

## ACS Reports Significant Advancements in Trade Facilitation



Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 22nd September, 2015- The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) through its Directorate of Trade Development and External Economic Relations convened the 30th Special Committee Meeting on Trade Development and External Economic Relations at its Headquarters in Port of Spain on 22nd September, 2015.

The Director of Economic Integration of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism, Andres de la Cadena representing the Republic of Colombia in its capacity as Chair of the Special Committee on Trade Development and External Economic Relations delivered introductory remarks during which he affirmed Colombia's belief in this forum as a favourable space for expanding economic relations among the ACS Member States.

Cadena further proposed the creation of a Working Group to examine the possibility of granting tariff preferences to neighbouring countries within the Greater Caribbean Region. This initiative, he assured, would greatly assist in deepening of trade relations and the development of the economies of our Members.

The Meeting also addressed through the report of the Directorate, delivered by Mr Alberto Durán, the ACS Director of Trade, an update on completed activities; ongoing projects; new initiatives and collaborative efforts in which the Directorate is currently engaged.

As detailed by this report, significant advancements were made in the areas of trade facilitation,

through the execution of the following projects funded by the Government of Mexico, “International Transit of Goods in the Greater Caribbean (TIM) and “Interconnectivity for Improved Trade Facilitation and Short Distance Maritime Transport in the Greater Caribbean (TMCD). Once completed, the former aims to facilitate the exchange of customs information and the harmonization of customs requirement and procedures. The latter will facilitate maritime transport by reducing paperwork, simplification of formalities, requirements and procedures associated with the arrival, stay and departure of vessels in international travel, as well as reduce obstacles faced at terminals and improve efficiency through the automation of their operating systems.

Other advancements include the development of the ACS Business Travel Card Scheme, an initiative of the ACS in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) which seeks to improve business mobility management for trade enhancement. The Meeting approved the proposal for the implementation of the Pilot Project of this initiative.

Mr Durán further presented the Draft Work Programme for the period 2015-2016. Based on four focal points, the Work Programme, which was unanimously approved, will: consider actions to further promote trade convergence, with special emphasis on the small economies of the Greater Caribbean; develop actions to consolidate and promote the development and expansion of trade and investment, its facilitation, competitiveness and connectivity among the countries of the ACS Region; integrate the ACS Region with other regional initiatives relating to the Business Convergence and promote and encourage International Trade negotiations and training on Trade Issues.

These areas will be developed through specific activities which include the convening of Trade Business Forums, the issuing of Trade Economic Bulletins, the Development and Strengthening of MSMES of the countries of the ACS, and training and capacity building in trade-related areas through both online and face-to-face seminars and courses.

The Meeting welcomed the participation of twelve Member Countries of the Greater Caribbean.