

ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)

25th MEETING OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

La Antigua Guatemala, Guatemala, May 23, 2014

RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT

The 25th Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) was held in La Antigua, Guatemala, Republic of Guatemala, May 23, 2014. The meeting was chaired by the Honourable Karine Roy-Camille, President of the Martinique Committee on Tourism and Chairman of the ACS Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism (SCST); and further presided over by the Vice-Chair, the Republic of Colombia represented by Mrs. Sandra Howard Taylor, Vice minister, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, and Rapporteur the Republic of Guatemala, represented by Mr. Pedro Pablo Duchez, Director, Guatemala Tourism Institute (INGUAT). Also seated at the head table was His Excellency Rodrigo Viemann de León, Vice-Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala, in the capacity as Host Country Representative and President of the ACS Ministerial Council. The ACS Secretariat was represented at the head table by the Secretary General, His Excellency Ambassador Alfonso Múnera, and the Director for Sustainable Tourism (DST), Mr. Julio Eduardo Orozco.

There were an estimated fifty (50) participants in attendance, including delegations from fifteen (15) ACS Member and Associate Member States and representatives of leading regional and international organisations related to the Tourism sector: the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), the Central American Tourism Integration Secretariat (SITCA for its acronym in Spanish), the Organisation of American States (OAS), and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) among others. The complete list of participants is attached to this Report as **Annex A**.

I. Opening ceremony.

The Meeting began with the welcome remarks by Ambassador Rodrigo Viemann de León, **Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guatemala**, in which he extended a welcome to the Twenty Fifth Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism, expressing Guatemala's honour to host the event and to have the attendance of the participants. He also conveyed his thanks for the preparatory work done by the ACS and highlighted the competitive advantages enjoyed by tourism in the region, which has potential for the economies of all countries and promotes the comprehensive management of the environment, as well as social and cultural values, with cooperation among states and the exchange of experiences being crucial elements. He indicated that Guatemala had set its sights on the Caribbean, to form a natural alliance, since Central America and the Caribbean are regions that complement each other. He further stressed the importance of consensus for decision making, in order to have an improved standard in the tourism industry and reiterated the call to increase intra-regional activity on the continent of the Americas. The remarks are attached as **Annex B**.

In addressing the meeting, **Ambassador Alfonso David Múnera Cavadía, Secretary General of the ACS**, acknowledged the presence of the Executive Board and the delegates of the member countries and associate members of the ACS, as well as the International Organisations, reiterating the objective of the meeting, which is to produce actions with a view to advance the

programmes and plans of action made in previous meetings. He also made reference to the last two ACS Summits of Heads of State and Governments, during which sustainable tourism has been a central theme. He further commented on the importance of implementing joint actions with a view to improving Tourism performance at the international level. The Secretary General also stressed the importance of having a concrete and feasible plan of action that would help provide some guidance, considering that the main point is the matter concerning the STZC, since it is the only sustainable development zone in the world and the time has come for its materialisation. In that regard, he urged the participants to do their utmost to achieve the goals proposed so that during the next Summit, the Heads of State could be informed that the STZC vision has been realised. He further indicated that now is the time to bring this great project to fruition in order to consolidate it and made mention of the other programmatic areas of the Sustainable Tourism Work Programme namely, the Promotion of Multidestination Tourism, the Language Training Programme and The Promotion of Tourist Safety, indicating that these are crucial issues for the economy and for the peoples of the Greater Caribbean in general, thus there must be concrete actions and plans coming from the meeting.

In addressing the meeting, Mr. Pedro Pablo Duchez, **Director of the Guatemala Tourism Institute (INGUAT)**, reiterated that Guatemala has a keen interest in working for the revitalisation of the regional dialogue. He made mention of the spirit of change brought about by the 13 Baktun in accordance with the Mayan Calendar. He added that the change in era has come with people demanding action and as public servants we are obligated to produce results for our peoples, for it is never too late to take action. He further expressed the importance of the issue of air and maritime connectivity, a true challenge for Guatemala, and of the intent to present during this meeting, a proposal for the formulation of a simple yet concise plan of action regarding the efforts that must be undertaken as a Region so as to improve air and maritime connectivity, in order to be strengthened as a region and maintain the position as an important tourist destination for the cruise ship and airline industry.

The **Chair of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism**, the Honourable Karine Roy-Camille, President of the Martinique Tourism Committee, began by greeting the head table and the delegates, indicating that it was an honour to participate in the meeting as Chair of the Tourism Committee and to be in La Antigua, Guatemala. She indicated that Martinique had recently become an Associate Member of the ACS in its own right, and her presence showed the continued commitment of the Regional Council of Martinique, led by President Serge Letchimy, to consolidate cooperation in the Greater Caribbean through the ACS. She continued that the STZC must become the reference framework for developing sustainable tourism, which would allow for the establishment of alliances, indicating that during her tenure, there were several ratifications to the STZC Convention, which today has been ratified by 17 countries. She conveyed her appreciation for the proactive role played by the countries in this regard, and invited those that had not yet done so to expedite the efforts for ratification. She also mentioned that during the last Summit of Heads of State held in Mérida, the importance not only of tourism but also for the exchange of experiences for the economic development of countries was reiterated, adding that the Workshop on Best Practices in Sustainable Tourism held the day prior was a critical step in that direction. She concluded that moving forward it was important to avoid the duplication of efforts, ensure closer coordination among countries and continue with the dialogue in order to advance sustainable tourism and thus realise the vision of making the Greater Caribbean one of the world's premiere tourism destinations. The speech presented is included as **Annex C**.

Mr. Julio Eduardo Orozco Pérez, **Director of Sustainable Tourism** of the ACS, joined in welcoming the participants thanking them for their engagement and support during his first year as the ACS Director of Sustainable Tourism. He made brief mention of some the key achievements to date to include the ratification of the STZC Convention and also introduced the team of the Director reiterating the commitment to work collaboratively with Member States and Regional and International organisations related to Tourism, for the sustainability and competitiveness of the industry in the Region. He also recalled that during the last Summit, connectivity was an important issue and he reiterated that it is a priority for the Association. He closed by informing the participants, he anticipated that the meeting would end with important conclusions.

II. Approval of the Agenda and Procedural Matters.

The Meeting examined the Draft Agenda presented by the Secretariat and addressed other procedural issues pertaining to its deliberations. The respective announcements were made regarding the procedures and handling of the meeting. There were no amendments and the Agenda was approved.

III. Report of the Chair on the Work Programme proposed for 2014.

The **Chair** presented a report on the major achievements of 2013 and presented considerations for advancing the Work Programme for the 2014 annum. In her speech, the Chair underscored Martinique's role in the Chairmanship of the Committee and her efforts in that regard. She made special mention of the 24th Special Committee Meeting which was held last year in Trinidad and Tobago and expressed her thanks for the support of the Trinidad and Tobago Government through the Ministry of Tourism who assisted the ACS in hosting. She highlighted among her priorities to host the Third Meeting of the Ministers of Tourism of the Greater Caribbean of the ACS, to increase the number of ratifications to the STZC Convention and to have specific dates and deadlines indicated for the projects and activities of the Sustainable Tourism Work Programme. The report of the Chair is attached as **Annex D**.

The **Minister of Tourism of Sint Maarten** in response congratulated the Chair on the advancements in relation to the Work Programme and expressed on behalf of his country an interest in participating in the Multidestination Programme Working Group.

The **Chair** voiced her gratitude for the comments made and invited those countries that would like to participate in the Multidestination Working Group to do so, confirming Sint Maarten's participation.

IV. Discussion on the Convening of the 3rd Meeting of Ministers of Tourism of the Greater Caribbean (TMM-3).

The **Chair** presented considerations on the convening of the 3rd Tourism Ministerial Meeting. During her presentation, the Chair highlighted the important topics to be discussed and the need for the current efforts to yield results. She welcomed interventions from the floor and invited the Minister of Tourism of St. Maarten to address the meeting.

The **Minister of Tourism of Sint Maarten** in addressing the meeting offered to sponsor and host the next ACS Tourism Ministerial Meeting. He presented a description of the Island, its population, tourism-related data and made mention of the importance of tourism to the island, which constituted a significant source of both income and employment and has grown exponentially over the years, with both private and public sector stakeholders working together. He outlined the importance of sharing best practices and learning from the major initiatives undertaken to ensure that sustainability is maintained. The representative further expressed that Sint Maarten is a diverse destination which is well connected regionally as it is serviced by all the major airlines. He proposed October 4 and 5 of this year as the dates for the 3rd Meeting of Ministers of Tourism of the Greater Caribbean, immediately preceding the Florida Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA) Conference, which will be held from October 6 in Sint Maarten.

The representative of the **Republic of Guatemala** conveyed her thanks for the offer made by Sint Maarten, indicating that it would be the perfect occasion in light of the FCCA Conference carded for October 6, 2014 in that country. She made the observation that it is important to arrive at concrete topics by those dates, so that the advancements made and the results achieved could be evaluated, in order for said meeting to be productive. She also presented for consideration, the proposal that the meeting run for one day.

The **Chair** invited the Ministers to travel on Saturday October 4th, for the Meeting of Ministers which would be held on October 5th and then attend the FCCA Conference on October 6th.

The **Secretary General of the ACS** expressed his appreciation to the Minister of Tourism of Sint Maarten and accepted their proposal to host the 3rd Tourism Ministerial Meeting. He added that it was important to take advantage of the occasion since most Ministers or Vice Ministers of Tourism will attend the FCCA Conference. In that respect, the Secretary General confirmed the proposal to hold the Ministerial meeting on October 5, underscoring the commitment needed from countries to participate at the Ministerial or Vice Ministerial level in order to have the highest level of representation and thereby guarantee successful outcomes. He appealed for the political commitment of countries in relation to the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean, indicating that this should take the form not only of ratification but also of implementation, of both the technical and political aspects, in order to work on a plan of action that would allow indicators to be developed for advancement in this area. Toward that end, the Secretary General reiterated the need to have the political will of governments to participate in the meeting so that the meeting of ministers could yield successful results in decision making, with at least 11 High Level representatives (Ministers or Vice Ministers) being necessary to achieve quorum. He closed by thanking the Minister of Sint Maarten for his generous offer and asked that the timeframes be established so that countries could make clear decisions to participate in the Ministerial meeting.

Colombia, in its capacity as Vice Chairman of the Special Committee, requested confirmation from delegations during the plenary session and confirmed participation in the Ministerial Meeting. The delegations of Guatemala, Nicaragua and Martinique confirmed high level participation in the meeting.

The representative of the **Dominican Republic** indicated his country's interest in participating however requested 15 days in which to circulate the invitation and confirm the attendance of the Minister or high level delegate. The representative also conveyed appreciation for the offer made by Sint Maarten to host the meeting.

The representatives of **Bahamas, Suriname, Mexico, Jamaica** and Panama all indicated that upon return to their capitals, they will make the necessary consultations and work on confirming the participation of their Ministers.

The **Secretary General** closed the discussion by expressing his appreciation for the work done by Martinique in chairing the Tourism Committee and confirmed October 5 as the date for the 3rd Meeting of Ministers of Tourism of the Greater Caribbean.

The **Chair** subsequently announced her departure from the meeting indicating that she was required to be back in Martinique for official business. The Secretary General led the meeting in a standing ovation in recognition of her astute Chairmanship. Mr. Jean-Yves Lacascade, the representative of **Martinique** fulfilled the role of the Chair in her absence.

V. Report of the Director of Sustainable Tourism on the Sustainable Tourism Work Programme of the ACS for the period 2014-2015.

The **ACS Director of Sustainable Tourism** presented a brief report on the activities undertaken and progress made since the 24th Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism, including the activities of the Working Groups. In his intervention, the Director stressed that during the Summit of Heads of State held in Merida, the Ministerial Council issued the mandate to the Secretary General that the Sustainable Tourism Directorate would use in the Spanish version the word “sustentable” instead of “sostenible” for future proceedings¹. The presentation is attached as **Annex E**.

The **Secretary General** reiterated the importance of language learning and called for attention to be focused on advancing the student exchange programme, indicating that we must strive to work jointly with the educational centres, universities and technical institutes of our countries, in order to mobilise scholarship offers for the students of the Greater Caribbean region. He urged countries to share information of existing scholarship programmes in order that those that do not offer scholarships can be encouraged to do so and provide scholarship and grants which can be used. The Secretary General further communicated that several publications have been produced by the Secretariat which are being translated into the three languages of the ACS. He requested the support of meeting participants to contact their media Agencies, newspapers and affiliated Tourism institutions, in order to share the publications that are of interest and also publish via their websites.

VI. Presentation and discussion on the Programme to Establish the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean (STZC).

The **ACS Director of Sustainable Tourism** provided updated information on the status of the ratifications and signatories to the STZC Convention and Protocol. Subsequently, the representative of the **Regional Council of Martinique** presented an update on the advancements made regarding the Regional Cooperation Mechanism (RCM) project of the STZC and in said presentation he outlined the importance of this project and the establishment of follow

¹ The term ‘sustentable’ will be used specifically in reference to the *Convention of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean and its Protocol* as utilised in the Spanish version of the official document.

up mechanisms with the Secretariat to ensure compliance with the project objectives. This presentation is attached as **Annex F**.

The **Secretary General** considered it important, the functioning of the Special Fund of the ACS, created by the Heads of State and Government with the intention of said body steering the development of the strategic projects of the region and the mobilisation of funds to execute such projects. He further indicated that the ACS budget only covers the expenses of the Secretariat, while the function of the Special Fund is intended to generate its own financial resources. The Secretary General informed the meeting that Ms. Ingrid Jacobs, citizen of the Republic of Guatemala was appointed to manage the Special Fund and he urged ACS member countries to make contributions to this fund. In that respect, he introduced Ms. Ingrid Jacobs as the Special Fund Project Manager of the Association.

Having been introduced during the plenary, Ms. Ingrid Jacobs, **Project Manager of the ACS Special Fund** presented the Special Fund initiative on the Certification of Destinations, in which she highlighted the benefits of certification, the elements of tourism certification, the objectives of the initiative, beneficiaries and the phases of the project. The presentation is attached as an **Annex G**.

The representative of **Martinique** congratulated Ms. Jacobs on her work and considered it essential to search for synergies to ensure that there is compatibility among tourism sites for their certification, logic of complementarity among same, while at the same time financing the validation of indicators. He reiterated that in any project formulation exercise, the Special Fund and Project Manager must work collaboratively with all parties, so that they would have a sound definition of objectives and ensure that the results are those desired, for which it is imperative that all project stakeholders be involved in its execution, in order to ensure synergy and complementarity with other donors, so as to avoid any redundancy.

The **Tourism Minister of Sint Maarten** expressed his concern over the issue of certification, indicating that since there are differences between countries and destinations, it is important to avoid competition among the countries of the region which may result from the certification of destinations.

The **ACS Director of Sustainable Tourism** explained that the Zone has comprehensive indicators that must be implemented and therefore the Secretariat deemed it necessary to work toward finding an added value that would be incorporated by countries into said indicators. This certification would add validity to the STZC concept and only apply to the STZC destinations.

The representative of **Costa Rica** expressed doubt over the fact that each country must propose a destination, since they could present "Monte Verde" a destination that already has certification. He further inquired whether 10 companies could be submitted as opposed to a destination. Director Orozco clarified that the STZC initiative as well as the indicators developed were targeted to improve the management and sustainability of Tourist destinations, thus a destination would have to be submitted.

The representative of **Colombia** questioned the process to obtain certification, adding that they are currently working on a project in collaboration with CARICOM, evaluating certification systems and processes.

The **Secretary General** addressed Colombia's question and explained that he recently held a meeting with the Director of the International Labour Organisation, during which he touched on the issue of certifications, since said Organisation conducted a comprehensive study in Uruguay, Brazil and Mexico, regarding competitiveness in the field of tourism. This was a comparative study that showed that certification is an added value in the international tourism market. He added that he considered that countries will be advancing in that direction, in such a manner that certification will become an important goal for countries with tourism interests and therefore work must be done in relation to the STZC to propel countries to the point of ratification, thereafter to be able to define the destination, and subsequently to move those destinations that comply with the indicators, to international certification. The Secretary reiterated that work hinges on the willingness of countries and the Association can help to promote, coordinate and support the processes. He clarified that each country must present a destination and if they fail to do so there can be no support; however the ACS is always willing to assist. He added that this meant that there needs to be joint work with international certification companies that establish specific criteria and therein lay the importance of achieving an aspect of homogenisation of indicators, in order to get destinations to consider certification. He closed by expressing that the Association will not present projects that do not offer a minimum of guarantees for their development and that work must be done in relation to the budget having analysed the viability of the project, in order to implement the activities planned by the ACS toward certification.

The representative of **Martinique** and the Chair of the SCST congratulated the Secretary General and added that it will be a process of lessons learnt, which will allow those countries involved to be able to apply the same methodology and ensure that there are synergies from which they could benefit in order to reach international levels, creating an exercise of complementarity.

The representative of **Guatemala** voiced support for the issue of sustainability certification, indicating that it is important for an analysis to be performed on what currently exists. She also shared that in Central America, work is being done on certification adding that there must be other such initiatives in the Greater Caribbean region. She recommended that efforts be focussed on assessing what currently exists and based on that, the stage at which the region finds itself can be determined, in order to be in a position to standardise.

The **Secretary General** declared that the Association is committed to facilitating dialogue and the sharing experiences among its Member States in order to join efforts. He added that if there are separate initiatives, these can be merged so as to give it meaning, strength and coherence. In that respect, the Secretary General requested that a small working group be convened to explore the harmonisation of Certification Programs currently existing, under the purview of the Project Manager, for the purpose of gathering information and contacting the main actors involved on this topic in member States, so that consensus could be reached subsequently with countries.

VII. **Presentation and discussion on the Programme to Promote Multidestination Tourism**

The **ACS Director of Sustainable Tourism** provided updated information on the project entitled "Cruise Tourism and Entrepreneurial Strengthening in the Greater Caribbean: Opportunities for Women", explaining that the first component of this project was a Conference which is being planned for October 22, 2014 tentatively. He also mentioned that discussions are ongoing with

Cartagena to host this forum. The Director reported that the Association has the resources to facilitate the mobilisation of women with small and medium enterprises to attend the event and that information in this regard would be circulated subsequently.

The **ACS Director of Sustainable Tourism** also informed on the Caribbean Aviation Day 2014 event, which will be celebrated in collaboration with the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), the Latin American and Caribbean Air Transport Association (ALTA) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA). This meeting will gather the Regional Tourism Ministers and Transport Authorities with the Airline Representatives and Civil Aviation Authorities. He further indicated that the draft Agendas will be circulated shortly and urged countries to support this initiative.

VIII. Presentation and discussion on the Programme to Promote the Languages and Cultures of the Greater Caribbean.

The **ACS Director of Sustainable Tourism** reported on the progress made in the initiative geared toward facilitating Student Exchanges for Immersion in Languages and Cultures among the countries of the region. During the presentation, he informed that a database of Institutions with accredited Language Training Programs that also have the capacity to host students is being finalised and should be published this year. He also indicated that said initiative is seeking cooperation with the educational sectors for the student exchanges, with the aim of creating scholarship grants for students to be able to benefit from this programme. The Director requested suggestions in that respect so that they could be forwarded to the Working Group responsible for this topic.

The representative of **Martinique** made mention of Guadeloupe's CIGAREL initiative (*International Centre of Guadeloupe for a Regional Approach to Languages*) to participate in the language training exercise which received approval for financing, and requested that the Secretariat co-ordinate with the Regional Council of Guadeloupe to implement the initiative in French.

IX. Presentation and discussion on the Programme to Promote Safety and Protection in the Tourism Industry.

The **ACS Director of Sustainable Tourism** presented the progress made and the status of the initiatives in this area to include the Regional Dialogue on Tourism Safety and Security and the Tourism Policing project. This was complemented by Mrs. Sandra Howard Taylor, **Vice Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Colombia** who presented the "Offer of Cooperation by Colombia in the area of Tourist Assistance and Safety in the framework of the ACS". She outlined the offer made by Colombia to share the best practises gained in the area of tourist safety to other member States. A video was presented extending an invitation to attend the 57th UNWTO Commission for the Americas to be held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia on June 25, 2014, whose theme is to continue sustainability and innovation, so as to discover synergies with the private sector. The presentation is attached as an **Annex H**.

The representative of the **Bahamas** queried the holding of special workshops on the issue of tourist safety, indicating that there were specific workshops targeted to experts and other stakeholders to address this topic, indicating that the heads of hotel security was one of the

stakeholders. **Director Orozco** clarified that the aim of this initiative was to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences among ACS Members Countries, which the Secretariat has successfully done with the members of the Tourism Safety and Security Working Group which includes Mexico, Colombia and Costa Rica, which involved learning the experiences of each country and promoting specific activities.

Daniela Garza Ríos Eychenne, **Director of International Organisations of the Mexican Tourism Secretariat** delivered a presentation on the International Conference on Tourist Safety and Assistance. A cordial invitation was extended to attend the conference, carded for June 11-13, 2014, and organised in conjunction with the OAS, the Tourism Secretariat and the Foreign Affairs Secretariat of Mexico. In addition, Ms. Ríos gave a brief description of the seminar and its objectives. The presentation is attached as an **Annex I**.

X. Review of the STWP for the 2014-2015 Biennium.

The **ACS Director of Sustainable Tourism** invited the meeting to present comments and feedback to the Sustainable Tourism Work Programme (STWP) for the 2014-2015 biennium with a view to updating it as necessary. There were no comments and the Work Programme as approved at the SCST-24 Meeting was left unchanged. The presentation is attached as an **Annex J**.

XI. Discussion and Presentation on Cooperation with International and Regional Agencies in the area of Sustainable Tourism.

The **ACS Director of Sustainable Tourism** presented a Report on the Training for Careers in Sustainable Tourism project, carried out with the French Development Agency (AFD). He commented that it is an initiative to assess the status and needs of Technical and Vocational Training in the Tourism sector and seeks to establish specific alliances in various industry related fields to address market intelligence and other aspects. He also pointed out that a consultancy was launched and the Secretariat is awaiting feedback from AFD to select a consultant and begin project implementation. He indicated that countries would be advised in a timely fashion of follow-up, since the project involves visits to gather information on the availability of training in the area of sustainable tourism among others.

Carolina Maitre, **Director of the Business Development Team of the Official Airline Guide (OAG)** delivered a presentation on opportunities for collaboration and presented a video on the OAG. During her intervention, she indicated that OAG is a reliable source of information, on ways in which people are travelling to their destinations as well as opportunities for diversifying markets. She explained that air connectivity is a key factor for economic development, since it is an industry that is continuously evolving and changing to accommodate greater opportunities, adding that it is useful to be familiar with the most sophisticated systems in order to be in a position to make progress. The presentation is attached as an **Annex K**.

The **ACS Director of Sustainable Tourism** submitted for the consideration of the plenary, the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the ACS and the OAG, for the purpose of forging a more specific alliance, which was approved. It was agreed that the DST will carry out the respective procedures for the signing of the Memorandum.

Mr. Raúl Palma Hernández, **Vice President for Central America, of the Pan-American Confederation of Hotel, Gastronomy and Tourism Schools (CONPEHT)** conveyed his thanks for the invitation to attend and to Mr. Julio Orozco for providing CONPEHT with the opportunity to address the meeting. He also delivered a presentation on opportunities for collaboration, stressing that as an initial step, closer relations could be developed with various institutions of the English and French speaking Member States of the ACS. He presented a description of CONPEHT, its mission and the services available through CONPEHT, and reaffirmed maximum interest in achieving closer relations with the countries of the Greater Caribbean, through the ACS. The presentation is attached as an **Annex L**.

The **ACS Director of Sustainable Tourism** submitted for the consideration of the plenary, the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the ACS and the CONPEHT, so that closer relations could be established for countries that do not have such alliances. This was approved and it was agreed that the DST will carry out the respective procedures for the signing of the Memorandum.

The **Secretary General** reiterated that there was scope for collaboration with CONPEHT in relation to the Training for Careers in Sustainable Tourism project, which entails a precise assessment of the various levels of training in the field of tourism in the Greater Caribbean.

The representative of **Martinique** intervened regarding the technical capacity to work in different languages, which he indicated was necessary in order to foster closer relations among the countries of the Caribbean. He indicated that in Europe, there is "Erasmus" an educational exchange programme which enables higher education students to study or work abroad as part of their degree and staff to teach or train, promoting trans-national co-operation projects among universities across Europe.

In that respect, he submitted for consideration, the creation of a programme with a type of academic or master's degree, which would allow linguistic training and capacity-building within the Greater Caribbean to be realised.

The representative of **CONPEHT** explained that the issue of language learning in tourism is a priority, and the opportunity to create a space that would make this possible is of interest. He indicated that CONPEHT will analyse ways in which to generate spaces for cooperation.

Mr. José Serulle, **Ambassador of the Dominican Republic and Permanent Representative to the ACS in Trinidad and Tobago** and Dr. Jacqueline Boin, **President of the Science and Art Foundation**, presented information on the 1st World Ecotourism and Production Fair that will be held in Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic, on October 18 - 26, 2014. They both expressed their thanks to the ACS, especially to the Secretary General and to Julio Orozco for the work done to promote Sustainable Tourism in the region. During their interventions, they invited the countries of the Association to attend the Fair, indicating that activities will include expositions in booths and stands, conference programmes and scientific workshops as well as an artistic, cultural and sports programme, for which they have received support from international and national partners, for the purpose of promoting ecotourism fairs and local development as activities for building sustainable destinations. They also explained that they are working to build a partnership between the city of Santiago de los Caballeros, and La Antigua Guatemala. An invitation was also extended to the Secretary General to deliver the opening speech at the event.

The **ACS Director of Sustainable Tourism** submitted for the consideration of the plenary, the ACS' participation in the event, which was unanimously approved.

The **Secretary General** expressed his thanks for the invitation and considered that this is an important phase in which there needs to be closer engagement with the countries of the Caribbean. He confirmed his support and attendance at the fair, indicating that this was an important and pioneering initiative, and encouraged the countries of the Association to also attend the event, to raise awareness of these important topics.

The representative of **Martinique** also expressed his support for the fair and commented on the Territorial Diplomacy programme, a new initiative being developed by the Regional Council of Martinique that would provide training and a platform for co-operation and the sharing of experiences among local authorities, Regional Organisations and International Agencies linked to co-operation and development. He proposed within the framework of this project, the possibility to hold a symposium targeted to the municipalities of different ACS countries so that they could share best practices and experiences with other municipalities that may be faced with the same problems of local development in the context of sustainable tourism development.

XII. **Discussion on the Date and Venue of the 26th Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism (SCST-26).**

The decision on the date and venue of the SCST-26 Meeting was presented for consideration, and countries were invited to submit proposals for the hosting of said meeting. It was agreed that proposals would be dispatched soon.

The representative of **Martinique** deemed it fitting that the Committee's meeting be organised together with a cooperation activity to promote exchanges and add value to the meeting. Thus, he indicated that Martinique would consider hosting the 26th Meeting of the Special Committee within the framework of the meeting planned at the conclusion of the Regional Cooperation Mechanism of the STZC project, carded tentatively for May/June 2015. He indicated that this proposal will be confirmed subsequently, although it must be given technical and financial consideration.

The **ACS Director of Sustainable Tourism** expressed his pleasure with Martinique's proposal indicating that the Secretariat will await Martinique's confirmation.

XIII. **Any Other Business.**

The Meeting examined other relevant matters, such as the concern expressed by the **representative of Jamaica** regarding the number of countries that have signed the Convention and the countries that have made amendments.

The **ACS Director of Sustainable Tourism** informed that 17 countries have ratified the STZC Convention to date and that he will consult the legal advisor in order to provide further details on amendments.

The representative of the **CTO** reminded the members that Caribbean Week will be celebrated the first week of June in New York and that the Third Symposium for Innovators in Coastal Tourism will take place on July 8-11 in Grenada. She invited the participants to visit the Organisation's web

page.

In closing the Meeting, the representative of **Martinique** acknowledged the efforts of the Guatemalan Government in coordinating and organising the meeting and conveyed his thanks for the great work done by the Association.

The **Secretary General** considered that it was a great and extremely positive meeting, which received participation from member countries who had not taken part previously, to include Sint Maarten, which recently formalised its status as an Associate Member State in its own right. He made mention of the workshop, indicating he was assured that all participants shared the sentiment that remarkable work was done. He also congratulated the Government of Guatemala and INGUAT on the outstanding, impeccable organisation and further thanked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala and the international organisations for their participation. He closed by applauding the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism, notably Director Julio Orozco and his team.

The **representative of Guatemala**, Mrs. Maruja R. Acevedo Orellana closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance and participation, indicating that it was a pleasure and an honour for Guatemala to host both events.

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