UNDP and ACS renew their Memorandum of Understanding to enhance Caribbean development and connectivity



The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed a renewed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at the ACS Secretariat in Port of Spain, continuing and expanding their commitment to regional development and cooperation.

Signing the MOU on behalf of the ACS was Secretary General H.E. Rodolfo Sabonge, and for the UNDP, Assistant Secretary General and Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Michelle Muschett. Also present were Ms. Randi Davis, UNDP Senior Strategic Advisor for the Caribbean, Mr. Ugo Blanco, UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Tricia Barrow, ACS Chief External Coordinator, Mrs. Natasha George, ACS Legal Officer, and Mrs. Lisa Douglas-Paul, ACS Officer in Charge of the Directorate for Cooperation and Resource Mobilization.

The original MOU, signed on October 29, 2021, has now been extended for an additional two years following comprehensive technical discussions that began in November 2023 and concluded in March 2024. This renewal not only reflects the commitment of both parties to strengthen their partnership but also introduces an innovative Action Plan attached as Appendix II, which outlines the collaborative efforts for the upcoming period.

Key components of the renewed MOU include:

Joint initiatives focusing on Digitalization.

Knowledge sharing opportunities with a focus on the Gender Equality Seal.

Compilation of a Regional Human Development Report.

Enhancing capacities in managing Sargassum influx.

Project Management and Results-Based Management improvements.

Michelle Muschett, speaking at the signing, highlighted the potential of this renewed agreement to elevate the partnership to new heights, and support the wider effort to enhance human development despite disparities that have been deepened by various localised and global crises. In this regard she pointed to the UN 2021 Regional Human Development Report in providing data that can help UNDP and ACS tailor their interventions to concretely meet the development needs of their shared membership.

Highlighting the priority focus of the MoU, Sabonge added: "The ACS is uniquely placed to act in the areas of the environment and climate change, mandated by convention to safeguard the Caribbean Sea. Our partnership with UNDP is crucial as we turn UN resolutions into actionable strategies that champion sustainable development."

This renewed partnership comes at a time when both organizations aim to advance the regional and national digital agendas. The ACS will particularly highlight this commitment at the forthcoming High-Level Conference on "SIDS 2.0: Defining the Pathway for Small Island Digital States in the Caribbean," scheduled for April 30 to May 1, 2024, in Port of Spain.

This event not only commemorates the 30th anniversary of the ACS but also marks a mature, focused continuation of a pivotal partnership. "Let us do," concluded Secretary General Sabonge, a call to action that resonates with the collaborative spirit of this renewed agreement.