



**7TH ACS MEETING OF HEADS OF STATE AND/OR GOVERNMENT
HAVANA, CUBA: JUNE 4, 2016**

**PLAN OF ACTION
FOR 2016-2018**

The tasks outlined in this Plan of Action of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) will be completed within a three-year period: 2016 to 2018. The Secretariat will present periodic reports and recommendations on their execution to the Ministerial Council and its subsidiary bodies which must decide on the actions to be taken and possible amendments to be made, taking into account the changes and different circumstances that may arise.

The ACS thanks the Member States and Associate Members for their ongoing and valuable support for the projects and activities identified in this document.

1. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

1.1 Establishment and Consolidation of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean (STZC)

This area of work includes the establishment and recognition of the Greater Caribbean as a region that fosters sustainable tourism development. It defines the normative and regulatory framework of the STZC and coordinates regional efforts supporting the establishment of the Region as a Sustainable Tourism Zone.

The five main actions to be undertaken in this area are:

- 1.1.1 Continuing the process of ratifying the STZC Convention and Protocol by all Member States and Associate Members of the ACS who have not yet done so;
- 1.1.2 Continuing the dissemination of information about the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean (STZC) among the Member States and Associate Members of the ACS.
- 1.1.3 Following-up with the Regional Cooperation Mechanism (RCM) that allows the application of Sustainable Tourism Indicators at destinations selected by ACS Member States and Associate Members.

1.1.4 Considering existing processes in the region, validation of the sustainability level of destinations in the STZC will be developed, with a view to the establishment of a certification system.

1.1.5 Once the application of Sustainable Tourism Indicators has been accomplished, the development of the multi-destination tourism in the STZC will be stimulated at destinations proposed by the Member States and Associate Members.

1.2 **Capacity Building in the Tourism Sector:**

To promote education in sustainable tourism addressing the human resources in the different areas of the sector in order to increase the competitiveness of destinations in the region.

The four main actions to be undertaken in this area are:

1.2.1 Promoting the implementation of a Regional Framework for Technical and Vocational Education and Training in the Region.

1.2.2 Continuing with the Programme for the Promotion of Languages and Cultures of the Greater Caribbean in coordination with the International Centre of Guadeloupe for Regional Language Strategy Project (CIGAREL, in its French-language acronym) of INTERREG – Guadeloupe.

1.2.3 Drawing up the Regional Tourist Safety Strategy in conjunction with the work group to deal with potential security threats at tourist destinations.

1.2.4 Developing capacity building in matters of tourism safety, continuing with the exchange of experiences and best practices.

1.3 **Community Tourism:** Supporting community tourism initiatives to promote social inclusion and sustainable development, and supporting the development of tourism-related micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through regional partnerships and collaboration to contribute to their sustainability and growth, maintaining cultural heritage and the environmental integrity of ecological areas.

The two main actions to be undertaken in this area are:

1.3.1 Creating a database of Community Tourism Projects which exist in the region, sharing best practices as well as lessons learned.

- 1.3.2 With the support of the Regional Network of Artisans in Tourism in the Greater Caribbean, creating a database for the handicraft sector in the Region and supporting coordination of activities to achieve the consolidation of the network.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE AND EXTERNAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS

- 2.1. **Gradual Reduction and Elimination of Trade and Investment Barriers in the Greater Caribbean:** This area will focus on holding technical meetings of the Working Groups on Customs and Port Facilitation, including those relating to the hydrographic capacities of member countries.

International Transit of Goods (TIM) and the Short-Distance Maritime Transport (SDMT) Project will be continued, and the hydrographical capacities of the relevant ACS membership agencies (FOCAHIMECA) will be strengthened, financed by the Mexican Government with funds from the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID).

- 2.1.1 **International Transit of Goods (TIM) Project**

The objective is to reduce the shipping time of goods in transit by means of a standardized process which allows the information required by customs, immigration and phyto and zoo-sanitary officials to be consolidated into a single document (Single Transit Document – DUT) which would include the electronic dispatching of export declarations in advance, thereby assisting in commercial operations.

- 2.1.2 **Short-Distance Maritime Transport Project (SDMT)**

The goal of the SDMT project is to analyse operations obstacles in the region's ports and to identify concrete actions to improve the operational efficiency of their ports while seeking to promote intra-regional trade by short-distance maritime transport, emphasizing support for small ports. It also includes the creation of a database of importing needs and/or requirements and export offers designed to encourage and facilitate the growth of intraregional trade.

2.1.2.1 **Strengthening Hydrographical Capacities in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean Project (FOCAHIMECA)**

The FOCAHIMECA Project aims to create or boost the hydrographical capacities of the states and territories of Mesoamerica and the Caribbean by:

- a) increased bathymetric databases on maritime areas;
- b) safety guarantees for the navigation of merchant and tourist ships; and
- c) the creation and/or increase in the efficiency of shipping routes and port infrastructures to boost maritime and economic development based on the information collected, and
- d) training specialists to use current technologies to conduct bathymetric surveys and produce electronic nautical charts that would help ensure the safety of maritime navigation and increase the efficiency of hydrographical services.

2.1.3 **Establishing a working group to study tariff preferences in the Caribbean:**

To put together a working group to analyse and discuss the possibility of having tariff preferences in the Greater Caribbean that would permit the promotion of intraregional trade.

2.2 **Joint Program for the Promotion of Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in the Greater Caribbean**

As part of this project, activities promoting MSMEs will be carried out with financial and technical support of the Government of Colombia, through its Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism, the Presidential Agency for International Cooperation (APC-Colombia), and other institutions with expertise in the field.

2.3 **Promoting the convergence and intensification of trade within the ACS through New Schemes. Strengthening trade capacities.**

Foreseeing the production of financial bulletins that would identify possible trade and investment flow channels.

Similarly, the implementation of courses, seminars and training workshops that would broaden and strengthen knowledge of trade-related issues in the Greater Caribbean Region with the technical assistance of specialized international and regional organizations and institutions, transmitting implemented best practices.

2.4 **The Greater Caribbean Business Forum**

This forum seeks to promote trade, investment and knowledge-sharing among business community of the Greater Caribbean. Cuba is offering to host this event in Santiago de Cuba in 2017.

3. **TRANSPORT**

The **Uniting the Caribbean by Air and Sea program** will be implemented by air and maritime transportation actions for the purpose of effectively contributing to the expansion of intra-Caribbean trade and investment, multi-destination tourism, as well as functional cooperation in general among the Member States and Associate Members of the ACS.

Along with the Pétion-Ville Plan of Action and observing the conclusions of the recently-concluded Port and Maritime Strategy, the Directorship will focus its attention during this period on improving the capacity of the region's ports thereby contributing to risk reduction. To this end, the following actions will be undertaken:

3.1 **Maps of Greater Caribbean Maritime Routes**

Implementing Phases IV and V of Maps of Greater Caribbean Maritime Routes to show the existing regular container line maritime transport services, their frequency and the locations of different shipping line agents by ports-of-call found on the interactive map posted on the ACS, COCATRAM and Maritime Authority of Panama (AMP) regularly updated webpages.

3.2 **The Greater Caribbean Port and Maritime Strategy**

Putting into practice the recommendations of the strategic plan for the development of maritime ports in the Greater Caribbean, in particular actions designed to benefit the development of small maritime ports in order to have a competitive sector that is capable of meeting the region's foreign trade needs, which could efficiently sustain the increased traffic expected to result from, among other things, the expansion of the Panama Canal in 2016.

3.2.1 **The Senior Port Management Course.**

In keeping with the findings of the Port and Maritime Strategy Study which established capacity-building at the senior level especially in Tier III ports, the project will include running training activities in key identified areas following consultation with regional port authorities.

3.3 **Continuing efforts for Connectivity**

Working towards establishing a framework of activities with international partners to address issues concerning air and maritime connectivity within the Greater Caribbean region.

3.3.1 **Air Transport Agreement among Member States and Associate Members of the Association of Caribbean States**

Continuing to promote the implementation and updating of the Agreement in order to meet the need of a general aviation policy for the Greater Caribbean, establishing a legal and co-operation framework that would offer more air service options with reduced costs and prices, more routes, more carriers and improved services, as well as attaining the highest levels of operational safety and protection for international civil aviation.

3.3.2 ***Defining cooperative actions with international agencies within the aviation sphere to improve and facilitate connectivity within the region.***

3.3.3 **Convening Meetings of Experts under the theme of connectivity**

This meeting should propose ideas and activities that would improve connectivity in the region of the Caribbean.

4. **DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

Considering the high exposure and vulnerability of our countries and territories to disasters associated with natural phenomena, ACS aims to foster international co-operation and capacity-building in the area of disaster risk reduction. After careful examination of the international agreements, such as the Sendai Framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the drive to incorporate geospatial data in planning to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the Directorship will be focusing on assessing and identifying risks with geospatial systems, implementing spatial data infrastructures and modelling tools during the period. To this end, the following actions will be undertaken:

- 4.1 **SHOCS II Follow-Up Project**
SHOCS II Follow-Up Project Phase: Strengthening Hydrometeorological Operations and Services in Caribbean Small Island Developing States and the Early Warning System using World Meteorological Organization (OMM) Trust Funds provided by the Government of Finland. This phase is designed to enhance the performance and strengthen the capacity of National Meteorological and Hydrological Institutions and Disaster Management Agencies in ACS Member States through the consolidation of their early warning systems and greater preparedness to mitigate the effects of natural hazards.
- 4.2 **UNGGIM: United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Caribbean Project: strengthening the infrastructure of geospatial data of Caribbean States – Caribbean Project**
This project, developed by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico, will introduce the Caribbean States to the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information management and will provide a link for countries to be a part of the world geodesic framework while improving the capacity for GIS, Spatial Data Infrastructure and its use in planning in the region.
- 4.3 ***Caribbean Territorial Information Platform for Disaster Prevention (PITCA)***
This project, headed by the National Disaster Prevention Centre of Mexico, will use the UNGGIM project as its information and systems base and will develop, with the aid of regional partners, the online GIS-based multi-risk analysis for sharing and managing risk information across the Caribbean.
- 4.4 **“Local Risk Management” Onsite Course for ACS Member States**
This Course will be developed in 2017 for countries of the Greater Caribbean at the Centre for Capacity Building for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation organised by the Environmental Agency of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of the Republic of Cuba.
- 4.5 **Reduction of regional vulnerabilities**
Cooperative activities will be undertaken with other regional agencies to contribute to DRR processes in the Greater Caribbean Region, using the provisions of the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as well as other instruments related to this subject that are recognized and implemented by ACS Member States.

- 4.5.1. **Convening a Meeting of Experts on Vulnerability** to propose regional policies for disaster risk reduction based on the identification of key activities, to be carried out by the government agencies involved in disaster management in member countries. This will be compatible with international standards that use geographic information systems such as the UNGGIM: Caribbean Project, the Caribbean Territorial Information Platform for Disaster Prevention (PITCA) and the Strengthening Hydrometeorological Operations and Services in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SHOCS) project as their reference framework.

5. **CARIBBEAN SEA COMMISSION**

The Caribbean Sea Commission is cognisant of its commitment to the preservation of the Caribbean Sea and of the necessity to continue its efforts towards it being recognised as a Special Area in the context of sustainable development.

5.1 **Definition of Special Area in the context of sustainable development**

Based on the results of the Consultation and with support from the Legal and Scientific and Technical Sub-Commissions, the Commission intends to proceed with dialogue among Member countries in order to define the steps needed for recognizing the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area in the context of sustainable development.

5.2 **Follow up of the I Symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission**

Continuing implementation of the key recommendations made at the First Symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission and discussed at the XXI Meeting of the Ministerial Council, primarily;

5.2.1 Through implementation of the ACS Program for the struggle against climate change in the Caribbean, with a view to place this region in more favourable conditions to deal with the entry into force of the Paris Agreement.

5.2.2 Using knowledge accumulated by the ACS States and with the assistance of international cooperation in projects regarding the main problems debated in the Symposium, and in particular the emerging threat of Sargassum seaweed, the invasion of lion fish, the peril for coral reefs and coastal erosion. Materializing international cooperation in these fields.

5.3 Annual Meeting of Experts to improve the dialogue between scientists and policy makers

Organize annual symposiums and/or workshops with the participation of experts and government officials responsible for the study and management of critical issues related to the sustainability of the Caribbean Sea within the context of climate change.

5.4 The Caribbean Sea Commission Databank

Establishing a data bank to centralize and disseminate relevant information on major threats to the sustainability of the Caribbean Sea.

6. CULTURE AND EDUCATION

6.1 PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL COOPERATION BETWEEN UNIVERSITY CENTRES AND OTHER HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE GREATER CARIBBEAN

We seek to undertake the following actions:

6.1.1 Facilitating joint research among university research groups and those at other higher education institutions, affecting the socioeconomic and cultural development of the Greater Caribbean;

6.1.2 Establishing contacts with the focal points of academic mobility in each country with a view to creating future synergies contributing to intensifying academic relations in the Greater Caribbean.

6.1.3 Encouraging Greater Caribbean Studies in each Member Country in order to promote research and joint publications among Member States on issues pertaining to the development of the Greater Caribbean.

6.2 COOPERATION IN CULTURE

Facilitating the development of concrete and tangible cultural cooperation programs to strengthen recognised spaces for cultural exchange in the Greater Caribbean such as book fairs, art festivals, art markets and other cultural expressions; among these sport is highlighted, given its capacity to promote friendship among the peoples of the Caribbean and to build collective identities. In particular, we propose:

6.2.1 Consolidating the Greater Caribbean Carnival Network in light of its successful establishment in Santiago de Cuba in July of 2015. Caribbean carnivals constitute one of the richest cultural expressions of our peoples; it is valuable heritage and one of the main instruments we possess for the process of forging a common identity. As a specific task for the 2016-18 period, we propose collaboration with the Network in order to:

6.2.1.1 Organise seminars, conferences, book fairs and exchanges within the framework of the carnivals for the purpose of promoting cooperation and friendship among the peoples.

6.2.1.2 Promote the next Encounter of Greater Caribbean Carnivals to be held in February of 2017 in Colombia, within the framework of Barranquilla Carnival.

7. SPECIAL FUND

7.1 **To increase activities and meetings with potential donors** in order to finance the projects outlined in the Plan of Action of Havana for the 2016-2018 period. Present the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) to international donors as a partner for implementing and managing projects through the Special Fund. The actions include:

7.1.1 Participating in meetings and events that would contribute to the objectives of the Special Fund to procure funds and greater visibility for the ACS.

7.1.2 Building strategic alliances and joint work with regional partners;

7.1.3 Promoting the exchange of information among donors;

7.1.4 Participating in convocations for project proposals to be presented to potential donors.

7.2 **Promoting technical cooperation and / or financing** by Member countries, for projects and / or initiatives that may arise in the 2016 – 2018 work program.

7.3 **Drawing up the institutional strengthening project** for the Projects Unit and seeking financing.