

Regional Stakeholders Discuss Transport & COVID-19



ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS) HOSTS MEETING OF GREATER CARIBBEAN TRANSPORT STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders of the Greater Caribbean Transport Sector met virtually on 28 May to speak to the challenges faced and opportunities provided by the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting was officiated by the Chair of the Special Committee on Transport, Mr. Clifton Amoida, Deputy Director - Transport, Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communication, Republic of Suriname, who posited that the “pandemic has shown us that transportation is an essential service. Moving goods will always remain essential. Therefore, we must ensure that we use the opportunity provided by the pandemic to advance a more equitable, accessible and robust regional transport mechanism.”

The Secretary General, Dr. June Soomer noted that COVID-19 has “indeed exposed the weaknesses and gaps in the transport sector in the Greater Caribbean.” She stressed that in restoring air links, priority would be given to increasing connectivity amongst the countries in the Greater Caribbean in order to ensure that south-south cooperation would soar through the Region’s own airlines. Her expectation was that the meeting would “emerge with a compendium of best practices applied in the region with regards to the transport sector, as well as regional solutions for an effective transport mechanism in the Greater Caribbean.”

Following presentations covering the current situation of the transportation sector to the challenges and opportunities within the maritime and aviation transport sectors respectively, presenters and the wider meeting held wide ranging discussion centred on creating an effective transport mechanism in the Greater Caribbean.

There were also comprehensive discussions on regional solutions for an effective Transport Mechanism in the Greater Caribbean. It was agreed that:

Sharing of best practices and solutions will be a priority.

Increasing public and private sector engagement will be necessary.

Efforts at digitalization and harmonisation would be pursued to increase efficiency.

Capacity building would be undertaken with port workers.

A regional approach to port of entry safety and security protocols will be pursued.

Gaps would continue to be evaluated

More data and statistics will be compiled and shared

The meeting was attended by participants from ACS Member States and Associate Members as well as other regional Organisations including The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Central American Integration System (SICA), Latin American Economic System (SELA), Permanent Secretariat of the General Agreement on Central American Economic Integration (SIECA), Central American Commission on Maritime Transport (COCATRAM), Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Port Management Association of the Caribbean (PMAC), Caribbean Shipping Association (CSA), Central American Corporation of Air Navigation (COCESNA) and American and Caribbean Air Transport Association (ALTA).

Established in 1994, the Association of Caribbean States is an organisation for consultation, cooperation and concerted action in the Greater Caribbean. The ACS coordinates the mandates of its 25 Member States and 10 Associate Members. Its work is focused on, but not limited to disaster risk reduction; sustainable tourism, trade, transport and the protection and preservation of the Caribbean Sea.