

**ACS to focus on providing ecologically effective tools in response to disasters : 20th Meeting of the Special Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction**



Port of Spain (November 16, 2012) - The Association of Caribbean States (ACS), through the Directorate of Disaster Risk Reduction will convene the 20th Meeting of the Special Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction at the Hilton Hotel and Conference Centre from November 22nd - 23rd, 2012. The Secretary General of the ACS, H.E. Alfonso Múnera, and the Director of Disaster Risk Reduction, Mr. Eduardo González, will make welcoming remarks during the opening ceremony of the meeting which will be chaired by His Excellency Mr. José Serulle Ramia, Ambassador of the Dominican Republic in Trinidad and Tobago.

The meetings of the Special Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction held annually gathers not only High level Authorities and Disaster Risk Reduction Officials from ACS Members and Associate Member States Countries but representatives from regional and international organisations such as the UWI, International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC), United Nations Office of for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and World Meteorological Organisation (WMO).

The results of the Strengthening Hydrometeorological Operations and Services in the Caribbean Small Island Developing States, (SHOCS) project will be presented by Dr. Martti Heikinheimo, Consulting Service Development Director of the Finnish Meteorological Institute. This item will be immediately followed by a presentation of the SHOCS II Project, which will be presented by Mrs. Hannele Halmeranta, Programme Officer, Office of Ambassador-at-Large to the Caribbean, of the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The main objective of the SHOCS project is to explore and increase the ACS' capacity for strategic planning in the entire Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) process, thereby raising the quality and capacity not only of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHS) but also of Disaster Risk Reduction organisations, in order to provide services for safety and preparedness with respect to natural hazards and, as a result, in the long term, allow Caribbean societies to be better prepared to deal with the adverse effects of natural disasters and the harmful effects of climate change.

On the second day of the meeting, Dr. Stephen Ramroop, Executive Director of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM) of Trinidad and Tobago and Mr. Earl Hernandez from the Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross, are scheduled to make presentations on the 'Green response' project. This project provides the governments and peoples of the Caribbean with ecologically effective, environment-friendly tools and processes that they can use in response to disasters. Other projects which will be featured at the meeting are the 'Urban Risk' project and the 'Rough Season' project.

The meeting will also focus on other regional issues such as the Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance (IDRL) and the Model Act for the IDRL Guidelines implementation as well as the proposal for the Renewal of the 'Saint-Marc Plan of Action.'