ACS committed to air and maritime connectivity



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Port of Spain (October 25th 2013) – The XXII Meeting of the Special Committee on Transport was held today at the Secretariat of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The meeting, following on from the mandate issued to the Directorate of Disaster Risk Reduction and Transport at this year's V Summit of the ACS, sought to provide an update on current progress, as well as facilitate discussion and collaboration on some of the key initiatives.

Mr. Andreas R. Talea, General Manager of the Suriname Port Management Company, chaired the meeting, with Member Countries represented at today's proceedings, together with delegations from regional organizations such as Central American Commission for Maritime Transport (COCATRAM), Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Corporation (PLIPDECO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), Caribbean Shipping Association (CSA) and Caribbean Airlines.

Trinidad and Tobago's Honourable Minister of Transport, Mr. Stephen Cadiz was among those in attendance. Minister Cadiz, in his opening address, commended the ACS on its continued efforts to strengthen and deepen areas of functional co-operation within the Greater Caribbean region. He stressed the need for dialogue and the development of strategic measures to alleviate existing barriers to connectivity. He concluded by assuring the gathering of Trinidad and Tobago's continued support to the work of the Association and its thrust for regional integration and sustainable development.

His thoughts were mirrored by that of the Secretary General of the ACS, His Excellency Ambassador Alfonso Múnera who reiterated the need to advance connectivity in the region. ACS Secretary General also emphasized the integral role that air and maritime transport plays in relation to sectors of trade and tourism in the Greater Caribbean region. His brief discourse alluded to current projects being undertaken and the resulting success that the ACS had experienced over the past few years. He maintained, however, that in spite of this there was a lot more to be done and urged all present representatives to further collaborate in this priority area.

According to George Nicholson, Director of Transport at the ACS, the meeting agreed to set up a Working Committee to examine all the material on connectivity of the ACS Member Countries, with a view to changing policy at the political level and resolving issues related to connectivity.

The meeting also realized the formal initiation of the Port & Maritime Strategy, which seeks to create a strategy throughout the wider Caribbean and develop synergies with COCATRAM, which has done similar work in this area.

In addition to which, the current 'Map of Maritime Routes of the Greater Caribbean' initiative was reviewed and approved by ACS Member States and its partners, with representative delegations making known their continued support towards the sustenance of the project. Director Nicholson also revealed plans for the expansion and increased promotion of the tool, to the benefit of Member States and members of the private sector.

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