

Secretary General's Remarks for the Special Committee on Transport



Regarding transportation issues, everyone knows that since before the pandemic the region already had problems. The distances and low demand from some countries make it difficult for private transport operators to offer quality services at a good price. With the pandemic, this situation has worsened. The closure of economic activities, unemployment and the health protocols established by the countries have further affected the imbalance between supply and demand in transport services, which has resulted in fewer services and higher prices. Hence, to talk about the economic recovery of the region, it is necessary to be clear that the first thing that must be restored is the transport services of both cargo and passengers. Hence, it is key to understand the context in which we find ourselves, something I will do in a short presentation later.

This meeting marks the transition between the Action Plan that we have been executing 2018-2021, with the new action plan that we will be developing for the 2022-2024 triennium. It is important to note that the execution of the previous action plan was affected throughout 2020 and so far in 2021; But more important than talking about the little that was achieved from the previous action plan is to recognize that conditions have changed significantly and that the new action plan will require new elements, or a major revision of the previous ones.

We are in a phase of re-calibration of our priorities and strategic objectives. The normality that we can glimpse in the short and medium term includes issues such as health protocols for the transport of cargo and passengers that we hope to standardize between countries, the urgent need to ensure that transport in the region is more environmentally friendly and comply with the new regulations to reduce emissions, but above all, see transport as a regional development tool, in a world in which trade and production are being regionalized. Faced with these new realities and others, the secretariat proposed in the last executive committee meeting and subsequently presented at the meeting of the coordination mechanism the realization of a strategic planning exercise that would be based on the "Strategic Management Document of the Secretariat of the ACS towards ACS Action Plan 2022-24" which was presented for discussion at the last ministerial meeting.

As part of the document, the secretariat proposes to develop a maritime transport and logistics strategy that includes all modes of transport for both cargo and passengers. A strategy oriented to

the development of intraregional and international trade, but also oriented to the development of sustainable tourism. A strategy that also serves as a roadmap to eliminate the barriers that hinder trade and the fluid movement of passengers in the region.

A strategy that includes the adoption of applied technologies and the digital transformation that are currently the foundation of cargo and passenger traceability and that in turn open the way to the possibility of using BIG-DATA Analytics to facilitate market analysis and optimization in the use of resources. A digital transformation that allows the integration of public and private procedures and the ease of financially transacting safely and efficiently throughout the entire value chain. In this we must recognize that digital transformation is key for foreign trade and tourism to evolve and become part of global value chains that have adopted digitization as part of their business plans.

A strategy that takes into account the great competitive advantage that the Greater Caribbean has and is that thanks to the Panama Canal, the entire region is connected to the maritime transport services that link the Caribbean with the Pacific, which is where the main markets are. of the world. A strategy that recognizes that the Canal expansion has contributed enormously to important transshipment ports in the region, such as Caucedo in the Dominican Republic; Freeport, in the Bahamas; Kingston in Jamaica; Moin in Costa Rica; Cartagena in Colombia; Manzanillo and Colón in Panama; and as many ports in the region grow, which translates into greater connectivity for the entire region. But not all the countries in the region are well connected, and that is our task, to find a way for all countries, no matter their size, to have frequent, efficient and economical transport services, both air and sea.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are facing a possible economic recovery, which comes hand in hand with advances in mass vaccination; Some international organizations already project significant economic growth in many countries in the region for this year and subsequent years. But for these projections to materialize, we must act promptly and double the time to catch up with the development train that is leaving us behind so far.

The ACS is well positioned to undertake a new plan of action and develop projects and programs on transportation and logistics issues. I have full confidence that the Director of Sustainable Economic Development Safiya Horne-Bique and her work team will live up to the commitment and will put all their knowledge and experience at your disposal, so that the new transport action plan has the consultation and participation of all member and associated countries, with which we can guarantee that it responds to the real needs of the region, and generates the necessary interest to attract international cooperation and resources to make them a reality.

We thank you for your participation and wish you all a successful meeting. Thanks you