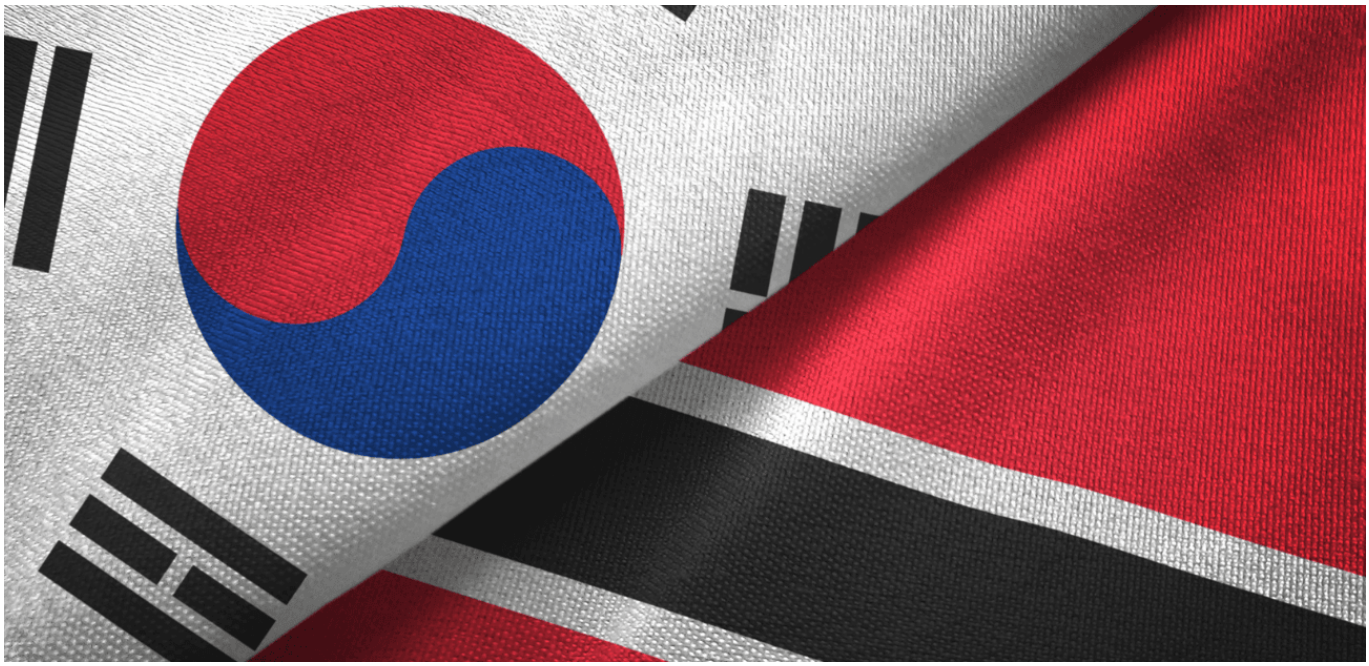
Korea and ACS Partnership for Sustainable Development in the Caribbean Region



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Since November 2012, Korea has been on a journey to promote mutually beneficial relationships with the Caribbean region and Association of Caribbean States (ACS) member countries as an observer member of the ACS. Thus, the Republic of Korea began expanding its scope of cooperation with various countries and international organizations beyond East Asia following the country's rapid economic growth experienced over the years.

Marking the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the ACS, Jeon Hongjo, Special Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs delivered a speech at the 29th ACS Ministerial meeting held in Paramaribo, Suriname this May. Notably, Park Jin, former Foreign Minister, became the first Korean Foreign Minister to speak at the ACS Ministerial meeting in May of last year at Antigua, Guatemala. Moreover, Han Duck-soo, Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea met with fourteen (14) countries on the occasion of the 45th Caribbean Community Summit held in Port of Spain, Trinidad of Tobago in July. President Yoon Suk Yeol further hosted bilateral talks with six (6) Caribbean countries in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Week last September. These milestone visits and exchanges are a representation of the continuous activities that the Korean Government has been undertaking to further promote cooperation with the Caribbean region.

In line with these high-level officials' visit to the Caribbean, the Korean Government has been hosting High-Level Forums on Korea-Caribbean Partnership annually for deeper cooperation on sustainable development in the region. Many senior officials and distinguished leaders from the region have been invited to discuss cooperation mechanisms for the common prosperity of both regions. Some of the agendas discussed at these High-Level Forums are Korea-Caribbean cooperation for a sustainable and inclusive growth (2023), cooperation in global marine environment (2022) and green cooperation partnership in post–COVID comprehensive digital transformation (2021).

Ambassador Rodolfo Sabonge, Secretary General of the ACS also emphasized the Korean Government's commitment to fighting climate change and environment protection including the establishment of Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) in 2012 and "Impact Assessment of Climate

Change on the Sandy Shorelines of the Caribbean: Alternatives of its Control and Resilience (Sandy Shoreline project)" during his participations at the 12th and 13th Korea-Caribbean High-Level Forum held respectively in 2022 and 2023. During his attendances at the forum, the Secretary General further suggested future cooperation areas such as sargassum treatment and marine debris to collectively avoid the Tragedy of the Commons, as well as in the areas of natural disaster, trade and marine transportation.

These exchanges have led to numerous ongoing cooperative projects between Korea-ACS such as KOICA (Korea International Cooperation Agency) - ACS Sandy Shorelines project, Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) - ACS internship program and the establishment of a Marine Science Research Center jointly by the Korean Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF) - ACS.

Achievements made from these efforts are evident in various fields. These include: cooperation in climate change response, marine ecosystem preservation, renewable energy, water resources and carbon emissions. Additional efforts involved research in sectors of common interest such as energy and food security, tourism, supply chain disruptions and digital technology; and development cooperation on global challenges such as climate change, artificial intelligence (AI) and agriculture.

The Sandy Shorelines project (USD 4 million, 2017-2024), a joint research project between KOICA and ACS. KOICA Caribbean Regional Office recognizes the urgent need for climate action particularly for those in vulnerable regions like the Caribbean because coastal communities and infrastructures are threatened by climate related damages. One of KOICA's most iconic projects in the Caribbean, with ACS' cooperation is the Sandy Shorelines project which aims to improve the region's capacity to study and manage impacts caused by coastal erosion and sea level rise, and also to preserve coastlines (beaches) which are the principal natural resources for tourism development in the Greater Caribbean. Additionally, the intent of the project is to reduce the vulnerability of the Caribbean coast and increase social resilience to climate change. Overall, this project has proven to be successful in reducing disaster risks in the Caribbean region.

The recent launch of a joint internship program between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Korea and ACS began with the signing of a MOU in May of this year. Commencing in the latter half of this year, the first intern is expected to be dispatched to the ACS Secretariat and will arrive in Port of Spain in the month of September. We anticipate in the coming years that these aspiring young talents will become a bridge for future Korea-ACS cooperation through their engagement in the region.

Further, a MOU on cooperation in the field of marine science between the Korean Ministry of Ocean and Fisheries and ACS was signed during Prime Minister Han's visit to Trinidad and Tobago in July, 2023. Negotiation efforts are underway to establish the Korea-Caribbean Marine Science Cooperation Center within this year. This will allow Korea to share its accumulated experience in marine science and conduct joint research with Caribbean countries.

In conclusion, I would like to sincerely congratulate the ACS on its 30th anniversary. Under our existing cooperation and successes, I expect that Korea and ACS will continue to work together to achieve diverse results in areas such as food and energy security, tourism, supply chain challenges and digital technology.

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