THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ZONE OF THE GREATER CARIBBEAN ENDORSED AS A FRAMEWORK FOR REGIONAL CO-OPERATION



Port of Spain, Trinidad (July 18th, 2013) – The 24th Meeting of the ACS Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism was held in Port-of-Spain, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, July 16th -17th, 2013. Included in the high-level gathering were delegations from sixteen (16) ACS countries and representatives from the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The Chairman of the Special Committee and President of the Martinique Tourism Authority, Honourable Mrs. Karine Roy-Camille, underscored that the ACS is an important forum for the sharing and exchange of experiences in common areas of development for the sustainable economic and social development of the region's countries and territories. Adding that as the region experiences a substantial increase in the arrival of tourists, it is essential to maintain and protect our natural spaces and to develop sustainable development policies and practices, the Chair recommended that efforts should be oriented towards the achievement of concrete results, avoiding duplication of efforts and increasing valued added benefits for the ACS member countries.

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Mrs. Juliana Johan-Boodram in endorsing the efforts of the ACS in the area of sustainable tourism, expressed that the SCST Meeting was a great opportunity for countries of the region to share best practices and experiences in the practise of sustainable tourism, which in the development context is a vehicle for achieving balance, sustainable growth and poverty alleviation, as well as in promoting the culture

and heritage of destinations.

Secretary General of the ACS, H. E. Ambassador Alfonso David Múnera Cavadía, in outlining the priority aspects of the ACS Sustainable Tourism Work programme stressed the commitment of the Association in fulfilling the mandates of the ACS Member States and highlighted the need for the active participation and engagement of all countries in fulfilling the objectives of the work programme.

At the conclusion of the meeting, some important advancements were made within the ACS four programmatic areas of the Sustainable Tourism Work Programme, foremost of which were as follows.

The importance of the project to establish the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean (STZC), in promoting Sustainable Tourism development in the region was highlighted as an International benchmark. The STZC initiative was endorsed as a framework for regional co-operation on Sustainable Tourism, and Countries committed to advance the ratifications to the Convention and Protocol of this instrument and ensure its immediate implementation during the first semester of 2014.

In the area of promoting Multi-Destination Tourism (MDT), the meeting agreed that enhancing intra-regional travel and connectivity were the two main priorities. A Meeting of the Regional Tourism and Transport Authorities with the Airline Executives will be held November 13th, 2013 in Cancun, Mexico. The ACS is collaborating with the Latin America and Caribbean Air Transport Association (ALTA) and the Caribbean Tourism Organisation for the hosting of this event.

As it relates to promoting the Languages and Cultures of the Greater Caribbean, the meeting appealed for the full mobilization of ACS Member countries in the Promotion of Languages and Cultures of the Greater Caribbean and in this regard to facilitate the language training student exchange programmes. It was agreed as an immediate next step to focus on engaging the youth as well as increasing Greater Caribbean cultural awareness and exchanges through professional

immersion.

In the area of Promoting of Safety and Security in the Tourism Industry, countries agreed on the importance of having increased sharing of experiences and strategies in relation to safety and security. In this regard, the importance of communication, education and sensitizing the local population, as well as building capacity in the area of media relations were highlighted as priority activities.

The committee proposed to organize a meeting with the chairs of Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Caribbean Tourism Organisation, Secretariat of Central American Tourism Integration, Latin American and Caribbean Air Transport Association and the United Nations World Tourism Organization to strengthen collaboration and facilitate the development of strategic partnerships and identification of resources. It was also agreed that the 3rd Meeting of the Ministers of the Tourism of the Greater Caribbean would be celebrated in Martinique on the 15th October, 2013.

The next meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism will be held in La Antigua in Guatemala on the 25th April, 2014.