

## ACS- SICA meet in El Salvador



Port of Spain (December 18th, 2013) - His Excellency Alfonso Múnera, Secretary General of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), accompanied by ACS Director of Trade Development and External Economic Relations, Alberto Duran and ACS Director of Sustainable Tourism, Julio Orozco, recently participated in meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador and the Central American Integration System (SICA) last week. The meetings, held during the period 9th - 10th December, 2013, also saw ACS senior officials meet with El Salvador's Office for Trade Policy, Ministry of Tourism and facilitate a discussion at the Specialized Institute of Higher Education for Diplomatic Training (IEESFORD) over the two-day period.

Proceedings commenced with meetings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador. The Secretary General of the ACS, alongside ACS Directors of Sustainable Tourism and Trade and External Economic Relations met firstly with Mr. Eduardo Palucho and Mr. Carlos Moreno, Director of Trade Policy of the Ministry of the Economy of El Salvador. Discussed at this meeting were issues relating to custom procedures, bi-lateral trade and FTA's. Secretary General of the ACS delivered a presentation on the ACS in which he also outlined agreements in the following areas: [1] the creation of an SME Training Programme in the Central American Region and the Caribbean, patterning that of the Exporting SME Project of El Salvador and [2] the Handcraft Project of El Salvador (CEDART), sponsored with resources from the Government of Taiwan and the possible extension of which to the rest of the Greater Caribbean region.

Following this meeting, the ACS met with Mr. Ricardo Flores, Director General of Trade Policies and Mr. Walter Alemán, Vice Minister of Tourism of El Salvador, with the ACS reiterating its interest in

having the Ministry of Tourism participate more actively in its developmental strategies in the field. The meeting with Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador, Mr. Juan José Garcia, also saw the ACS express interest in further collaborative effort and participation from El Salvador in the development of the Greater Caribbean region, more specifically in the areas of Trade, Tourism, Environment and Disaster Risk Management. The Vice Minister indicated that it was the host country's intention to support the work of the ACS, expressing his desire to develop closer ties with the Caribbean region.

Further collaborative discussion was held in the meeting with Secretary General of the Central America Integration System. Following presentations from both Secretariats by their respective Secretary Generals, the Secretary General of SICA, His Excellency Mr. Hugo Martinez, voiced interest in establishing a biannual work mechanism, with participation from the Secretariats of SICA, CARICOM and the ACS. The following special interest projects were then presented by Secretary General of the ACS, His Excellency Alfonso Múnera: [1] Natural Disasters Project [2] Project to strengthen Tourism MSE's that provide services and support for Cruise Ships [3] Proposed Business Forum of the Greater Caribbean [4] CA4 Project and [5] TIM Project.

On the second day of meetings in El Salvador, the Secretary General Múnera delivered a presentation at the Specialized Institute of Higher Education for Diplomatic Training (IEESFORD). His Excellency, Alfonso Múnera, addressed the gathering comprising officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the forum entitled: "The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and the challenges and opportunities of the Contemporary International Reality." Also presenting at the discussion was Ambassador Secretary General Carlos Adrian Velasco, Director of Research (IEESFORD).

Overall, the two-day meeting in El Salvador proved to be a successful endeavour for the ACS. Reports from last week's proceedings indicate that the ACS was able to establish contact points on the issues of Trade and Tourism. Additionally, the holding of the meeting among Secretary Generals from SICA, CARICOM and the ACS, scheduled for March 2014, in attempt to further collaborate efforts in regional development and cooperation, promises to be a fruitful venture. SICA has indicated that they will instruct (Secretariat of the Central American Tourism Integration (SITCA) and Centre for the Coordination of the Prevention Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPREDENAC) to work together with the ACS on the Risk Management Project and the Tourism MSME's Project.