ACS hosts Workshop to conclude Phase 1 of the Sandy Shorelines Project



In the framework of its 30th Anniversary, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) hosted a workshop to conclude Phase 1 of the "Impact Assessment of Climate Change on the Sandy Shorelines of the Caribbean," also known as the ACS Sandy Shorelines Project. The event took place on October 16-17, 2024, in Trinidad and Tobago. The project, aimed at improving resilience in coastal communities, focused on establishing a regional erosion monitoring network and promoting best practices for beach rehabilitation. The project was made possible by funding from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and support of the Korean Institute of Oceanic Science and Technology (KIOST).

Twelve Member States attended the workshop: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, and Venezuela, along with ten Associate Members: Aruba, British Virgin Islands, Curaçao, and Guadeloupe.

During the workshop’s opening ceremony, ACS Secretary General, H.E. Rodolfo Sabonge, highlighted the support ACS received from Korea in executing the project. He emphasized the project as a critical step towards climate change adaptation in Caribbean communities. Sabonge reflected on lessons learned, examining both challenges and successes to ensure more strategic efforts in future initiatives.

Secretary General Sabonge noted that the effects of climate change are being witnessed and reaffirmed the ACS’ commitment to protecting coastal environments and strengthening climate resilience through the Caribbean Sea Commission’s work. He also mentioned the Joint Ocean Research Center project, another initiative supported by Korea. Sabonge announced that a delegation from the Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology (KIOST) is currently in Santa

Marta for a site visit regarding the proposed headquarters for this center.

H.E. Seijoong Kwon, Ambassador of Korea to Trinidad and Tobago, delivered remarks expressing gratitude to the ACS for its work in helping Caribbean states better protect their coastlines. Ambassador Kwon highlighted Korea’s increasing cooperation with the ACS and recognized the Sandy Shorelines Project (2017-2024) as one of KOICA's most iconic projects, equipping the region to address coastal erosion and safeguard crucial resources. He also congratulated the ACS on its 30th Anniversary and expressed hope for continued collaboration in areas such as food and energy security, tourism, and supply chains.

The Deputy Director of the KOICA Caribbean Regional Office, Yong Jeong Kim, also attended the workshop and expressed gratitude to the ACS for organizing it. She emphasized that addressing environmental challenges requires collective action and partnerships. Kim reaffirmed KOICA’s commitment to supporting sustainable, impactful projects across the Caribbean and looked forward to future collaboration to ensure that communities flourish while preserving natural heritage for future generations.

Senator the Honourable Dr. Amery Browne, Minister of CARICOM and Foreign Affairs, also delivered remarks, stating that the Sandy Shorelines Project is a flagship initiative for the ACS and the Caribbean Sea Commission. He stressed that climate change poses a severe challenge to Caribbean communities, noting the region's heightened vulnerability due to the increased frequency and intensity of storms. Browne highlighted the approximately 370 fatalities and more than $80 billion in damages caused during the current hurricane season, pointing out the paradox of the Caribbean contributing the least to climate change while suffering disproportionately from its effects.

Minister Browne emphasized the significance of the Sandy Shorelines Project in combating coastal erosion, protecting beaches, and supporting tourism, which is a major economic driver for many small islands. He expressed his gratitude to Korea for its contributions and voiced optimism for a second phase of the project.

Key Achievements of Phase 1

Phase 1 of the Sandy Shorelines Project achieved several milestones, each contributing to the long-term resilience of the Caribbean’s coastlines:

Focal Point Network & Needs Assessment: A regional network of national focal points was established to enhance collaboration and data exchange on coastal erosion.

Capacity Building: Extensive training programs and hands-on experiences were organized to equip stakeholders with the skills to tackle erosion effectively.

Beach Rehabilitation Projects: Rehabilitation efforts were successfully implemented in Panama, Antigua & Barbuda, and Trinidad & Tobago, providing tangible examples of coastal resilience.

Regional Erosion Monitoring Network (REMN): The REMN provides real-time data on erosion trends, supporting evidence-based decision-making for coastal management.

Beach Rehabilitation Guidebook: A comprehensive guidebook offering best practices for erosion control and rehabilitation was developed by regional experts.

Knowledge Transfer Platform: The project established a platform to share insights and expertise across the region.

Presentations and Discussions

The workshop featured insightful presentations on beach rehabilitation efforts. Pavel Morales Diaz from Gamma S.A. (Cuba) shared strategies for beach recovery and protection, including management actions like coastal cleanup and engineering interventions such as artificial sand nourishment. Dr. José Luis Juanes, Technical Coordinator of the Sandy Shorelines Project, presented the "Guidebook for the Protection and Rehabilitation of Greater Caribbean Beaches," emphasizing its use as a resource for mitigating coastal erosion.

The focal points from each country shared insights on their respective projects. Christopher Alexis from Trinidad and Tobago discussed fieldwork and project management improvements, highlighted sediment sampling, and the importance of monitoring equipment, while Mark Archibald from Antigua and Barbuda spoke about the collaboration with experts and the challenges faced. A panel dedicated to institutional capacity building and human resources development featured contributions from Dr. Lilliana Piedra Castro from Costa Rica, Juan Adalberto Chamo Cardona from Guatemala, Bienvenido Santana Ferreras from the Dominican Republic, and Katherine Martinez from Panama.

Furthermore, the participants engaged in focused discussions through breakout groups led by key representatives. These discussions revealed a general concern about the lack of awareness among technical personnel regarding project participation opportunities, emphasizing the need for improved communication with officials to ensure involvement in future project phases.

Key recommendations included establishing clear guidelines for selecting technical focal points and ensuring the long-term involvement of technical experts and policymakers. The need for hands-on training in coastal processes and sedimentary analysis in laboratories was highlighted, with suggestions that countries with more experience could provide human resources and expertise to support others.

The workshop underscored the success of the project in addressing coastal erosion and its socio-economic impacts. The project’s goal of strengthening coastal communities' resilience through a regional monitoring network and shared best practices aims to benefit all member states in the Greater Caribbean Region, which relies heavily on its natural coastal assets for environmental stability and economic vitality.