

RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT OF THE 11TH EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL OF THE ACS

ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)

**25th INTERSESSIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE 28TH ORDINARY
MEETING OF THE ACS MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

ACS Secretariat, Port of Spain, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

(Virtual Meeting)

18th January, 2023

ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)

11th EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE ACS MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Wednesday September 21st, 2022

Westin New York Grand Central Hotel, New York City
212 East 42nd Street, West 44th Street, Consulate Room, Third Floor
Meting Format: Minister +1

RAPPORTEUR REPORT

The 11th Extraordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the ACS was held on September 21st, 2022 in New York, United States of America. The Meeting was presided by the Chair of the Ministerial Council, **the Republic of Guatemala, H.E. Mario Adolfo Búcaro Flores**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guatemala. Also in attendance were Representatives of the Vice Chairs of the Ministerial Council, **Jamaica, H.E. Brian Wallace**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Jamaica before the United Nations, Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, **and the Republic of Mexico, H.E Maximiliano Reyez Zúñiga**, Undersecretary for Latin America and the Caribbean, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

H.E. Rodolfo Sabonge, Secretary General of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), led the ACS delegation.

The meeting was attended by delegations from sixteen (16) ACS Member States and two (2) Associate Members. **The List of Participants is attached as Annex 001.**

- **Opening Remarks by the Chairman of the Ministerial Council**

In his opening remarks, the **Chair** posited that the Greater Caribbean is facing the greatest challenge of its history – to place food on the table of its peoples. He opined that to address this challenge, the Region must speak with a single voice in international fora and implement its agreed Plan of Action. He considered it critical to present the

Region to the world as an opportunity for investment and to ensure access the global credit system. He lamented that, to date, the Region had been unable to make its voice heard and had been divided but posited that the opportunity to change this existed in the form of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) – the second largest hemispheric organisation after the Organisation of American States (OAS).

- **Welcome Remarks by the Secretary General**

The Secretary General welcomed participants with the observation that the meeting represented the first opportunity he had enjoyed to meet with Ministers collectively in the old tradition of face to face meetings.

He expressed solidarity with regional states and territories being negatively affected by Hurricane Fiona.

He extended thanks to the Chair and the team at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala singling out for praise the visionary and proactive leadership of the PPT in the person of Minister Mario Búcaro.

In updating Ministers on actions being taken and partnerships being built to advance ACS cooperation he highlighted the following:

1. The Breakfast of CELAC and ACS Foreign Ministers, brainchild of Minister Búcaro, which, with the support of the Latin American Development Bank (CAF) heralded the beginning of a process of leveraging the comparative and competitive advantages of each in a synergistic manner to the benefit of the Region: CELAC's comparative advantage in consolidating political positions; the ACS' comparative advantage in harnessing and translating these political positions into functional cooperation through projects, programmes and joint work programmes and CAF's in financing functional cooperation to address climate change, coordinate disaster risk management, augment connectivity, protect the Caribbean Sea and, through the promotion of sustainable enabling environments- i.e. networks, infrastructure and digital transformation in the tourism and transport industries- ensure food and energy security. He suggested that thought be given to coordinating and institutionalising such dialogues like-minded entities;

2. The mandate given for the ACS to coordinate with CELAC in the crafting of a common LAC position ahead of the COP 27;
3. The signature of the ACS – CAF Memorandum of Understanding and the intention to mobilise the latter's support for the elaboration of the first ACS Strategic Plan;
4. The proposed engagement with UNCTAD following a meeting with its Secretary General, Ms. Rebecca Grynspan to cooperate more closely to address the Greater Caribbean's connectivity challenge, including through capacity building as it regards digital platforms for transport and related trade logistics;
5. An engagement with the World Bank to deepen the dialogue in respect of funding windows to support implementation of the 2022-28 Plan of Action;
6. Ongoing efforts to formalise and institutionalise partnerships with development banks to open funding opportunities for the Region, e.g. the Central American Economic Integration Bank (CABEI) and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB);
7. The ongoing deliberations of the Working Group to examine the recommendations of AEGIS Business Solutions Ltd in respect of the functioning of the ACS. He informed that the last two meetings of the Working Group to be held in October would focus on Human Resources and Governance. Thereafter an Extraordinary Meeting of the Special Committee for Budget and Administration would consider findings at the end of October and report same to another Extraordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council tentatively scheduled for January 2023. He noted the purpose of the process to retrofit the ACS to make it fit for renewed purpose.

He reminded that the Ministerial Council Meeting would take decisions regarding such key operating parameters as the format of future ACS meetings-virtual or physical- and the ratification of the sole candidate for Director in the Directorate for Cooperation and Resource Mobilisation, Ms. Rita Mishaan of Guatemala representing the Central American Grouping.

He closed by thanking Ministers and delegates for their participation and continued support and commitment to the ACS and reassuring that they could count on his.

The Secretary General's opening remarks are at **Annex 002** to this Report.

I. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PROCEDURAL MATTERS

There being no proposed changes, *the Draft Agenda was adopted.*

II. APPROVAL OF THE CANDIDATE FOR DIRECTOR, COOPERATION AND RESOURCE MOBILISATION

Prior to inviting the Secretary General to present Item 2, the **Chair** noted that the difference between CELAC and the ACS was that the latter has established for itself a mechanisms to drive its actions – a Secretariat, a Secretary General and Special Committees. He expressed concern however that time was short and that it would be critical to optimize these mechanisms.

The Secretary General recalled the process governed by Ministerial Agreement that had culminated in Ms. Rita Mishaan being the sole nominee for Director, Cooperation and Resource Mobilisation being interviewed by the 60th Open Meeting of the Executive Board of the ACS. He noted that Ms. Mishaan had has full support due to her competencies, knowledge and experience and background and recalled the importance of filling this important vacancy. He posited that the Association could not move forward with its Agenda and work plan unless there was a champion leading the cooperation. He then formally submitted to the Council's consideration, Ms. Mishaan's nomination. He submitted Agreement 14/22 Approving the Appointment of a High Level Official of the Secretariat of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS)

Ms. Mishaan's Nomination was approved with no objections as per Draft Agreement 14/22

III. PRESENTATION OF THE EXPECTED ACHIEVEMENTS OF GUATEMALA'S CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL OF THE ACS

The Chair recalled the four priorities established from the onset of his one year chairmanship as follows:

1. Cooperation- he noted the importance of ACS Members working together to advance common interests.
2. The Blue and green agendas- he reminded that the Sea unites Members and is the Region's greatest asset. He recalled the UN Secretary General's warning that by 2050 there would be more plastic in the ocean than fish and called on the ACS to preserve the Sea.
3. Economic Reactivation- he posited that the success of SICA was its projecting itself as a market of 60 million and asserted that the ACS at 220 million strong, need to position itself as a single investment space. He noted that he had requested the SG to develop regional projects to link the Region by sea and air and to develop a maritime logistical chain to promote investment. He reminded that the Region has the largest energy resources in the world
4. Cycle of migration – Minister Búcaro opined that the Region should proactively address the needs of citizens by providing jobs and temporary work programmes amongst the Region's countries so that citizens wishing to remain could do so and actively contribute to national and regional development.

The Chair again called for the Region to unite its voice going into the COP 27 negotiations.

IV. DECISION ON THE FORMAT OF THE ACS MEETINGS – VIRTUAL OR PRESENT

At the invitation of the Chair, **the Secretary General** presented Draft Agreement 15/22 to Approve the Organisation of Meetings Held Outside Port of Spain for the Period 2022-2023 for the consideration of Members.

The Representative of Honduras sought clarification as to which meetings were being proposed for physical attendance, to which the **Secretary General** responded that statutory meetings were the prime candidates for same.

There being no objection Agreement 15/22 was approved and the Secretary General instructed to implement its provisions.

The Chair then opened the floor to general comment.

In their interventions, all delegations expressed solidarity with those affected by Hurricane Fiona.

The Representative of Aruba reminded that only 5 years ago the Region had been hit by Hurricane Maria and had since been harshly affected by a triple C threat- Conflict, Climate change and COVID. She agreed with the sentiments expressed thus far in the meeting that the only way for the Region to overcome these threats was by leveraging the economies of scale that derive from joining voices and resources.

The Representative of Cuba agreed with all sentiments expressed in the meeting. She extended an invitation to all to participate in the 6th International Cooperation Conference.

The Representative of Grenada reminded that not only do climate catastrophes destroy in the short term, but that over the long-term the recovery process diverts investments towards recovery and forces citizens to seek job opportunities abroad often under lamentable conditions. He called on the ACS to harmonise positions to protect labour rights of migrants e.g. the right to be unionised. This call was supported by the Chair.

Further the **Chair** indicated that this matter had been raised by his delegation in discussions with the US in follow up to the Summit of the Americas and at the OAS. He noted Mexico's and Guatemala's experience in negotiating terms and conditions for workers which could be used as a best practice by the Region.

The Secretary General recalled that one ACS effort to join forces to address the matters raised as regards migration and climate change was the Greater Caribbean Climate Mobility Initiative (GCCMI), a project being undertaken in partnership with the United Nations and World Bank. He invited all present to the launch of this important project the next day.

The Representative of St. Vincent and the Grenadines expressed her delegation's appreciation for the convening of this meeting which she considered timely. She called for the ACS to be unwavering and unequivocal in its joint message about its expectations as a group of environmentally vulnerable states, observing that, to date, climate change pledges have not been forthcoming but that resources were being mobilised

internationally for other causes. She reminded that often, because of small size, disasters became national disasters.

Agreeing with the Representative of St Vincent and the Grenadines, **the Chair** called for the new director for Cooperation and Resource Mobilisation to develop a catalogue of the needs of disaster hit Members that could be shared with Members.

The Representative of Mexico greeted the meeting, expressed wishes for a successful negotiation of the Declaration of Antigua, Guatemala and hosting of the 6th International Cooperation Conference. He acknowledged the work of Secretary General Sabonge in giving new rhythm to the ACS acknowledging the contribution of the management audit to the improvement of the internal processes and governance of the ACS. He affirmed the importance of spaces like the ACS to Mexico to building cooperation. By way of regional cooperation he pointed to Mexico's donation of vaccines to the Region and contribution through projects like 'Youth building the future'; 'Sowing Life' and the Sanitary Self Sufficiency Plan. He presented Mexico's bid to head the Pan American Health Organisation, recognising that there is also a Haitian candidate.

Mexico's Intervention is at **Annex 003** to this Report.

The Secretary General then presented Draft Agreement 16/22 to Approve the List of Priority Projects Identified by the Special Committees of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and the Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC), reminding that Special Committees had discussed projects to be presented at the Cooperation Conference.

There being no objections, Agreement 16/22 was approved by the meeting.

The Representative of Nicaragua, extended fraternal greetings to the meeting. He reiterated Nicaragua's commitment to the ACS and Plan of Action and expressed his expectation for the success of the 6th International Cooperation Conference to be held in Cuba later in the year.

The Representative of Jamaica, conveyed greetings to the meetings, and stated that "Jamaica maintains that the current modality for the hosting of the meetings should be maintained. This includes in-person meetings at the ACS Headquarters, to facilitate the participation of Permanent Representatives based in Port of Spain, as well as other

stakeholders, who are able to travel to Port of Spain for the meeting. The Secretariat should continue to facilitate hybrid meetings for those who are unable to attend in person.”

Closure of the Meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting and thanked all delegations for their participation and clear decision making.