International conference in Panama on Caribbean sandy beaches poses challenges for the region



Panama City, 28 June 2023 - The City of Knowledge, Panama, is the venue for the International Conference of the Association of Caribbean States entitled "Identification, Protection, Restoration and Management of the Beaches of the Greater Caribbean 2023", (IPREeM Greater Caribbean 2023), from 28 to 30 June.

This event is part of the ongoing 'Sandy Shorelines' project, promoted through close collaboration with the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) to bring together leading experts and practitioners in the field of coastal conservation and management from across the Greater Caribbean region.

During the opening ceremony, the Senator of the Republic of Mexico, Beatriz Paredes Rangel, called on all delegates from the countries of the region to urgently promote a coalition of all the Environmental Commissions of the congresses and parliaments of the Caribbean States in order to consolidate a unified work to help protect the coasts and their natural resources that are being severely affected by climate change.

"We propose, from the Mexican Parliament and the Latin American Parliament, to convene a meeting of all the Environmental Commissions of the regional congresses and seek ways to work together on real and effective solutions to the effects we are experiencing on our beaches and coasts, and that we give priority to this issue because it affects us all equally," said Senator Paredes Rangel. She also pointed out that the large arrivals of sargassum reflect the challenges posed by climate change and pollution, for which we currently do not have sufficient environmental, governmental or economic responses to face this regional emergency.

Ana Leticia Ramirez, Director of Disaster Risk Reduction, Environment and Caribbean Sea of the Association of Caribbean States described this International Conference as a timely forum for discussion and evaluation of the situation of Caribbean beaches, an important economic engine for many populations throughout the countries of the region.

"From the Association of Caribbean States, we are very pleased with the proposal of Senator Beatriz Paredes Rangel, to bring together all the congresses of the region through their Environmental Commissions, seeking this unification of criteria that will help us work together to safeguard our beaches and coasts, a proposal that goes hand in hand with the aspiration of the Caribbean States that are gathered here today in Panama," said Ana Leticia Ramirez.

Meanwhile Joonsung Park, Regional Director of the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) reiterated the commitment of the Government of the Republic of South Korea to continue supporting and strengthening all efforts being made through the Caribbean States to protect the coasts of the Caribbean, especially those regions most vulnerable and prone to the impact of climate change.

"The task of defending the natural coastal resources of the Caribbean region is enormous, and from our agency, we have seen good results in the fight and joint protection of the sandy coasts, and we are committed to continue supporting all initiatives in favour of this ecosystem so valuable not only for the region but also for the world," said Joonsung Park.

At the opening ceremony, the Representative of the Ministry of Environment of Panama, Maribel Pinto, reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to provide data and monitor risks related to the impact of climate change in the Caribbean coastal zones. In her speech, she pointed out that islands have been identified that will cease to exist, which is why since 2010 coastal communities have been moving to the mainland.

For her part, Raisa Banfield, President of the Sustainable Panama Foundation, stressed that the sea is currently reaching places where it did not reach years ago, and that this phenomenon is not only caused by climate change, but also by anthropological actions.

"An issue of great concern is that in Panama, despite the serious consequences that we all know, sand mining continues to be developed at the bottom of our Atlantic and Pacific seas, whose irreversible effects we are already seeing on our coasts and is an issue that deserves discussion and urgent action between the government and citizens, otherwise, Panama that is narrow will be narrower due to erosion and the loss of its beaches," Banfield said.

During the three-day conference, a number of sessions and panel discussions will be held, addressing key issues such as coastal erosion, marine pollution, climate change and sustainable beach management. Successful case studies, best practices and innovative solutions that contribute to the protection and restoration of beaches in the Greater Caribbean will also be presented.

IPReM Greater Caribbean 2023 is an event organised by the Association of Caribbean States in collaboration with the Korean Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba (CITMA) and the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Panama. Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands, Panama, South Korea, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago and Antigua and Barbuda are participating in this meeting.

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