The UNAM and the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs Organize Colloquium on the ACS in Mérida



The National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), through the National School of Higher Studies, Mérida Unit, along with the Faculty of Higher Studies Aragón, the Faculty of Higher Studies Acatlán, the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, the Center for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean, the Autonomous University of Quintana Roo, Chetumal Campus, the Mexican Association of Caribbean Studies, the Academic Unit for Regional Studies, the University of Guadalajara, and the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, organized the International Colloquium titled '30 Years of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS): Progress, Challenges, and Opportunities.' The colloquium took place at the ENES of UNAM in Mérida and was held in a hybrid format on August 1 and 2, 2024.

The Secretary General of the ACS, H.E. Rodolfo Sabonge, inaugurated the Colloquium highlighting Mexico's active participation in the ACS and explaining its structure, functioning, and focal areas. He also delivered the keynote lecture titled 'Past, Present, and Future of the ACS: Facing the Challenges and Opportunities of the Greater Caribbean,' where he provided context on the geopolitical and economic environment at the time the ACS was created and assessed the main achievements and obstacles faced by the ACS in its 30 years of existence. He emphasized the resilience and adaptability of the organization.

"The challenge we face is to work together as a region in solidarity, consolidating a single vision on the relevant issues that concern us," expressed the Secretary General, referring to the obstacles that hinder integration among the countries of the region.

He also addressed the need to strengthen air and maritime links between the countries of the Greater Caribbean, affirming that "physical and digital connectivity is fundamental for regional trade and tourism."

The Secretary General called for action against climate change, emphasizing that, although the Greater Caribbean contributes little to this phenomenon, it is one of the most affected regions. He stressed the need to act now to face the natural phenomena that threaten the survival of our peoples.

H.E. Rodolfo Sabonge concluded his speech by proposing the need for a strategic planning exercise to define the vision and mission of the ACS in the medium and long term, to adapt to new global geopolitical realities. He emphasized the importance of repeating this exercise every five years, using performance indicators to evaluate its achievements annually.

The colloquium also featured the participation of the Mexican Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago, H.E. Victor Hugo Morales, who spoke on 'The Association of Caribbean States, between the

Geopolitics of the Greater Caribbean and Cooperation for Development,' highlighting the achievements of the ACS and the challenges it faces in fulfilling its purpose of contributing to the sustainable development of the Greater Caribbean. "The current world in which the ACS operates is a multipolar, fragmented scenario, with multiple crises and countries of the global south making their way to become relevant actors in international relations," said Ambassador Morales. He praised the vision of the leaders who conceived the ACS and mentioned achievements such as the agreement for the Sustainable Tourism Zone in 2001 and the air transport agreement in 2012.

The Ambassador highlighted the historical significance of this event, as it was in Mérida, Mexico, 10 years ago that the ACS held its VI Summit of Heads of State, reaffirming its commitment to strengthening air connectivity and international trade.

The colloquium brought together academics, researchers, diplomats, and students to reflect on the impact and future of the ACS in the Greater Caribbean region, featuring numerous speakers who provided different perspectives on the geopolitical situation of the Association. Crucial topics such as economic integration and international cooperation between Mexico and the Caribbean, the current challenges and opportunities of the ACS, the geostrategic role of the Association and its evolution over 30 years, as well as migration dynamics, environment, tourism, and the role of SMEs in regional development were discussed. The event demonstrated the importance of multilateral collaboration to face common challenges and promote sustainable development in the Greater Caribbean.