XVI Intersessional Preparatory Meeting inaugurates in Mexico



Mexico City (November 26th, 2013) - The XVI Intersessional Preparatory Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) was held today in Mexico. Some twenty five (25) Member Countries and two (2) Associate Member Countries were represented at the meeting, chaired by Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, His Excellency José Antonio Meade Kuribreña.

His Excellency, in his welcoming remarks at the meeting's opening ceremony, commended the ACS on its current work in the Greater Caribbean region and assured the gathering of Mexico's continued support and commitment. In his address, he acknowledged the creation of the first Sustainable Tourism Zone in the Greater Caribbean region, an initiative spearheaded by the ACS, and urged the gathering to continue collaborating for renewed institution, citing the collective as possessing tremendous economic potential capable of even many more possibilities with further unified efforts. The Government of Mexico, in the capacity of Chair, presented four issues for cooperation efforts in the thematic areas of the ACS. One such initiative is to focus on Geospatial Management.

Secretary General of the ACS, His Excellency Alfonso Múnera, expressed his appreciation and gratitude to the Government of Mexico for making this week's meetings possible – the XVI Interssessional Preparatory Meeting of the Ministerial Council and the inaugural International Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction hosted by the ACS, in conjuction with Mexico. He thanked the gathering, comprising Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Vice Ministers, Ambassadors and specialists in the fields of Tourism, Trade, Disaster Risk Reduction and Transport for their contribution to the success of the week's earlier meeting and for their continued support to the ACS.

Following his initial remarks, he presented the report of the Secretariat on the progress made with regards to the Plan of Action of Pétion-Ville and the mandates issued at this year's V Summit of the Heads of State and/or Government of the Association of Caribbean States held in Haiti. Next year's Summit of the ACS, according to the Secretary General, promises to be a special one for the Association, which celebrates its 20th anniversary. The Summit is scheduled to be hosted by Mexico, in Yucatan, Merida from 28th – 30th April. Having enjoyed a fruitful year for the period 2013, the Secretary General shared his optimism at the prospects of 2014.

The Secretary General presented an update on the inclusion of Guadeloupe and Martinique as Associate Members of the ACS. He stated that communication was made with France presenting proposals in terms of facilitating the applications of Martinique and Guadeloupe. Several countries endorsed the inclusion of these territories. He further informed that Sint Maarten expressed their interest to continue participation in the ACS as Associate Members.

ACS Host Country to the Secretariat, Trinidad and Tobago, also addressed the Meeting, with His Excellency Neil Parsan, Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago in Washington, delivering a speech on behalf of Trinidad and Tobago Minister of Foreign Affairs, Winston Dookeran. His Excellency endorsed the ACS Work Programme for 2014 – 2015, stating that the reoriented convergence approach to regional integration, propounded by the Honourable Winston, Minister of Foreign Affairs and sanctioned by the membership in the Declaration of Petion-Ville, was compatible with the goal of the Work Programme. Ambassador Parsan voiced that the trajectory of the ACS was fixed on achievable outcomes that promise to improve the lives of the region's people, alluding to Trinidad and Tobago's commitment to the sustainability of the organization.