The Association of Caribbean States celebrates 30 years

The Convention that Established the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) was signed on July 24, 1994. Under the theme “United for Life: Towards a more sustainable Greater Caribbean,” this milestone represents our enduring commitment to regional integration, sustainable development, and enhanced cooperation among our Member States, Countries, and territories. A layer of historical and symbolic importance is added to this milestone by the fact that Colombia is currently chairing the ACS Ministerial Council, as thirty years ago, the event that laid the foundation for what would become a cornerstone of regional cooperation took place in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia.

The ACS emerged from the aspirations of a group of countries recognized for their leadership in the Caribbean region. These nations sought to bring practical and meaningful life to their shared regional similarities and historical ties despite the diversity in their cultures, languages, sizes, and economies. Their efforts were guided by the principles and ideals outlined in the Convention. Since its inception, the ACS has grown significantly, now including 25 Member States, 10 Associate Members, 6 Founding Observers, 29 Observer Countries, 7 Observer Organisations, and 18 Social Actors, a testament to our expanding influence and reach.

In preparing for the 10th Summit of Heads of State and/or Government of the States, Countries and Territories of ACS, the occasion provides an opportunity to reflect on the legacy of past Summits.

Inaugural Summit

The inaugural ACS Summit, held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on August 17-18, 1995, laid the foundation for ACS collective efforts by producing the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action on Tourism, Trade, and Transport. This seminal document set the stage for the Association's ongoing commitment to enhancing these critical sectors, which are vital to the economic and social development of our region.

Second ACS Summit

The second Summit, held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, on April 16-17, 1999, provided a reflective and forward-looking platform, ensuring that ACS actions were aligned with the evolving needs and aspirations of its Member States. Sustainable tourism was recognised as an adequate response to the challenges of increasing rates of growth in employment and foreign exchange earnings, protecting and preserving the environment and natural resources, and protecting cultural patrimony and values. Therefore, the Declaration for the Establishment of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean was adopted.

Third ACS Summit

The third ACS Summit held in Margarita Island, Venezuela, on December 11-12, 2001, aimed at the Consolidation of the Greater Caribbean. The Heads of State and/or Government of the States, Countries, and Territories of the ACS declared their commitment to establishing the Greater Caribbean region as a Zone of Cooperation, in recognition of the shared geographical space and the shared interests and objectives that arise from it.

Fourth ACS Summit

The fourth Summit, held in Panama City, Panama, on July 29, 2005, was driven by the objective of giving the Association new political impetus. Leaders gathered with a renewed commitment to invigorate the ACS's role in regional politics and cooperation, reinforcing the strategic importance of our collective voice on the global stage.

Fifth ACS Summit

The fifth Summit held in Pétion Ville, Haiti, on April 26, 2013, aimed to strengthen synergies within the Greater Caribbean through deep and positive interaction among Heads of State. Additionally, it addressed matters related to education, culture, science, gender, and the empowerment of women, underscoring the holistic approach needed for regional development.

Sixth ACS Summit

The sixth Summit, held in Merida, Mexico, on April 30, 2014, marked the 20th anniversary of the ACS and provided an opportunity to reflect on our journey and to plan ahead with a clear vision for continued progress and cooperation. In addition, the Heads of State and/or Government of the ACS Membership reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen and support the execution of the actions to contribute to the development of air connectivity and the strengthening of International Trade.

Seventh ACS Summit

The seventh Summit, held in La Havana, Cuba, on June 4, 2016, reinforced the Membership's collective commitment to sustainability. This Summit highlighted the importance of environmental stewardship, economic resilience, and social equity in our region's development strategies. It was a call to action for all member states to unite in their efforts to create a sustainable and prosperous future for the Caribbean.

Eight ACS Summit

The Eight Summit, Summit held in Managua, Nicaragua, on March 29, 2019, served as a platform to acknowledge the region's vulnerability to climate change. The Declaration of Managua stressed the significance of the IPCC report on the impacts of global warming at 1.5ºC and its implications for the region, and ACS Membership agreed to unite efforts to face global climate change with a view to positioning the countries of the Greater Caribbean at the forefront of international efforts to limit

global warming to 1.5ºC.

Ninth Summit

The Ninth Summit, held in Antigua, Guatemala, on May 12, 2023, was focused on addressing the multidimensional challenges of the Greater Caribbean, particularly climate change and post-COVID-19 socio-economic recovery. The declaration highlighted the importance of multi-actor partnerships, emphasising South-South and Triangular cooperation for sustainable development. It underscored the revitalisation process of the ACS to establish a "New Normality" based on socio-cultural, economic, technological, digital, and environmental cohesion and the implementation of the ACS Plan of Action 2022-2028 for resilience and preparedness.

Over the course of 30 years, the ACS has also formed numerous strategic alliances, each of which aims to leverage synergies and harness the capabilities of our partners to attain common objectives. These agreements, formalised through Memorandums of Understanding, reflect the ACS's devotion to fostering collaboration and leveraging international expertise to address the challenges and opportunities facing the Greater Caribbean. Each partnership brings unique strengths and resources, allowing ACS to make significant strides towards the well-being of our people.

Since the inaugural Summit, the ACS has consistently built upon the foundations set by its predecessors to cope with the dynamic needs of our region and ensure that the ACS remains a vital platform for consultation, cooperation and concerted action. Together, these principles form the cornerstone of ACS efforts to enhance the quality of life and promote sustainable development among our Member States and Territories.