Historical moment for Martinique and Guadeloupe as they become Associate Members of the ACS



Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago (February 14th, 2014) – “For the first time in history, the various islands are represented in one Association,” said the Ambassador Alfonso Múnera, Secretary General of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), upon the acceptance of the French overseas territories of Martinique and Guadeloupe into the ACS as Associate Members in their own right. These were his words at the 19th Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the ACS which took place on February 14th, 2014.

Prior to this, these countries were represented by France. The delegates from Martinique and Guadeloupe both expressed their gratitude to the ACS for having accepted them as Associate Members. They announced their commitment to the work and programmes of the ACS and further indicated that this is an historical moment for their Territories.

The Meeting was presided by the Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, for Latin America and the Caribbean, Vanessa Rubio, alongside Vice Chairs, Cuba and Honduras, and the Secretary General of the ACS.

Representing the host country of the ACS Secretariat on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, the Honourable Winston Dookeran, was Sir Edwin Carrington, Ambassador Extraordinaire of Trinidad and Tobago to CARICOM. In his opening address, he reaffirmed that, “Trinidad and Tobago remains as sanguine today in respect of the colossal potential of the Association as an invaluable mechanism for uniting the Greater Caribbean Region as it was when it undertook to host the ACS Secretariat. We are satisfied that the Organisation has amassed an impressive compendium of achievements in its short history and express our unequivocal commitment to our duty as Host Country.”

Following this, the Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico informed that Mexico will serve as host of the Sixth Summit of Heads of State and/or Government of the ACS to take place in April, 2014. She extended an invitation to all the Member and Associate Member Countries of the ACS, and urged them to ensure representation at the highest level. She further assured that direct air connections will be established in Barbados to allow Caribbean Heads of State and/or Government ease of access to this auspicious event.

The Minister of Development of Turkey, the Honourable Cevdet Yılmaz, addressed the gathering as an Observer Country of the ACS, revealing that Turkey has a history of 15 years of active diplomatic presence in the region. He informed of the opening of an Embassy in Santo Domingo in addition to another in the Eastern Caribbean.

In the area of air connectivity, he stated that Turkish Airlines will be opening four new routes to connect the region of Latin America to Turkey. The Minister further pledged cooperation in the areas humanitarian aid, development, disaster risk reduction and the Caribbean Sea Commission. High level meetings have been planned between his country and CARICOM.

Guatemala has now assumed Chairmanship of the Ministerial Council for the period 2014 -2015, the position previously held until last Friday by Mexico. The meeting also approved the Chairmanship of the Special Committees led by the following countries: Disaster Risk Reduction (Guadeloupe), Transport (Cuba), Tourism (Martinique), Trade (Mexico), Budget and Administration (Guatemala) and the Special Fund (Dominican Republic).

The following Ministers were also in attendance at the meeting: Minister de Foreign Affairs y Worship of Costa Rica, José Enrique Castillo Barrantes, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Haiti, the Honourable Pierre Richard Casmir, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guyana, Mrs. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, and the Minister for External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation of Saint Lucia, Mr. Alva Romanus Baptiste.

Ambassador Múnera, in his closing remarks thanked the Ministers, Vice Ministers, Ambassadors and representatives from the various regional organizations such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Organisation of American States (OAS), International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Economic Commission of Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), for their participation at the Meeting and the continued support shown to the ACS.

The Association of Caribbean States is the organization for consultation, cooperation and concerted action in trade, transport, sustainable tourism and natural disasters, as well as the development of cooperation programmes in the areas of education and culture in the Greater Caribbean and is

comprised of 25 Member Countries and 7 Associate Member Countries.