ACS URGED TO FOCUS ON BLUE ECONOMY



The 17th Intersessional Preparatory Meeting of the Ministerial Council was convened by the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) on December 1st 2014 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The meeting gathered Member States and Associate Members of the ACS along with Founding Observers, Observer Countries and Social Partners. International Organisations including the International Labour Organization were also present for this Meeting.

The Honourable Winston Dookeran, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago issued introductory remarks in which he reinforced the concept of the ACS as a required organisation in the Greater Caribbean Region. He also made reference to the VI Summit of Heads of States and/or Government of the Association of Caribbean States which was held in Mérida, Mexico, April 2014 and stated that it was a turning point in the dynamics of the organization. He indicated that the ACS has been performing successfully in achieving the mandates set in Mérida.

Minister Dookeran also referred to the Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC) of the ACS as a possible prelude for discussions on the Blue Economy which has already earned great importance in the global and international agenda, specifically gaining significant support in the Pacific region.

He emphasized that the Blue Economy should be considered as a new resource which must be looked at with urgency and he urged the Chairman of the Ministerial Council as well as the Secretary General of the ACS to consider his suggestion of focussing on the Blue Economy as a potential for developmental and economic change. He further explained that the Blue Economy refers to the sustainable exploitation of the resources of the oceans such as fish and other marine life.

The Chairman of the Ministerial Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guatemala; the Honourable Carlos Raúl Morales Moscoso shared Minister Dookeran's view of the ACS as an important regional body in the Greater Caribbean and reaffirmed his country's full support to the organisation.

He added that during Guatemala's Chairmanship, there has been a continuity of the mandates set in Pétion Ville and Mérida during the ACS V and VI Summit respectively, including the Development of Short Distance Maritime Transport, Exchange of Information on Disaster Risk Reduction, Risk Management, Cultural Exchange and Sustainable Tourism.

H.E. Alfonso Múnera, Secretary General of the ACS reinforced the words of his counterparts by stating that the ACS is a tool that can produce real movement and meeting in the Greater Caribbean. He disclosed that despite challenges faced by the ACS, this organisation continues to move forward in fulfilling its role in the Greater Caribbean. He further revealed that the Association has generated great expectations and its duty is to fulfil these expectations.

The Meeting concluded following remarks on the preparation of the 20th Ordinary Meeting of the ACS Ministerial Council which will be held in La Antigua Guatemala in March 2015.