

Original: French

**Speech delivered at the occasion of the official signature for accession to the ACS**

**Ambassador of France to Havana, Cuba**

**June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

Representatives of the Government of Cuba,  
Minister of the Overseas Territories,  
Secretary General of the ACS,  
Ambassador delegated to the regional cooperation of the French West Indies-Guyana  
Ambassador of France in Cuba  
Ambassador of France in Trinidad and Tobago  
Esteemed guests  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Stakeholders,

Thank you very much for being here.

Today, the accession of the Collectivity of Saint Martin to the Association of Caribbean States is the outcome of a long process and I am pleased that I can celebrate it here at the Embassy of France in Cuba.

It is also my pleasure to indicate that during the admission process, the Government of France has greatly facilitated our accession as an Associate Member in its own right to the Association of Caribbean States.

Ambassadors of France, I thank you all for your contribution.

I also wish to thank all the Member States of the ACS for their support.

Our accession would not have been possible if Ambassador Múnera had not personally visited Saint Martin in an effort to establish the benefits of taking this step for Saint Martin as well as for the Association that will take a new member under its wing.

Our accession to the ACS is now a reality and speaks to human, geographic, cultural and economic proof that serves to concretize our belonging to the Caribbean Basin.

To guarantee the governance of such a small territory that is a Caribbean island, a French Collectivity as well as a European region is no easy task.

Original: French

Since the end of the 15th century, history dictated that Saint Martin be considered as a crossroad, a point of convergence where numerous histories, cultures and realities all connect.

Today, we still find many nationalities from all of the Caribbean and the rest of the world. There is a total of 123 nationalities officially residing in the territory.

Governing Saint Martin therefore means taking stock of this reality without making exclusions. On a daily basis, my government and I work towards strengthening regional cooperation initiatives.

It is a complex situation but, it is still important to guarantee the sustainability of our country and that of the group to which it belongs.

In recent years, all the different changes which have disrupted the traditional balance of the countries of the basin can no longer rely on the virtues of the principles, customs and traditions of yesterday to resolve the problems of today.

When certain realities change, the ways in which they are addressed must also change.

We have become a member and reinforce the regional diversity represented throughout the Association.

Becoming a part of the Association is a fundamental step for the future.

We are aware that a new era begins for our country and henceforth we must participate in regional initiatives for political and economic integration.

I am happy to share this historical moment with you and I do so with the greatest humility.

Thank you for your attention

Aline HANSON