ACS Secretary General advocates for strategic planning to improve regional connectivity at the 21st Session of the Monitoring Committee of the ECLAC Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee

H.E. Rodolfo Sabonge, ACS Secretary General, attended the 21st Session of the Monitoring Committee of the ECLAC Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee on 3 November 2023. He delivered a presentation at the high-level roundtable discussion titled Repositioning the Caribbean in a dynamic and competitive global environment, which was moderated by Pennelope Beckles-Robinson, Minister of Planning and Development, Trinidad and Tobago.

In his remarks, the Secretary General stated that the issue of connectivity experienced in the Caribbean region cannot be addressed by focusing solely on the development of infrastructure projects. He explained that a strategic planning exercise for the whole region must be conducted to design a master plan that supports the advancement of these infrastructures. "The development of transport services in parallel with the infrastructure and digital connectivity, is what we need to solve the challenge of connectivity," he said.

The Secretary General highlighted ACS's efforts to improve regional connectivity and referred to the Connectivity Conference of the Greater Caribbean held in October 2023 in Martinique as a successful event. The conference was hosted in collaboration with the Collectivité Territoriale de Martinique (CTM), and gathered regional experts who provided innovative solutions to advance regional development through stronger transport links and transport services in the Caribbean. He also highlighted that as a result of the conference, the convening of the next edition of the event was agreed to in 2024.

The Honourable Albert Ramdin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation of the Republic of Suriname, and current Chair of the ACS Ministerial Council, also took

part in this roundtable, and encouraged the Ministers present to work to strengthen inter-regional cooperation. The Honourable expressed that the region needs to reposition itself, and this will require an honest analysis and discussion between the parties, leading to an economic partnership agreement.

The Honourable Alva Baptiste, Minister for External Affairs, International Trade, Civil Aviation and Diaspora Affairs of Saint Lucia. Minister Baptiste elaborated on this discussion as well. The Minister pointed out that in order to address the connectivity issue, it is critical to study traffic patterns. He stressed the importance of a collective effort to respond to these challenges and the need for an honest debate on the future of the Caribbean, as the region has extensive human capital capable of providing solutions.