

## **Secretary General Soomer: Education for Women Integral to Creating Resilience & Development**



There must be recognition that girls do not benefit from equitable access to education, which translates to decreased opportunities, inferior jobs and remuneration. This was the main theme of a presentation by ACS Secretary General Dr. June Soomer, one of the panelists at the Equity in Education Forum, a joint effort of the ACS, the University of the West Indies and GeoTechVision.

The ACS Secretariat, ACS Social Actor, the University of the West Indies and its collaborator GeoTechVision, sponsor of EduTech Aid, partnered to host the Inaugural Equity in Education Forum, a Caribbean perspective Equitable Access to technology on June 30, 2020.

In the ACS Declarations of Havana and Managua, Heads of State/Government gave the Association the mandate to promote cooperation in education. This collaboration is one of the activities being undertaken to advance this mandate. SG Soomer said that girls and women must be encouraged to embrace Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education opportunities and greater focus must be placed on research and statistics. Serving the ACS since 2016, Dr. June Soomer is the first female Secretary General of the Association. She pointed out that she has a personal and professional interest in Equity in Education and access to technology.

Managing Director of GeoTechVision and global information systems expert Valrie Grant made the point that equity in education is important to ensure that vulnerable students have access to resources. She noted that the regional private sector has a role to play in assisting governments to equalize the difference in access to digital resources, which has been made even more evident by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The discussion was moderated by UWI Senior Lecturer in Geoinformatics Dr. Bheshem Ramlal, who was heavily involved in ACS' Geospatial Information Management Systems project (give full name of project UNGGIM). Other panelists included: Izett McCalla and Telly Onu.

Established in 1994, the Association of Caribbean States is an organisation for consultation, cooperation and concerted action in the Greater Caribbean. The ACS coordinates the mandates of its

25 Member States and 11 Associate Members. Its work is focused on, but not limited to disaster risk reduction; sustainable tourism, trade, transport and the protection and preservation of the Caribbean Sea.