

## ACS & Panama Sign MOU to Cooperate on Humanitarian Assistance Logistics



The Association of Caribbean States and the Republic of Panama have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work together on projects and activities for the Regional Logistics Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (CLRAH).

ACS Secretary General Her Excellency Dr. June Soomer and Panama Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago His Excellency Luis Cigarruista signed the memorandum at the ACS Secretariat in Port-of-Spain on Tuesday, May 21, 2019.

The MoU recognises the importance of pooling efforts to optimise humanitarian assistance, considering that the Caribbean is a region vulnerable to the impact of natural phenomena. Both ACS and CLRAH agree to implement support initiatives to improve coordination among the bodies that provide humanitarian assistance in the region. Both parties commit to planning and executing training activities exchanging best practice and knowledge management.

Secretary General Dr. Soomer says: "What we signed was an agreement for us to work together to put things in place to ensure that humanitarian assistance can reach vulnerable groups immediately after a disaster, because a key part of disaster risk reduction is preparation."

Ambassador Cigarruista says: "Today is a milestone occasion in the history of Panama and the Association of Caribbean States. It is an honour to have been part of this signing, which is an important moment that opens up the possibilities to further collaboration."

The agreement recognizes the ACS' efforts to strengthen ties among Member States and different organisations at the regional level, to establish a coordinated prevention and mitigation response to natural threats.

CLRAH, created in 2017 is an initiative of the Government of Panama, with the aim of incorporating the logistical operations of several international agencies into a single facility, creating new opportunities for coordination and cooperation among international organisations.

In 2017, during the Atlantic Hurricane Season, the ACS along with Panama and other countries of the Greater Caribbean region played a key role in coordinating disaster relief efforts to the territories battered by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

The Association of Caribbean States is a diplomatic organisation, made up of 35 countries and territories of the region, coming together to promote the sustainable development of the Greater Caribbean through cooperation, coordination and concerted action. Its main areas of focus are: Disaster Risk Reduction, protection and preservation of the Caribbean Sea, Sustainable Tourism, Trade and Transport. The ACS was established in 1994 and is celebrating its 25th Anniversary this year.