

**ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)
25TH MEETING OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
(SCST-25)**

La Antigua Guatemala, Guatemala, May 23rd, 2014

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

Review of the SCST-24 Meeting

This report covers the main activities undertaken by the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism of the ACS since the 24th Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism (SCST-24), which was held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, July 16-17, 2013.

The meeting was chaired by Madam Karine Roy-Camille, Commissioner, Martinique Tourism Authority and Chairman of the ACS Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism (SCST); and further presided over by the Vice-Chairs, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Costa Rica; with the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as Rapporteur. Forty (40) delegates were in attendance including representatives from sixteen (16) ACS Member States, one founding observer, the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) and one International Organisation, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The SCST-24 reviewed the advances made in the implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Work Program and approved projects and activities presented as part of the Work Programme for the 2014-2015 biennium.

Executive Board of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism (SCST) for 2014

At the 19th Ordinary Meeting of the ACS Ministerial Council, held in Port-of-Spain, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on February 14th, 2014, new members of the Executive Board of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism were elected for the 2014 annum as follows: Chairman: the Regional Council of Martinique; Vice-Chairmen: the Republic of Colombia and Haiti; Rapporteur: the Republic of Guatemala. The Directorate thanks and congratulates the new SCST Board and further reiterates its willingness and commitment to working with the new leadership of the SCST for the advancement of the ACS Sustainable Tourism Work Programme.

THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM WORK PROGRAMME

Pursuant to the approval of the Sustainable Tourism Work Programme (STWP) for the 2014-2015 biennium, the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism has been advancing the implementation of projects and activities within the framework of the four Programmatic Areas as approved at the 20th Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism (SCST-20).

One of the main decisions of the SCST-24 meeting, was the formation of Working Groups, one for each programmatic area of the STWP, comprised of representatives of 3-5 members states. The Working Groups were tasked to work closely with the Directorate to provide ongoing direction and support for the advancement of the projects and activities in each programmatic area.

The Directorate has been successful in convening the three Working Groups related to the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean, the Promotion of Languages and Cultures and Tourism Safety and Security, and several meetings of each working group has been held to date. In relation to the Multidestination Working Group, information has been exchanged with the group members in order to coordinate future meetings.

The Directorate wishes to express its thanks and appreciation to the Members of the Working Groups and commends them for the high level of support in contributing to the work of the Directorate, and the advancement of the STWP. An invitation is also extended to countries to encourage participating in one of the Working Groups. In this regard, a letter should be sent to the Directorate indicating the area of interest and the name and contact information of the representative selected to participate in the meetings.

As it relates to execution of the various programmatic areas, the following are the main activities that were undertaken:

1. Establishment of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean (STZC)

By receipt of Diplomatic Note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia, in the capacity as the Depository State of the Association's Ratification Instruments, the ACS was officially notified that the STZC Convention, having received the requisite number of ratifications, entered into force on November 6th, 2013.

As it relates to the accompanying Protocol, it is an integral part of the STZC which clarifies in greater specificity, the terms and provisions outlined in the Convention. In order for the Protocol to enter into force the 15 countries that have already ratified the Convention need to sign the Protocol. To date, only 5 more signatures are required for the Protocol to enter into force.

The Directorate wishes to thank and acknowledge the Member and Associate Members States that have completed the process and encourages those who have not yet done so to deposit ratification instruments to the STZC Convention and Protocol. It is recognised that the support of Ministers of Tourism and Regional Tourism Authorities is a crucial catalyst in promoting the necessary actions in each State and this support is therefore being requested to expedite the process. A briefing document on the STZC and an update on the Status of Ratifications to the STZC Convention and its Protocol are being circulated as **ACS/2014/SCST-25/INF.03** and **ACS/2014/SCST-25/INF.04** respectively.

In other areas supporting the establishment of the STZC, the Directorate has advanced as follows:

a. *Regional Cooperation Mechanism (RCM)*

The Directorate has been collaborating with the Regional Council of Martinique on the project to develop the Regional Cooperation Mechanism (RCM), an important component of the STZC. In this regard, a consultancy was launched and a Consulting firm has been selected to execute the project until June 2015. This project will include a Study that collates best practices on Sustainable Tourism and Sustainable Destination Management in the Greater Caribbean; the expansion of the Sustainability Indicators to have at least one destination in each ACS Member and Associate Member State STZC designated; and

development of promotional materials to include a logo/insignia to brand STZC destinations, production of brochures, guidebooks and other literature, and creation of a website to showcase the STZC destinations and facilitate use of the indicators and related destination management tools.

b. STZC Steering Committee

Concurrently, the Directorate is engaged in formalising the STZC Steering Committee, which serves as a technical advisory group to support implementation of the STZC-RCM project. The main function of the Steering Committee is to advise and assist the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism in the advancement of the STZC and support promotion efforts. The Steering Committee comprises regional and international organizations working in the area of Sustainable Tourism as well as Academics, Sustainability experts and Tourism professionals from the Greater Caribbean Region.

c. *Technical and Vocation Education and Training (TVET) in Tourism in the Region*

The Directorate in collaboration with the French Development Agency (AFD) are engaged in the implementation of a project which seeks to explore the status of Technical and Vocation Education and Training (TVET) in Tourism in the Region. This project is designed as a proactive approach to produce documentation and provide recommendations to strengthen human resource capacities in cross-cutting areas necessary for a sustainable and competitive Regional Tourism Industry. This project includes the commissioning of a Study/Research Publication to document the needs and priorities for Technical and Vocation Training with the aim of developing a Framework for the development and implementation of a comprehensive Training and Capacity-building Programme. Following the launch of a region wide Request for Proposals (RFP) the ACS is in the process of finalising the selection of a consultant to implement project activities, and the support of countries is being requested to provide information as needed by the consultants. This project is expected to be implemented over the next six months.

d. *STZC Newsletter*

The Directorate has produced three publications of the STZC Newsletter "In the Zone" during 2013. The newsletter is intended to highlight the efforts of the ACS in the establishment of the STZC and facilitates the exchange of information and experiences, promoting sustainable tourism initiatives and best practices in the Greater Caribbean.

2. Promotion of Multidestination Tourism

There are two major initiatives being pursued currently within the Multidestination Tourism (MDT) programme. A briefing document on the Promotion of Multidestination Tourism is being circulated as **ACS/2014/SCST-25/INF.05**

a. *Forum of Airline and Tourism Executives*

The first is the *Forum of Airline and Tourism Executives*. The Directorate in collaboration with the Latin American and Caribbean Air Transport Association (ALTA), the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) hosted in Cancun, Mexico, November 13th 2013, the **Caribbean Region and Latin America Meeting of Tourism and Transport Executives**. This meeting was held on the margins

of the 10th Annual ALTA Airline Leaders Forum and was convened to gather the regional Tourism and Transport Authorities with the CEO's and Senior Executives of Airlines operating within Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Participating in this historic dialogue were over 50 Tourism and Aviation Industry Leaders and High-level Authorities who discussed important matters pertaining to connectivity, intra-regional travel, immigration facilitation and the opportunities and challenges facing the Region in that regard. The meeting also set the framework for the Agenda and key topics to be considered for a full Caribbean Aviation Day Meeting being planned for 2014. As a follow-up to this initial meeting Caribbean Aviation Day 2014 will be held in St. Thomas, USVI, September 16th, 2014, with the Theme: ***The Passenger Experience: Discussing the outlook for the future of the airline industry and passenger experience in the region.*** Based on the success of the previous meeting held in 2013, Airports Council International (ACI) as well as Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation (CANSO), and the Caribbean Aviation Safety and Security Oversight System (CASSOS), a CARICOM institution have joined the group of organisations that will be collaborating for the hosting of this event, each bring their expertise and experiences to the discussion.

b. Cruise Tourism and Entrepreneurial strengthening in the Greater Caribbean: Opportunities for Women

The second initiative was designed as a joint collaboration with the ACS Directorate of Trade and External Economic Relations. This project entitled *Cruise Tourism and Entrepreneurial strengthening in the Greater Caribbean: Opportunities for Women*, will deliver training and capacity building tools to women with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism industry. The ACS has committed USD\$30,000 from its Special Fund budget to host the Conference related to this project. Cartagena de Indias, Colombia has shown interest in hosting said meeting during the second half of 2014 and discussions in this regard are still ongoing.

3. Promotion of Languages and Cultures of the Greater Caribbean

The two main projects being pursued in this area are the establishment of the *Centre for the Promotion of Languages and Cultures (CPLC)* and the implementation of *Student Exchange Programs* among the ACS countries for language training and cultural immersion. A briefing document on the Promotion of Languages and Culture is being circulated as **ACS/2014/SCST-25/INF.06**

In accordance with the mandates stemming from the Plan of Action of Pétiion-Ville and previous SCST meetings, the Directorate has been engaged in setting up the framework to facilitate the student exchange programme. As outlined in the STWP the objective is firstly to create a database of Language Training institutions. As such, a request has been sent to countries for the list of schools and other institutions with accredited language programs that also has the capacity to host students as part of an immersion program. The Directorate has received several responses to date and an initial draft of the Directory is being circulated as **ACS/2014/SCST-25/INF.07**. Countries that have not sent this information are being requested to please do so.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has submitted to the Directorate a proposal for the implementation of the 'Caribbean Language Certification System' for the teaching of English,

French and Spanish, based on a best-practise framework which was developed by the Hotel Escuela de los Andes of Venezuela. Venezuela has indicated willingness to share the language tools which had been developed, with the aim of having a common framework and standardized linguistic platform for language learning among the ACS Countries, particularly for professionals and students of Tourism. The proposal of Venezuela will be distributed to all countries.

Simultaneously, Member States and regional partners have been outreached requesting information on scholarships and awards available for language learning. This information will be critical in building the necessary linkages and partnerships to support both the Student Exchange Programs and formalisation of the CPLC network.

4. Establishment of the Regional Tourist Safety and Security Network

There are two initiatives being considered in this programmatic area: the hosting of a *Regional Tourist Safety and Security Capacity Building Workshop / Seminar* and the *Project to develop a Tourism Policing Program*. Discussions among the Tourism Safety and Security Working Group have proven beneficial and presentations were received from Costa-Rica, Mexico and the Republic of Colombia on their Tourism Security initiatives which could be shared and/or replicated as Regional Benchmarks among the Countries of the Region.

Subsequently, the Directorate has received from the Republic of Colombia its proposal offering Technical Assistance in Tourist Security for the Countries of the Greater Caribbean, which is being circulated as **ACS/2014/SCST-25/INF.09** of the meeting documents. This initiative focuses on the best practices gained from the experience of Colombia in the area of Tourism Policing. Similarly, initial discussions have been held with Mexico regarding the hosting of a Capacity building workshop on a Topic related to Tourism Safety and Security. A briefing document on this Programmatic Area is being circulated as **ACS/2014/SCST-25/INF.08**.

CO-OPERATION WITH REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES

The Directorate has continued to seek out strategic partnerships and alliances related to the execution of the Work programme with the aim of providing additional value and benefits to ACS Member States. In this regard the following has been pursued:

- A Memorandum of Understanding for co-operation was signed between the ACS and the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). The scope of the MOU includes co-operation in the area of tourism satellite accounts; Sustainable tourism; Risk and crisis management and the exchange of information, experiences and best-practises.
- A Memorandum of Understanding is in the process of being finalised with Fair Travel, an organisation that motivates partnerships to contribute to social and environmental projects in countries which are both tourist destinations and developing nations. Fair Travel has a strong program promoting 'Sustainable Destinations' in the EU and has agreed to join efforts towards achieving inter-institutional exchange in the area of Sustainable Tourism.
- The Directorate is in discussions with OAG (Official Airline Guide), to determine the scope of a co-operation Agreement. OAG is an International firm, which supplies global airline

information and analytical services, which includes airline schedules, timetables, distribution services as well as real-time flight status information, codeshare, connection services and cargo logistics. OAG also offers market intelligence about aircraft fleets, capacity supply, traffic demand, financial and operating performance, and Maintenance, Repair and Operations (MRO) forecasting. OAG is best known for its airline schedules database which holds future and historical flight details for more than 1,000 airlines and over 4,000 airports. This aggregated data feeds the world's global distribution systems and travel portals, and drives the internal systems of many airlines, air traffic control systems, aircraft manufacturers, airport planners and government agencies around the world.

- Discussions are also ongoing with CONPEHT, The Pan American Confederation of Hotel, Catering and Tourism Schools (CONPEHT), a civil association which seeks to contribute to the improvement and professionalisation of the Tourism industry in the countries of the Americas. CONPEHT supports several initiatives targeted to students, graduates, teachers, researchers, and managers of academic institutions. In the execution of its functions CONPEHT pursues linkages with tourism businesses and service providers as well as related governmental and international bodies with similar aims. CONPEHT will be a strategic partner towards achieving a related aim which is to foster co-operation and closer engagement between the Education sector, Private enterprises and Tourism Authorities and Development Agencies related to the Tourism industry.

ACS MEETINGS

The ACS hosted its *Sixth Summit of the Heads of State and/or Government*, in celebration of its 20th Anniversary, commemorating 20 years of the existence of the Association working to foster closer relations and co-operation among the countries of the Greater Caribbean. The Directorate joins in congratulating Mexico on the hosting of this most successful Summit, and notes with gratitude the extensive preparations and high level of coordination and support extended to facilitate the participation of all countries.

As it relates to the Meetings of the Directorate, it is expected to finalise discussions on the hosting of the *Third Meeting of Ministers of Tourism of the Greater Caribbean (TMM-3)*, subsequent to the postponement of this meeting in 2013. . It is the recommendation of the Directorate that countries decide in tandem with this discussion whether future Tourism Ministerial Meetings should be held.

It is recognised that the TMM meetings provide an unparalleled opportunity for the Ministers and other High level Tourism Authorities to share knowledge and experiences, decide on policy and provide direction and mandates to the ACS Sustainable Tourism Work programme with the aim of promoting a more harmonised and integrated approach to tourism development among the countries of the region. However it is also noted that there are a number of Regional and International events related to Tourism that require the attention of the Tourism Ministers, Commissioners and Directors and therefore compete with the ACS Tourism Ministerial Meeting.

DST HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENTS

On May 2nd, 2014, the contract of the former Research Assistant to the Directorate, Ms. Rehanna Ramroop came to an end. We thank her for the work she has done and wish her the best in her future endeavours. The Directorate is currently assessing possible replacements to complete the Team. All members of the Directorate have been fully involved in the preparation and organisation of the documentation for this meeting and the initiatives related to the advancement of the Work Programme. In this regard, the hard work and efforts of the Team of the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism are to be commended.