

Historical moment for Martinique and Guadeloupe as they become Associate Members of the ACS



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The 19th Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council took place at the Hilton Hotel and Conference Centre on Friday September 14th, 2014.

In attendance were nineteen (19) Member Countries, five (5) Associate Member Countries, six (6) Observers and three (3) Founding Observers.

Included in the gathering were the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, the Honourable Winston Dookeran, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Haiti, the Honourable Pierre Richard Casmir, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guyana, The Honourable Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, and the Minister for External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation of Saint Lucia, the Honourable Alva Romanus Baptiste. Representing the host country of the ACS Secretariat before the arrival of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago was Sir Edwin Carrington, Ambassador Extraordinaire of Trinidad and Tobago to CARICOM.

The Meeting was presided over by the Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, for Latin America and the Caribbean, Vanessa Rubio, alongside Vice Chairs, Cuba and Honduras, and the Secretary General of the ACS.

Guadeloupe and Martinique become Associate Members

The French overseas territories of Guadeloupe and Martinique were accepted as Associate Members of the ACS in their own right. Prior to this, these countries were represented by France. On this occasion, the delegates of these countries expressed their gratitude to the ACS and pledged their commitment to the work and programmes of the Association. They further indicated that this is an historical moment for these Territories, as the ACS is the first international organization where they are represented in their own right.

Trinidad and Tobago pledges commitment to the ACS

In his opening remarks, Sir Edwin Carrington reaffirmed the commitment of Trinidad and Tobago to the ACS. He indicated that Trinidad and Tobago remains sanguine towards the potential of the ACS as a vehicle for uniting the Greater Caribbean Region. He stated that his country expresses its unending support to the Association as Host Country.

On the issue of convergence, which was presented by Hon. Minister Dookeran at the 18th Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council held in Panama in 2013, Carrington reiterated that the Association's role was of immense significance in advancing the process towards convergence, citing the organization as being an ideal vehicle for cementing a position of sustainability for all economies in the Greater Caribbean region.

He alluded to the tremendous success of last year's V Summit of Head of State and/or Government of the ACS, hosted by the Republic of Haiti, as evidence of the organization's importance within the region, validated by the participation of some 11 Heads of Government in its activities.

Sixth Summit of the Heads of States and/or Government of the ACS

Following this, the Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico informed that Mexico will serve as host of the VI Summit of Heads of State and/or Government of the ACS to take place in April 29th - 30th, 2014. She extended an invitation to all Member and Associate Member Countries of the ACS, and urged them to ensure representation at the highest level. She further assured that direct air connections will be established in Barbados to allow Caribbean Heads of Governments ease of access to this auspicious event.

Fifth Summit of the Heads of States and/or Government of the ACS

Secretary General, Alfonso Múnera, seized the opportunity to pay laudatory remarks to the Government of Haiti, which hosted the V Summit of the ACS in 2013. He disclosed that for the ACS, this Summit, true to its theme, provided a forum through which the organization was able to discuss and implement developmental strategies, whereby repositioning itself in the aim of achieving concerted action, consultation and cooperation among Member States of the Wider Caribbean.

Ambassador Alfonso Múnera further expressed his gratitude to the Government of Haiti for the successful outcome of the Summit. He stated that the main objective of the Summit was largely achieved and that the presence of 29 Countries and territories is a record number of participants in the annals of the ACS.

Turkey strengthens support to the region

The Minister of Development of Turkey, the Honourable Cevdet Yilmaz, addressed the gathering as an Observer Country of the ACS, revealing that Turkey has a history of 15 years of active diplomatic presence in the region. He informed of the opening of an Embassy in Santo Domingo in addition to another in the Eastern Caribbean.

In the area of air connectivity, he stated that Turkish Airlines will be opening four new routes to connect the region of Latin America to Turkey. The Minister further pledged cooperation in the areas humanitarian aid, development, and disaster risk reduction and the work of the Caribbean Sea Commission. High level meetings have been planned between his country and CARICOM.

Election of new ACS Chair

Guatemala has now assumed Chairmanship of the Ministerial Council for the period 2014 -2015, the position previously held by Mexico. The meeting also approved the Chairmanship of the Special Committees led by the following countries: Disaster Risk Reduction (Guadeloupe), Transport (Cuba), Tourism (Martinique), Trade (Mexico), Budget and Administration (Guatemala) and the Special Fund (Dominican Republic).

Appreciation

Ambassador Múnera, in his closing remarks thanked the Ministers, Vice Ministers, Ambassadors and

representatives from the various regional organizations such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Organisation of American States (OAS), International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Economic Commission of Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), for their participation at the Meeting and the continued support shown to the ACS.

The Association of Caribbean States is the organization for consultation, cooperation and concerted action in trade, transport, sustainable tourism and natural disasters in the Greater Caribbean and is comprised of 25 Member Countries and 7 Associate Member Countries.