

## **ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES**

### **25<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM (SCST-25)**

**La Antigua Guatemala, Guatemala, May 23rd, 2014**

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### **BRIEFING DOCUMENT ON THE MEETING OF MINISTERS OF TOURISM OF THE GREATER CARIBBEAN**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The ACS Tourism Ministerial Meeting (TMM) is considered a political platform for Ministers of Tourism of the different Greater Caribbean sub-regions to coordinate efforts and address common challenges in Tourism, one of the most important economic sectors of our region. The opportunity is also taken to provide Ministers with updated and practical information that would assist in the development of tourism policies in a sustainable manner.

The theme of the Ministerial and corresponding sub-topics are selected to facilitate the formulation of policies where needed and development of intervening strategies that can be addressed through co-operation. As such, international and regional partner organisations are invited to share their initiatives and considerations of contemporary and complex issues affecting the development of tourism, such as visitor safety and security, Air accessibility, the global financial situation and climate change. The purpose in this regard, being the facilitation of multi-lateral dialogue aimed at strengthening cooperation mechanisms in the area of Tourism development.

Following the mandate given by the 4<sup>th</sup> Summit of ACS' Heads of States and Government held in Panama in July 2005 two TMMs have been held: TMM-1 in Havana Cuba in October 2006 and TMM-2 in Barranquilla, Colombia, in April 2009. This document will present an over-view of the historical evolution of the TMM, provide information on the intervening logic and lastly present considerations for the convening of the Third meeting of Ministers of Tourism of the Greater Caribbean (TMM-3).

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

At the 4<sup>th</sup> Summit of the ACS Heads of States and Government concluded on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005 in Panama City, Heads of State and/or Government once again acknowledged the importance of tourism for Caribbean countries, as well as the need to exchange national experiences in the area of public policies that could serve as a point of reference for the formulation of regional guidelines to ensure the sustainability of this economic activity.

As mandated in the Panama Declaration Article 22b; the ACS Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism (SCST) was assigned the task of organising this exchange through the convening of a High Level Meeting of Tourism Officials of the Greater Caribbean:

*We have decided that the Ministers or the highest tourism authorities of ACS Members, in the framework of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism and in conjunction with the specialised organisations in the Greater Caribbean, should convene a meeting during the first half of 2006, during which experiences would be exchanged and proposals and alternatives regarding public tourism policies would be examined, especially those associated with cruise ships, so that the possibilities of this type of tourism providing a greater contribution to the sustainable development of the sector in countries within the zone can be evaluated.*

Consequently, the SCST at its 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting held in Fort-de-France, Martinique on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005, agreed to convene the First Meeting of Ministers of Tourism of the Greater Caribbean (TMM-1) in the first half of 2006. In February 2006, the Government of Cuba offered to host TMM-1 in Havana on May 8<sup>th</sup>, as part of the activities of the 25<sup>th</sup> Cuba International Tourism Fair. However, after consultation with institutional stakeholders and consideration of diverse reasons, including among others the overlapping of this Meeting with previous commitments of some of the fundamental regional partners, the meeting was postponed and finally held on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

The decisions and recommendations of this meeting of high level tourism authorities were captured in the Declaration of Havana on Tourism in the Greater Caribbean (DHAV). The ACS Ministerial Council signed Agreement N° 11/07 institutionalising the DHAV.

Acknowledging the relevance of this Greater Caribbean Tourism forum, the TMM-1 "agreed to analyse the proposal to institutionalise the ACS Tourism Ministerial Meeting on a biennial basis". Having TMM-1 been held in 2006, the SCST proceed to request ACS States and Associate Members their expression of interest to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tourism Ministerial Meeting (TMM-2) in 2008. However, countries were not forthcoming in offering to host this meeting in 2008. It was at the 14<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting of the ACS Ministerial Council in January 2009 that the Republic of Colombia officially presented its offer to host TMM-2 in April 2009, offer that was accepted by through the signing of Agreement N° 08/09.

TMM-2 was therefore held in Barranquilla on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009. With the participation of delegations from eight Member States (four at the Minister level) and two Associate Members, two Funding Observers (CTO and ECLAC), as well as experts from two regional specialised agencies (IICA, CDERA) and from the University of Oxford, the meeting agreed to a series of recommendations compiled in the Declaration of Barranquilla on Sustainable Tourism in the Greater Caribbean (DBAQ). The Meeting proposed to consider changing the periodicity of the TMM's from biannual, as agreed at TMM-1 to annual, however, concern was expressed on the number of regional and international events held every year requesting the presence of Ministers of Tourism and therefore caution was recommended on selecting the dates for the proposed annual ACS TMM.

### **3. INTERVENING LOGIC**

#### **OBJECTIVE**

The objective of the Tourism Ministerial Meeting is to exchange views and consolidate common actions that would yield benefits for the diverse composition of the ACS membership and propose alternatives to increase the contribution of the tourism industry to the sustainable development of the Greater Caribbean countries.

#### **SCOPE**

Ministers of Tourism of the Greater Caribbean and high-level tourism officials are invited to share information and experiences in the area of tourism as it relates to the regional economy, transport, the environment, as well as initiatives on product diversification and community engagement.

Additionally, international and regional partner organizations are also invited to share their initiatives and considerations of contemporary and complex issues that affect the development of tourism, such as food security, the global financial situation as well as climate change.

#### **PROCESS**

If a country is interested in hosting the TMM, it so communicates in writing to the Secretariat. The Secretariat in its turn would then inform the ACS membership of the offer. The hosting of an ACS Meeting outside of the ACS Headquarters is governed by Ministerial Agreement N° 05/03. This agreement stipulates the conditions and arrangements to which the Host Country is committing as well as the responsibilities of the Secretariat.

Selection of the Theme and Agenda for the Meeting is jointly coordinated by the ACS Directorate of Sustainable Tourism, the host country and the Chair of the Special Committee. Proposals are then submitted for the considering of the ACS Membership. Bearing in mind the interdependence of many of the issues related to the regional tourism industry, in preparing the agenda for the TMM, the ACS Directorates of Trade, Transport and Disaster Risk Reduction and their respective Special Committees may be consulted.

### **4. CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE ACS TOURISM MINISTERIAL MEETINGS**

TMMs have proven to fulfill their objectives in providing a platform for intra-regional exchange at the highest political level and the formulation of common positions on issues affecting the sustainable development of tourism in the Greater Caribbean. The two Declarations emanating from these meetings have provided strategic guidance to the work of the SCST and the DST for the implementation of the ACS Sustainable Tourism Work Programme. Initiatives such as the Convention establishing the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean, the facilitation of student exchanges among the countries of the Greater Caribbean, as well as the support to regional tourism projects related to the ongoing dialogue on Regional Air-Connectivity and capacity-building workshops to enhance Safety and Security in the Tourism Industry are some of the immediate results of the TMMs in only two stages.

Mindful of the global financial crisis that affects ACS Member States and Associate Members as well as of the busy tourism regional agenda, the availability of Ministers of Tourism to attend regional and international meetings is becoming more limited. It is important in this environment of limited time and scarce resources to prepare agendas that would address the most relevant issues affecting the regional tourism sector, with a view towards developing comprehensive follow-up programs and strategies, while also providing an opportunity to share best-practices and learn from each other's experiences.

It is also very important to ensure that ACS Member States and Associate Members take ownership of the convening of these meetings and the recommendations which ensue aligned to their own national agendas. In this regard, it should be noted that Meetings of the ACS Tourism Ministers have not been held for the past four years, and a discussion on the hosting of the *Third Meeting of Ministers of Tourism of the Greater Caribbean (TMM-3)*, subsequent to its postponement in October 2013 is expected to be finalized. 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 recognized that the TMM meetings provide an unparalleled opportunity for the Ministers and other High level Tourism Authorities of the Greater Caribbean 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 which consequently compete with the ACS Tourism Ministerial Meeting. The guidance and direction of the Regional Ministers of Tourism and Tourism Authorities is therefore warranted.