Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Association of Caribbean States and the Finnish Meteorological Institute (FMI)



Strengthening of the Hydro meteorological Operations and Services in the Caribbean SIDS (SHOCS Project).

Port of Spain (March 4, 2011) – The Secretary General Ambassador Luis Fernando Andrade Falla and the ACS Director of Disaster Risk Reduction and Transport Mr. Eduardo González signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) involving the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), and the Finnish Meteorological Institute (FMI); Dr. Martti Heikinheimo, SHOCS Project Co-ordinator and Development Director signed on behalf of the FMI.

Furthermore, Ambassador Andrade and Dr. Heikinheimo expressed some of the SHOCS activities planned to take place during the months of August to December of the present year. Among these activities is the intention to explore the feasibility of implementing this project in 16 Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS's), which will be visited for meetings and interviews to evaluate specific needs and opportunities. Some of the topics that will be covered are: the Preparedness against natural hazards, tools for monitoring, forecasting, service provision - products and delivery and Observation networks. In addition, during this process, there will also be the introduction of Quality Management Systems (QMS) principles in handling the Early Warnings and Disaster Management.

As part of this process a training workshop on a Quality Management System for Aeronautical Weather Services will be offered and it is open to the following countries:Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El

Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & The Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago and Venezuela. Moreover, roadmaps for NMHS's to certify aeronautical meteorological services according to ISO9000 will also be available and in conjunction with two seminars in Barbados and document preparation through correspondence.

In this regards, Ambassador Andrade and Dr. Heikinheimo stated that some of the benefits to the Caribbean Society will be: Early Warnings and risks related to natural disasters better understood, clearly displayed and communicated at local level, handling of disaster events nationally more organised, co-operation between agencies improved, decreased economic losses and casualties.

During this event Ambassador Andrade Falla expressed and highlighted his appreciation to the FMI and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Finland for their valuable support throughout the development of this project.