

## Release - 32nd Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism



The Association of Caribbean States hosted its 32nd Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism on Wednesday 28th July, 2021, via videoconference with participation for seventeen (17) ACS Member States, one (1) Associate Member, one (1) ACS Founding Observer and two (2) ACS Observer Countries and six (6) Special Invited Guests. This meeting took the form of two (2) sessions with the aim of informing participants of the on-going status and trajectory for tourism recovery post-COVID-19 and also provided an update on the proposed ACS' strategic priorities that will be accomplished in the next few years by the ACS' Directorate for Trade and Sustainable Development.

The first of the two part meeting was a Sectoral Meeting for Tourism Partners and Stakeholders and included presentations from international tourism experts who discussed key challenges facing the sector in relation to cruise tourism, air transport and Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Presentation focused on the importance of sustainable and resilient recovery and resulted in robust discussions by the meeting participants. Mr. Rodolfo Sabonge, Secretary of the ACS gave an overview and context of the pandemic on regional tourism. He identified challenges, such as mass tourism which has devastating impacts, increase in cost of services and cost of living and deterioration of the environment, among others. He posited that these challenges will be addressed through the ACS Strategic Objectives with the aim of driving sustainable tourism.

The meeting received rich presentations from stakeholders. Among them Mr. Donnie Brown, VP Maritime Policy of the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) share with the meeting ongoing developments for Reactivating Cruise Tourism. Mrs. Annaleen Lord, Area Manager, Caribbean of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) discussed the global status of travel amidst COVID-19, highlighting loss in connectivity and noted that recovery will depend on industry collaboration related to biosafety measures and roadmaps for planning certainties. The meeting also received a presentation from Mrs. Mariama Trotman, Project Assistant, FUT-Tourism Project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on, "Future Tourism: Rethinking tourism and MSMEs in time of COVID-19". The first session concluded with a Video message from Mr. Dirk Glaesser, Director, and Sustainable Development of the Tourism of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) which discussed the link between tourism, the pandemic and sustainability.

The second part of the meeting was convened as a closed session focused on sustainable tourism

matters related to the ACS' 32nd Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism and discussed the work to be accomplished in this focal area. The meeting endorsed the proposed strategic priorities related to sustainable tourism for the next three years, proposed for inclusion the impending ACS' Plan of Action 2022-2024. The ACS proposes to focus its work for sustainable tourism for the next triennium through three strategies, Increase Competiveness, Maximize Market Exposure and Investment Facilitation and Promotion. The meeting also approved the Sustainable Tourism Work Programme for 2022. Three major projects was approved for implementation namely, the the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Greater Caribbean, Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean and the Evolution of Community Based Tourism in the Greater Caribbean.

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