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MEDIA RELEASE

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Port-of-Spain

As countries of the Greater Caribbean continue to seek vaccinations for COVID-19 and to keep the region's sustainable development targets on track, the fifth ACS International Cooperation Conference attracted over 80 potential donors and cooperation partners from around the world. The Conference, under the theme: "Recalibrating Cooperation: A Key Driver for the Recovery of the Greater Caribbean" was hosted by incumbent Chair of the Ministerial Council of the ACS, Dominican Republic.

Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic Hugo Rivera said that widespread vaccination seems to be the only solution to mitigate the effects of the virus and to launch an aggressive recuperation strategy in the region.

"Cooperating in a coordinated manner is the only solution, with the motto "that no one is left behind". Solutions can only be created through concerted action among countries and working together. Cooperation is an opportunity for our region and offers us a wide spectrum of possibilities. Cooperation makes us stronger, more resilient and better prepared."

Secretary General Rodolfo Sabonge said that the Cooperation Conference was a space to promote the union of Latin American and Caribbean countries, working with international partners, to build partnerships that promote inclusion and resilience during and after the pandemic. "Only through cooperation can an adequate recovery plan be structured and designed that aligns the priorities of economic, social and environmental sustainability with minimal impact for the wider Caribbean region."

The Conference featured presentations from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Economics Advisor at IDB Henry Mooney said that the Caribbean, which is the region most dependent on tourism in the world, is not expected to see the same levels of pre-pandemic international tourism until 2023/2024, meanwhile the pandemic continues to have devastating impact on regional GDP and debt levels. Ambassador Ruy Pereira, Director of the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) spoke about ABC's preparedness to establish a basic cooperation agreement with the ACS. Other presenters included the Japan International Cooperation Agency, Chile Agency for International Development, European Union and the Bank of ALBA.

Countries such as Argentina, Peru, United Arab Emirates, Italy and The Republic of Korea all expressed their thanks to the ACS for the opportunity to contribute to the sustainable development of the Greater Caribbean. Member States and Associate Members including Guyana, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago, and British Virgin Islands all put on record, their desire for strengthened South-South and triangular cooperation. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines thanked the ACS Membership for the solidarity extended while it has dealt with the catastrophic eruption of volcano La Soufrière in recent weeks and highlighted how important regional cooperation has been for the country.

The fifth ACS International Cooperation Conference was, for the second time, held virtually. The Conference, organised by the Directorate of Cooperation & Resource Mobilisation is an opportunity for the ACS to gather all major actors in global cooperation to further develop and discuss solutions to regional challenges. The event also offers an occasion to foster and strengthen existing relations and develop new alliances with donor agencies.

The Association of Caribbean States is an organisation that works towards sustainable development of the Greater Caribbean. The Organisation's work is focused on: cooperation; disaster risk reduction; sustainable tourism; trade, transport & external economic relations; the protection of the Caribbean Sea, education and culture.