations: The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America- People's Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP), Central American Economic Integration Bank (CABEI), European Union (EU) and International Organization for Migration (IOM), Italian-Latin American International Organization (IILA).

Social Actors: The participation of Social Partners in the Association should contribute effectively to the accomplishment of the goals set forth by the organisation, pertinent decisions of the Ministerial Council, and the activities outlined in the Work Programmes of the Special Committees. The Social Partners of the ACS are:

The Antilles-French Guiana Regional Centre of the National Institute of Agronomical Research (CRAG/INRA), Association of Caribbean Universities and Research Institutes (UNICA), Association of Caribbean University, Research and Institutional Libraries (ACURIL), Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce (CAIC), Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA), Caribbean Medical Association (AMECA), Caribbean Shipping Association (CSA), the Regional Economic and Social Research Coordinator (CRIES), the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLASCO) and the Arthur Lok Jack Global School of Business.

The Greater Caribbean. The Greater Caribbean Zone of Co-operation was established in recognition

of the common geographic space shared by our States, Countries and Territories, and the common interests and objectives derived therefrom. The Greater Caribbean Zone of Co-operation consists of joint actions in the priority areas of the ACS, namely, Trade, Sustainable Tourism, Transport and Disaster Risk Reduction.