ACS and UNWTO Sign Co-operation Agreement at SIDS Conference in The Bahamas



Nassau Bahamas, (February 20th, 2014), The Association of Caribbean States and the United Nations World Tourism Organisation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in order to revitalise and improve collaboration and co-operation between the two organisations in the area of sustainable tourism. The MOU which was renegotiated and replaced a former MOU Agreement, provides for technical co-operation in coordinating actions for the implementation of projects and activities in areas of mutual interest. The MOU acknowledges the importance of pooling efforts in order to achieve greater reach and impact of initiatives to contribute to the sustainability of Tourism in the Region.

The Conference "Tourism as a Key Sector for Development in Island States" was jointly organized by the Ministry of Tourism of The Bahamas and the United Nations World Tourism Organization and took place from February19-20, 2014 in Nassau, Bahamas. The conference featured panel discussions by high-level experts and Ministers from the Region on topics such as: Maximizing the local benefits of tourism; Transport and air connectivity as a major factor for SIDS' destinations; Regional integration; and Climate Change and Environmental Challenges, among others. As part of the conference a Ministerial Round-table meeting for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was also held to deal specifically with air connectivity and tourism. One of the main outcomes of this event will be a conclusion document that will provide input to the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), to be convened in Samoa in September 2014, called for by the United Nations.

The meeting was presided over by the Minister of Tourism of The Bahamas, Hon. Obediah Wilchcombe, as well as the Secretary General of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, Mr. Taleb Rifai. Participation was received from over 50 high-level delegations from countries and organisations across the Greater Caribbean, including Mr. Hugh riley, Secretary General of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), Hon. Dr. Wykeham McNeill, Minister of Tourism and Entertainment of Jamaica, Hon. Richard Skerrit, Minister of Tourism of St Kitts and Nevis, Hon. Carlos Ricardo Benavides, Minister of the Presidency of Costa Rica, and Ms. Sandra Howard, Vice Minister of Tourism of Colombia, among others.

The Association of Caribbean States was represented by the Director of Sustainable Tourism, Mr. Julio Orozco Perez, who delivered a presentation on the initiatives of the ACS Directorate of Sustainable Tourism (DST) to address some of the major challenges to tourism growth and sustainability facing the region. He informed that the interventions were geared to address the need for and provide long-term strategies to ensure an improvement in environmental sustainability, regional connectivity and human resource development in the tourism industry, an industry on which many of the ACS' Small Island Developing States are highly dependent for revenue. Adding that the primary objective in this regard was to facilitate the harmonisation of policies, strategies and standards in seeking a more collaborative and integrative approach to tourism development among the countries of the region.