ACS AND GUADELOUPE LAUNCHES LANGUAGE IMMERSION PRORAMME

Port of Spain, Trinidad (December 7, 2015) The Greater Caribbean region boasts linguistic plurality as a result of its colonial history, with English, French and Spanish which are the three main languages spoken in the Region, being among the most spoken languages in the world. The inherent language and cultural diversity of the region, allows countries a unique opportunity to build bridges based on the sharing of knowledge and skills contributing to the Region's holistic growth, and developing the competencies of human resource. In pursuit of this goal, the ACS has incorporated as part of its Sustainable Tourism Work Programme, the facilitation of student exchanges for language and cultural immersion through the establishment of agreements between language training institutions in the region. The aim in this regard, is to improve the language skills of nationals of ACS countries through a series of immersion courses thereby encouraging awareness and appreciation of the languages spoken in the countries of the Region and their respective cultures, as well as establishing a network of regional language training institutions.

As part of this programme, the ACS has been collaborating with the Regional Council of Guadeloupe and project partner Guadeloupe Formation, within the framework of the Guadeloupe International Centre for Language Learning (CIGAREL) project. The CIGAREL project which is funded by the Regional Council of Guadeloupe and the INTERREG VI Caribbean Space Programme, entails the creation of a multilingual centre of excellence in Guadeloupe, dedicated to the teaching of English, Spanish and French as foreign languages. The CIGAREL project will support the ACS Student Exchange Programmes and facilitate co-operation for language training among the countries of the Greater Caribbean, to include the countries and territories of the Insular Caribbean and Central and South America.

From December 6-17, 2015, the first student immersion programme for the learning of French coordinated by the ACS took place as part of the CIGAREL project, linked to the Programme for the Promotion of Languages and Culture of the Greater Caribbean that the ACS Directorate of

Sustainable Tourism promotes. For this exchange, the CIGAREL project supported the participation of students from three countries: Costa Rica, Dominica and Guatemala, consisting of 12 students from each country with one coordinator in each group. The 10 day immersion programme included language lessons with the aim of improving student's literacy levels and fluency in the French language, and incorporated site visits as well as cultural and other activities to familiarize students with the 'Guadeloupean' way of life and culture.

This exchange programme was designed as a pilot and first phase in the ACS Student Exchange Program, the results of which will inform the organisation of future exchange programmes in Guadeloupe and other countries of the Region.

The ACS Directorate of Sustainable Tourism will continue to pursue efforts to build partnerships and alliances to facilitate on-going implementation of student exchanges for language training and cultural immersion among the countries of the Region. Towards this end, efforts have been focussed on the development of support of mechanisms to foster the establishment of a cohesive regional approach to language training, linking the countries of the region as part of the ACS Student Exchange programme.

One of the primary on-going activities in this regard is the creation of a Database of Language Training Institutions in the Region, which lists institutions with accredited language programs that are able to host students as part of an immersion programme. The Directorate has also drafted a Survey to identify the needs and interests of students and professionals from the region, in the area of language learning, the results of which will provide recommendations and impetus into future immersions as part of the wider regional approach being considered.

The ACS remains committed to support language training initiatives in seeking to contribute to the multilingualism of the inhabitants of the region; enhance intra-regional travel and trade; and foster regional integration and cooperation in the area of language learning. It is recognised that such efforts will produce professionals who are better equipped to function in the competitive Twenty-first Century global environment and contribute to the region gaining a competitive advantage in relation to trade, investment and tourism.