ACS Forms Regional Multi-Sectoral Technical Task Force to Tackle COVID-19

MEDIA RELEASE

ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS) FORMS REGIONAL MULTI-SECTORAL TECHNICAL TASK FORCE TO TACKLE COVID-19

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A multi-sectoral task force, comprising doctors and public health officials from 15 countries around the Greater Caribbean has been established by the ACS to facilitate cooperative action aimed at halting the negative impact of COVID-19 and preparing for a different regional future after the pandemic.

Health and development experts met virtually at the 1st Regional Technical Meeting of ACS Members on COVID-19. This followed the mandate by some 30 ministers of Foreign Affairs and Health in March, when the ACS was instructed to convene the technical meeting.

The Technical Meeting called for the established a multi-sectoral technical task force as reflected in the Terms of Reference considered by the Meeting. The Technical Task Force discussed the pandemic in the context of health and risk management, but also deliberated on social and economic impact of the virus on the region and how to transform this shared experience into a lesson in regional resilience. During the meeting, doctors and other health workers from around the region benefitted from the Cuban delegation, which shared its experiences treating COVID-positive patients. The Cuban team shared its experiences in detecting asymptomatic cases, population studies in areas of high infection, quarantine procedures and medication.

As a region, the 35 countries and territories of the Greater Caribbean have recorded nearly 30,000 cases of the virus. At the meeting, the ACS also updated the participants on a Greater Caribbean public COVID-19 Response Dashboard that features geo-mapping, news and action on the virus in

the region. The Dashboard will be shared with the membership this week.

Representative of the Chair of the ACS Ministerial Council, Barbados, David Commissiong Ambassador to the ACS, said: “Let us forget political considerations, ideological considerations, racial and ethnic differences. Let them fade into the background. The only thing that matters now is that we come together to save the lives of our people. Nothing takes precedence over that at this point in time.”

Since the pandemic began to affect the region, Secretary General Dr. June Soomer has stressed the importance of looking after vulnerable groups and building resilience in such critical areas as food security, transport and tourism. She said, “We have to use this opportunity to build more equitable societies as we address social and economic recovery as such renewal cannot be under the current parameters that do not give access to resources to more countries and to more citizens.”

Established in 1994, the Association of Caribbean States is an organisation for consultation, cooperation and concerted action in the Greater Caribbean. The ACS coordinates the mandates of its 25 Member States and 10 Associate Members. Its work is focused on, but not limited to disaster risk reduction; sustainable tourism, trade, transport and the protection and preservation of the Caribbean Sea.