ACS and Mexico host International Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction



Mexico City (November 25th, 2013) – The first International Workshop on Disaster Risk Management Associated with Natural Phenomena was held today in Mexico City, Mexico. The conference meeting, organized by the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) in collaboration with the host country, sought to examine the current state of preparedness within the Greater Caribbean region and propose a way forward in dealing with natural disasters and climate change.

Mexican Secretary of Foreign Affairs José Antonio Meade, in his address, highlighted the gravity of the situation facing the region, noting its increasing susceptibility to natural disasters and the adverse environmental effects ensued by changes in the global climate. His concerned call for unified action, on the part of Latin American and Caribbean States, beckoned the gathering to "work on creating greater institutional capacity to mitigate disaster risk before, during and after they occur."

His Excellency Alfonso Múnera, Secretary General of the ACS, echoed the sentiments of the Foreign Affairs Secretary, stressing the importance of the issue to the Greater Caribbean region. The theme of Disaster Risk, one of the focal areas which forms part of the ACS portfolio, according to the Secretary General was one of special interest, especially in recent times given the frequency of occurrence. The increased rate of occurrence has rendered the region more, now than ever, prone to risk – a risk detrimental to our natural environments, resources and our people. His Excellency cited the meeting initiative, the first by the ACS and the government of Mexico, as crucial in developing and establishing mechanisms for disaster preparedness, management and recovery.

Claudia Ruiz Massieu, Secretary of Tourism of Mexico also addressed the near 100 delegate gathering, comprising Ministers and Vice Ministers, Ambassadors, and specialists in the area of

Trade and Economics, Tourism and Natural Disaster. The Secretary of Tourism was keen to point out the correlation between natural disaster and the Tourism sector, underlining the view shared by the Foreign Minister and Secretary General of the ACS that the problem was of critical importance, especially given its direct relation to sectors such as tourism and trade throughout the Greater Caribbean region.

The Meeting gathered experts in the field of Disaster Risk Reduction from the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM) of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Stephen Ramroop; the United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction Office of the Americas (UNISDR), Ricardo Mena; the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Jose Manuel Iraheta, among others.

It is expected that conferences of this nature will be held in the future, as the ACS, along with its Member States strive to establish functional cooperative means to tackle an issue that has proved to be a major challenge for the Greater Caribbean region. It is hoped that together, through collective discussion and concerted action the region will be able to better cope with the threat posed by natural disasters and climate change to the region’s environment, its economies and its people.