

**ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)  
DIRECTORATE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM  
26<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM  
(SCST-26)**

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Port-of-Spain, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT**

**Review of the SCST-25 Meeting**

This report covers the main activities undertaken by the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism of the ACS in the implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Work Programme, since the 25th Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism (SCST-25), which was held in La Antigua, Guatemala, Republic of Guatemala, on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014.

The meeting was chaired by the Honourable Karine Roy-Camille, President of the Martinique Committee on Tourism and Chairman of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism, and further presided over by the Vice-Chair, the Republic of Colombia represented by Mrs. Sandra Howard Taylor, Vice minister, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, and Rapporteur the Republic of Guatemala, represented by Mr. Pedro Pablo Duchez, Director, Guatemala Tourism Institute. With the aim of facilitating dialogue and the exchange of experiences on sustainable tourism among the countries of the Greater Caribbean, a **Workshop on Best Practices and Lessons Learnt in Sustainable Tourism** was held prior to the SCST meeting, on May 22, 2014. This Workshop provided an opportunity to showcase ongoing destination management initiatives at the international, regional and national levels. In this regard, the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean (STZC) initiative being spearheaded by the ACS was featured prominently, and a report on the process and progress made in establishing the Zone, as well as a presentation by the Consultants contracted to implement activities related to the current phase were made. An Inaugural meeting was also held to install the **Ad-Hoc Steering Committee of the STZC**, a technical advisory group to support the establishment of the 'Zone', which is comprised of regional and international organizations working in the area of Sustainable Tourism. There were an estimated fifty (50) participants in attendance at the meetings held in Guatemala, including delegations from fifteen (15) ACS Member and Associate Member States and representatives of leading regional and international organisations: the Caribbean Tourism Organisation the Central American Tourism Integration Secretariat, the Organisation of American States, and the United Nations World Tourism Organization among others.

**Executive Board of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism (SCST) for 2015**

At the 20th Ordinary Meeting of the ACS Ministerial Council, held in La Antigua, Guatemala, Republic of Guatemala, on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015, new members of the Executive Board of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism were elected for the 2015 annum as follows: Chairman: the Republic of Guatemala; Vice-Chairmen: Costa-Rica and Panama; Rapporteur: the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The Directorate thanks and congratulates the new SCST

Board and further reiterates its willingness and commitment to working with the new leadership of the SCST for the advancement of the ACS Sustainable Tourism Work Programme.

The following outlines advancements related to the various programmatic areas of the Sustainable Tourism Work Programme:

## **1. The Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean (STZC)**

The Directorate has been advancing with the implementation of the project to develop the Regional Cooperation Mechanism (RCM) as the third phase in the implementation of the STZC, which is being implemented with cooperation and financial assistance from the Regional Council of Martinique and the INTERREG IV Caribbean Space Programme. The Draft Final Report has been submitted by the consultants and contain results of the Research on Regional best Practises in Sustainable Tourism and recommendations for the expansion and strengthening of the STZC. Initial drafts of the relevant project deliverables to include, the brochure and Destination Manuals and the new STZC website have also been submitted for the approval of the Directorate and are in the process of being finalised.

A meeting was held on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015 between the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism, the Regional Council and MC Consultant for a comprehensive review of the terms of reference and requisite deliverables related to the STZC-RCM required for the project implementation. This meeting proved very productive and the Directorate anticipates a most efficacious end to the consultancy. With the aim of having at least one destination for each ACS country designated for inclusion in the STZC, countries have been requested to nominate their destination and those who have not yet done so, are urged to submit this information at the earliest opportunity to facilitate its inclusion on the website and next steps being developed. A workshop is being held in tandem with the 26th Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism Meeting to present the results of the Consultancy and officially launch the website, brochure and other collaterals developed as part of the project.

In relation to future initiatives, the ACS Special Fund Manager has developed in collaboration with the Directorate the project *'Increasing the Competitiveness of Tourism Destinations in the Greater Caribbean through the Implementation of Sustainable Tourism Certification'*. This initiative focuses on the adoption of a Certification system based on the indicators and criteria of the STZC, and a workshop is being planned to provide training on the implementation and use of the STZC Sustainable Tourism Indicators. .

A related initiative which supports the establishment of the Region as a Sustainable Tourism Zone, is the 'Training for Careers in Sustainable Tourism Project', which is funded by the French Development Agency (AFD). In this regard, a consulting firm Certificaciones de Centroamérica, S.A (CERTIFICA), was awarded the contract for the Study related to the project, which commenced on September 29th, 2014. The study entails identification of the status and needs related to Technical and Vocational Training in the Tourism sector in the Region and development of a Framework for future Professional Training and Capacity-building Programs. The Draft Final Report has been produced and the Directorate is working with the consultants to ensure the successful completion of the project and also discuss future interventions related

to this topic. The results of the Consultancy will be presented on the margins of the 26th Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism Meeting.

## 2. Promotion of Multi-destination Tourism

The Directorate in collaboration with the Airports Council International, Latin America and Caribbean Air Transport Association, International Air Transport Association and the Caribbean Tourism Organization successfully hosted Caribbean Aviation Day 2014, on September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014, in St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands. This event was celebrated under the Theme: ***Improving the Passenger Experience and Securing Sustainable Market Growth in the Caribbean: A Review of the Latest Technological Trends, Operational Best Practices, Cost Implications and Strategies for 2014 and Beyond.*** A distinguished panel of speakers to include Aviation industry experts and Representatives of Regional Tourism and Air Transport Organisations discussed challenges facing the Region and explored strategies and possible solutions to address issues affecting intra-regional travel and air connectivity among the countries of the Greater Caribbean. The Aviation Day Conference received the participation of approximately 130 High-Level Representatives from across the Tourism and Aviation industry value chain.

The Directorate also hosted the Regional workshop ***Entrepreneurial Strengthening in the Tourism Sector: Opportunities for Women***, in collaboration with the Regional Port Society of Cartagena and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism of Colombia, with the support of the Office of Culture and Tourism of the Organisation of American States. This workshop was held on October 23-24, 2014 in Cartagena, Republic of Colombia. Twenty-one (21) women Artisan Entrepreneurs participated in the workshop, representing a cross-section of 15 ACS Member Countries from the four geographic sub-regions.

Among the main outcomes the Artisans committed to forming a Regional Network of Artisans in Tourism of the Greater Caribbean for ongoing networking, co-operation and dialogue. As a follow-up activity, the Directorate collaborated with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Organisation of American States (OAS) to organize an **Inaugural Meeting of the Network**. This meeting was held in Montego Bay, Jamaica March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 with a pilot group of **9 participants** identified as leading Artisan Entrepreneurs, representing each of the four geographic sub-regions, based on nomination by their countries and participation in the Cartagena workshop. The Network has been established as a platform for training, networking and the exchange of knowledge and best practises to harness the entrepreneurial opportunities and other benefits generated by tourism, particularly as it relates to strengthening the competitiveness of local Artisans and small and medium enterprises serving the Tourism sector to contribute to business and professional development. Ongoing are discussions on the modalities to expand the Network and support implementation of a plan of action for the first two (2) years of operation of the Network.

Following the meeting of the network an Entrepreneurship Training Workshop was held from March 24 – 26, 2015 in Montego Bay, Jamaica. A total of 24 Artisans/Entrepreneurs with Small and Medium-sized enterprises participated in the training which comprised of the Regional Network participants and local Artisans from Jamaica. The workshop was conducted as part of an ongoing ILO initiative to deliver training and capacity-building tools to SMEs, for business skills development geared towards the formalisation of the informal economy.

### **3. Promotion of Languages and Cultures of the Greater Caribbean**

In this area, the Directorate has focused on the development of support mechanisms to facilitate the implementation of *Student Exchange Programs* among the ACS countries for language training and cultural immersion. One of the primary activities was the creation of a Database of Language Training Institutions in the Region, which lists academic institutions with accredited language programs that also has the capacity to host students as part of a language immersion or cultural exchange program.

Concurrently, the Directorate is collaborating with the Regional Council of Guadeloupe for implementation of the Guadeloupe International Centre for a Regional Approach to Languages (CIGAREL) project, an initiative within the framework of the INTERREG VI Caribbean Space Programme. This project entails the creation of a multilingual centre of excellence, which will support of the ACS Student Exchange Programs, for the teaching of English, Spanish and French as a foreign language. The Directorate has drafted a Survey to identify the needs and interests of students and professionals from the countries of the Region to participate in an immersion programme for language learning as part of the ACS and CIGAREL language training initiative. The results of this survey will provide recommendations and provide impetus into the adoption of an integrated and holistic approach which will inform the development of the immersion programmes. Additionally, meetings to discuss the advancement of this project with stakeholders are expected to take place within the year.

### **4. Promotion of Safety and Security in the Tourism Industry**

The Directorate has been supporting the Republic of Colombia to promote the “Offer for Cooperation in the area of Tourism Safety and Security within the framework of the ACS”, made by Colombia. Efforts have focussed on encouraging and facilitating the participation of countries in this initiative, which seeks to share the best practices and tools gained by Colombia in the area of Tourism safety and security.

On July 7-8, 2015, a Meeting on Technical Assistance in Tourist Safety was held as part of this initiative in Bogota, Colombia. Participating countries included: Barbados, Guatemala, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia and Panama. The ACS was represented at this meeting by the Sustainable Tourism Director, Mr. Julio Orozco.

### **5. Co-operation with Regional and International Agencies**

The Directorate has been engaged in an ongoing collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and hosted a workshop Anticipating Skills Needs – Occupational Trends and Emerging Demands, on May 6-7, 2014, at the ACS Secretariat. This workshop was the first of a 7 month training programme targeted to National Training Agencies (NTAs) and Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) institutions. On December 8-9th, 2014, the ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean and the Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training (ILO/Cinterfor) with the support of the ACS and the National Industrial Training Service (SENAI), hosted the Second Workshop, “Anticipating Skills Requirements: Occupational Trends and Emerging Demands In Tourism”, as part of this initiative. The main objectives of this training programme are capacity building in order to

generate prospective studies that allow NTAs and other Vocational Training Institutes to anticipate skills requirements and design the best training programmes. This is a key step in order to enhance competitiveness in the Greater Caribbean States and generate more productive jobs, particularly in the Tourism sector.

In fulfilment of the mandate to host the Meeting of Regional Tourism Agencies of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the Directorate successfully coordinated the convening of this meeting on November 10th, 2014, at the ACS Secretariat, under the theme: "Sustainable Tourism: Building Bridges for Co-operation and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean". The purpose of the meeting was to enhance intra-regional dialogue and cooperation, as well as to support the joint execution of projects and activities linked to the sustainable development of tourism, particularly in relation to Community-based initiatives. Among the main outcomes, the Meeting identified areas for Regional Cooperation including the establishment of heritage routes and the creation of a Network of Community-based Tourism Initiatives of Latin America and the Caribbean to facilitate knowledge-sharing and the exchange of best practices for academic, cultural and tourism purposes. Attending the meeting were representatives from the United Nations World Tourism Organization, the Central American Tourism Integration Secretariat, and as observers, the Republic of Nicaragua, the Republic of Suriname and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as well as the Embassy of Argentina.

### **PROPOSED NEW WORK PLAN STRUCTURE 2016-2017 Biennium**

The Directorate has submitted for the consideration of countries a new structure for the Sustainable Tourism Work Programme, commencing with the 2016-2017 biennium. The current work programme and its four Programmatic Areas were based on the reorganisation approved at the 17th Meeting of the ACS Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism (SCST-17), held in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, June 28th and 29th, 2007. The structure has remained unchanged for the past 8 years, and it is considered an opportune moment to update and thus reinvigorate the Sustainable Tourism Work Programme, in order that it reflects and is more aligned to new trends and developments in the Tourism Sector, new priority areas for countries, as well as the evolution of the work of the Directorate these past 8 years. The proposed structure is outlined in the Sustainable Tourism Work Programme Document for 2016-2017 and focuses on themes and topics that address the most relevant issues affecting the regional tourism sector, and includes project and activities, with the aim of promoting a more harmonised and integrated approach to tourism development among the countries of the region, while also providing an opportunity to share best-practices and learn from each other's experiences.

### **DST HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENTS**

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, the contract of the former Research Assistant to the Directorate, Mr. Tevin Gall from Trinidad and Tobago came to an end. We thank him for his efforts and wish him the best in his future endeavours. On July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the Directorate welcomed Ms. Karla Nathalie Perez Valencia, from El Salvador as the new Research Assistant.

In December 2015, the Adviser to the Directorate, Ms. Amanda Charles, five year tenure at the ACS will come to an end. Her contributions to the functioning of the Directorate and leading role in the development and advancement of the Sustainable Tourism Work Programme and meetings of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism are highly valued. It is further noted that all members of the Directorate have been fully involved in the implementation of initiatives related to the advancement of the Sustainable Tourism Work Programme, and in this regard, the contributions of both the former and current members of the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism guided by the Director for Sustainable Tourism, Mr. Julio Orozco are to be commended.