

## ACS AND CELAC PRESENT INITIATIVES AT MEETING OF REGIONAL TOURISM AGENCIES



Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago (November 11th 2014) - On November 10th 2014 the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), on behalf of the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States (CELAC), hosted a meeting of Regional Tourism Agencies at its headquarters in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The meeting was themed “Sustainable Tourism: Building Bridges for Co-operation and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean Promoting Community- based Tourism for Diversification and Competitiveness.”

Mrs. Carmen Gil Erazo, Delegate Assigned for National Coordination of Costa Rica in the Embassy of Costa Rica in Trinidad and Tobago, represented CELAC and the Republic of Costa Rica in its capacity as President Pro Tempore of CELAC and Mr. Julio Orozco, Director of Sustainable Tourism of the ACS, presided over the meeting which featured High-Level representatives from Caribbean and Latin American Regional Tourism Agencies including the United Nation’s World Tourism Organization and the Central American Tourism Integration Secretariat.

Mr. Orozco and Mrs. Gil in their opening remarks reinforced the aim of uniting both the ACS and CELAC for the advancement of sustainable tourism, highlighting the importance of promoting Community-Based Tourism for the development of Ethnic, Indigenous and Rural Communities in the countries of the Region. Mrs. Gil further stated that tourism often goes beyond the reach of its own field, explaining that CELAC’s focal areas are closely linked to tourism in the region, among them, poverty eradication, and improvement of environmental conservation, climate change mitigation and disaster risk reduction. She further stressed that tourism is a two-pronged entity as it facilitates the generating of income for the local community as well as the creation of a demand for new, unique and authentic experiences for the tourist.

Having identified areas which hinder growth in the tourism sector including a lack of specific tourism policy, recommendations were made for the implementation of further initiatives and programmes that promote tourism growth through broadening capacities for personal development, peer learning and the further development of courses for capacity building.

The Meeting for Regional Tourism Agencies therefore addressed areas for Regional Cooperation including the development of a Directory of Regional Tourism Organisations of Latin America and the Caribbean, the establishment of heritage routes and the creation of a Network of Community-based Tourism Initiatives of Latin America and the Caribbean to facilitate knowledge-sharing and the exchange of best practices for academic, cultural and tourism purposes.

Moreover, in a discussion of modalities for future collaboration, it was expressed that future meetings will be held to generate interest for the creation of the Network, which will include mapping the status of projects, marketing and outreach to Regional and International Tourism Networks, and forming an action plan to assist with coordination among the partner Agencies.

Representatives from the Republic of Nicaragua, the Republic of Suriname, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Embassy of Argentina were also present for this Meeting.