26th Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, July 23rd, 2015- The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) through its Directorate of Sustainable Tourism convened the 26th Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism (SCST-26) from 22nd – 23rd July 2015. This Meeting gathered high-level tourism officials and representatives from key regional and international organisations to facilitate dialogue for the promotion, growth and continued sustainability of the regional tourism industry.

The first day focused on the results of the Regional Cooperation Mechanism of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean Project Meeting (STZC-RCM). Among the principal activities of this Meeting was discussion on the implementation of the Regional Sustainable Tourism Indicators and next steps in the process. A major component of this project included the development of communication materials and tools to enhance the value of the STZC to the ACS Membership, including brochures, destination manuals, a reference guide and the unveiling of the official website.

Ms Donna Ferraz, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago delivering the remarks at the STZC-RCM Meeting on behalf of Senator the Honourable Gerald Hadeed, Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, stated that these meeting have occurred at an opportune time taking into consideration that with regards to tourism, the "Caribbean region out-performed the rest of the world, recording a growth rate of 4.7%, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation."

In his inaugural discourse, His Excellency Alfonso Múnera, Secretary General of the ACS stated that the development of sustainable tourism is closely linked to climate change, and that such factors are important as it relates to the initiative of the first sustainable tourism zone. He further expressed that the ACS is interested in developing sustainable tourism because it contributes to social and economic development as one of the sectors which generates the largest source of employment in the Greater Caribbean Region.

On the second day, Mr Julio Orozco, Director of Sustainable Tourism of the ACS presented a report on activities undertaken and progress made in the implementation of the Work Programme since the

last Special Committee Meeting. He also presented for the Meeting's consideration, the proposed Work Programme for the 2016-2017 biennium, which was subsequently approved.

Another important activity related to the Meetings was the results of the Study on Training for Careers in Sustainable Tourism by the project Consultant. This study assessed the status and needs of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in the Tourism sector and provided recommendations to enhance competitiveness in this critical area. A regional TVET Framework was also presented and the ACS will seek to collaborate with its Member and Associate Member States for its implementation.

The two days of Meetings received the participation of fifty delegates which included representatives from fifteen Member and Associate Member States as well as high level officials from various regional and international organisations and Observer Countries to the ACS.