29th Ordinary Meeting of The ACS Ministerial Council concludes in Paramaribo, Suriname



The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) is an intergovernmental organization comprising 25 Member States and 10 Associate Members in the Greater Caribbean. Only the OAS surpasses the ACS in the number of Member States.

On May 9, 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Suriname, International Business and International Cooperation, in close collaboration with the Secretariat of the ACS successfully conducted the 29th Ordinary Meeting of the ACS Ministerial Council in Paramaribo, Suriname. This meeting was held alongside the 16th Greater Caribbean Business Forum on May 6 and the 8th International Cooperation Conference on May 7. This year's Ministerial Meeting was marked by significant developments, including the ceremonial transfer of the Council's Chairmanship from Suriname to Colombia, where the agreement that established the ACS was signed 30 years ago. One of the main undertakings of the Colombian Chairmanship will be the conduct of a Strategic Planning Exercise to define the Vision and Mission of the organization for the next ten years- a mandate handed down by the last Summit of ACS Heads of State and Government held in 2023 in Antigua Guatemala. This is expected to be one of the key considerations at the 10th ACS Summit to be held in Colombia within a year.

The 16th Business Forum of the Greater Caribbean, held prior to the ministerial meeting, featured a dynamic business exhibition, and served as a vital platform for networking between Greater Caribbean businesses. The event furthered the ACS mandate to strengthen regional economic integration and cooperation.

During the Business Forum, ACS Secretary General Rodolfo Sabonge emphasized the link between physical and digital connectivity and the sustainable development of the region. "Trade depends on intraregional connectivity and being linked to global value chains. The lack of connectivity makes foreign trade more expensive and makes us increasingly less competitive." he said. He highlighted the urgent need for a Regional Public-Private Partnership (PPP) that allows for risk sharing by the private and public sectors, delivers quality public goods for the regional citizenry and profit for the private sector. This initiative was well received by the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) participating in the Forum who indicated their desire to discuss further.

The 8th International Cooperation Conference, held under the theme “Propelling the Greater Caribbean through Pathways for Sustainable Development”, brought together regional and international experts, policymakers, stakeholders and development partners to explore pressing issues and opportunities facing the region, and witnessed the launching of the third edition of the ACS Regional South-South Cooperation Catalog. This catalog serves as a cornerstone to foster development and facilitate collaborative projects among Member States, promoting sustainable growth and partnership within the region.

During the Cooperation Conference, the Chair of the ACS Ministerial Council, Minister Albert Ramdin emphasized the need for implementing Sustainable practices in tourism and the preservation of mangrove ecosystems to address environmental challenges such as climate change and the Sargassum influx. He pointed out the potential of turning seaweed from a threat into a valuable resource for various industries. He also stressed the importance of digitalization in improving business efficiency. A call for robust cooperation and concrete actions to improve the livelihoods of people in the Caribbean, including by greater involvement of the Private Sector, was made by the Minister.

These meetings reinforce ACS's commitment to facilitate dialogue and collaboration among its Member States, Associates, and Observers. The outcomes of this year's meetings are expected to further drive economic, social, and environmental initiatives throughout the Greater Caribbean region.