THE 31ST SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRADE DEVELOPMENT AND EXTERNAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS



THE 31ST SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRADE DEVELOPMENT AND EXTERNAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS

The 31st Special Committee on Trade Development and External Economic Relations (hereafter the Committee) was held on 20th September, 2016 at the Secretariat of the Association Caribbean States (ACS) in Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago. ACS Special Committee Meetings are annual meetings held in the major focal areas of the Association's agenda – Trade and External Economic Relations, Sustainable Tourism, Transport and Disaster Risk Reduction, in addition to Budget and Administration. Special Committees are open dialogues for Member States to discuss, amend and approve the work programmes of each area for the ACS' upcoming calendar year and review the outcomes of the previous year. This year, the meeting was attended by 17 Members and Associate Members and was chaired by the Colombian Ambassador to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago - His Excellency Mr. Jaime Acosta.

The Committee primarily focuses on encouraging increased trade and investment within the Greater Caribbean – a market place of approximately 292 million people (World Bank Indicators, 2015), envisioning the construction and consolidation of an enhanced economic space for trade and investment. While an ample market size, unique characteristics such as linguistic and cultural differences have proven to be obstacles to the Greater Caribbean region. However, more complex factors such as trade facilitation, access to information to trade policy, and country specific legislative and legal measures are not only pervasive but problematic across the regional trading environment.

The Directorate of Trade Development and External Economic Relations (DTDEER) is therefore tasked with a multi-faceted agenda which includes addressing the aforementioned obstacles and barriers to trade, encouraging participation of all Members and Associate Members, particularly small economies, increasing trade facilitation, competitiveness and connectivity and encouraging international trade negotiations.

TRADE IN NUMBERS

Highlights of the Committee Meeting were: the successful projects completed by the DTDEER 2015/2016 focusing on trade facilitation, logistics, trade statistics and small, medium enterprises (SMEs) development.

What was the ACS' trade impact in numbers?

The Directorate has conducted over 15 sessions in the 2015-2016 periods in the form of workshops, distance learning courses and seminars. It has trained approximately 300 trade, maritime, customs and government professionals and collaborated with 8 international and regional organisations.

In conjunction with the Secretariat for Economic Integration (SIECA) and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the ACS held its first online initiative for 2016 hosting 150 professionals from 31 countries, including economists, statisticians and policy analysts etc., who were trained in the latest International Trade in Services data collection procedures.• In the following months, this time in conjunction with the Government of Colombia, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism (MinCIT), the ACS hosted 5 online trade training workshops with approximately 50 officials from various ACS government agencies in areas such as Trade Facilitation, Technical Standards and Regulations, Export and Investment Promotion, Public Procurement and the establishment of a Single Window for Trade.

The Government of Colombia has also supported Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) training and development by hosting 2 workshops in Bogota, Colombia and welcomed some 20 Caribbean professionals.

The Government of Mexico and the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID) have contributed significantly to trade facilitation and logistics initiatives through the Short Distance Maritime Project (SDMT) and the International Transit of Goods (TIM) projects. Workshops were conducted on Terminal Operating Systems and Maritime Traffic according to international conventions.

From 2015 to 2016, another AMEXCID initiative - the FOCAHIMECA project focusing on improving regional hydrographic capacity has trained over 40 hydrography specialists/technicians in 4 workshops in Veracruz and Ciudad de Campeche, Mexico.

TRADE AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The DTDEER’s impact in number is bolstered by its strategic alignment with the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These include:

Sustainable Development Goal 8 – Decent work and economic growth

To promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Sustainable Development Goal 9 – Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure

To build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Sustainable Development Goal 10 – Reduced Inequalities

To reduce inequality within and among countries

Sustainable Development Goal 17 – Partnerships for the Goals

To strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Indeed, the Directorate seeks to foster trade policies which not only promote growth but also drive innovation, integrate the region's small producers and rural communities into the global market and leverage its synergies with partner institutions to achieve these goals.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As the Directorate looks toward the future, it endeavours to continue its on-going projects but also launch more innovative initiatives. One such initiative is the ACS Business Travel project which is slated to enter into its pilot project phase in the coming months. This project supported by the International Organisation for Migration is specifically crafted to allow business owners and entrepreneurs to travel within the region for business purposes without the bureaucracy and regulative nightmare of the current system.

Another project to be officially launched in the near future is the ACS's Trade Platform, an online trade database which is expected to be a comprehensive repository of trade statistics for the region's policy analysts, students, researchers and public at large.

The Directorate is supported by a team of 5 professionals: Director Alberto Duran Espaillat, a native from the Dominican Republic heads the team; He is supported by Ms Veronica Gonzalez - Trade Advisor (Colombia), Ms Cherise Trotman - Research Assistant (Barbados), Ms Kafi Nicholas - Secretary (Trinidad & Tobago) and Mrs. Gina Cabrera-Tilokee (Venezuela).

Any comments or feedback should be submitted to feedback@acs-aec.org