

## ACS, CARICOM, SICA and SELA meet to establish common priorities for a joint program



### PRESS RELEASE

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The Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Central American Integration System (SICA), and the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) convened the 1st ACS-CARICOM-SICA-SELA Coordination Meeting at the ACS Secretariat in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The meeting was attended by H.E. Rodolfo Sabonge, Secretary General of the ACS, the President of the ACS Ministerial Council, H.E. Albert Ramdin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation of the Republic of Suriname, H.E. Dr. Carla N. Barnett, Secretary General of CARICOM, H.E. Clarems Endara, Permanent Secretary General of SELA, and Mr. Emil Joseph Waight, Head of SICA-CARICOM-ACS Relations Unit at the SICA General Secretariat.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the respective organizations objectives for the next three years and to establish common priorities, which would serve as the foundation for a joint program over the period 2023-25, based on the vision and expectations articulated by the Chairman.

In his opening remarks, H.E. Albert Ramdin emphasized the necessity of constant interchange until the region's position is established. "I don't see this policy dialogue as the first and only one. I see it more as a continued process of stocktaking, adjusting, and making sure that we stay on track", expressed the President of the Ministerial Council.

In his welcoming remarks, Secretary General Rodolfo Sabonge encouraged a review of the reasons for the creation of the organisations. "50 years after the founding of CARICOM and 29 years after the creation of the ACS, 30 years after the creation of SICA, and 43 years after the creation of SELA, it is important to note that this is a good time to reflect on the vision that our founders had, to celebrate what we have achieved, but also to put more effort into advancing those objectives that we have not yet achieved," said the Secretary General.

Sabonge also explained how the Plan of Action approved by ACS Member States and Partners seeks through strategic actions to address the issue of climate change impact and disaster risk reduction, and the issue of physical and digital connectivity, which is closely related to trade facilitation and sustainable tourism.

H.E. Dr. Carla N. Barnett, referred to the establishment of CARICOM as an organization to seek closer relations in the Caribbean region. "As a region, we need to understand that we are more similar than we are different, that we are only divided because of the colonial experience," she emphasized. She also highlighted that ACS and CARICOM share the same priorities and stated that it is necessary to work more closely so as not to dilute resources.

In his turn, H.E. Clarems Endara pointed out that the region's notable dependence on agricultural inputs indicates a high level of vulnerability. He also stressed that SMEs are "a central axis of the work being carried out by the Latin American Economic System, which we have seen fit to include within the mechanisms for institutional strengthening, that is, in training for most of the member countries of SELA".

Mr. Emil Joseph Waight emphasized the Sargasso crisis confronting the Greater Caribbean region as a crucial matter for SICA and expressed his gratitude to CARICOM for providing updates on the projects implemented and the position of its members to address this issue. Joseph Waight reiterated SICA's commitment to continue collaboration and coordination with regional and internal partners in order to address the other challenges we face.

The meeting concluded with a commitment to schedule an upcoming technical level meeting where the priorities identified will be discussed in depth.

**About CARICOM:** The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is a regional organization comprised of 15 member states and 5 associate members. CARICOM aims to deepen economic integration, foster human and social development, and enhance cooperation among its members in various sectors, including trade, health, and education.

**About SICA:** The Central American Integration System (SICA) is a regional organization consisting of 8 member states in Central America. SICA aims to promote regional peace, democracy, and sustainable development through economic integration, social cohesion, and environmental protection.

**About SELA:** The Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) is an intergovernmental organization comprising 25 member states in Latin America and the Caribbean. SELA focuses on promoting economic cooperation, trade, and social development among its members.