ACS ends 2022 discussing challenges to regional integration at CELAC-SELA forum



ACS ENDS 2022 DISCUSSING CHALLENGES TO REGIONAL INTEGRATION AT CELAC-SELA FORUM

Represented by the Secretary General, H.E. Rodolfo Sabonge, the Association of Caribbean States, contributed to a robust discussion during the CELAC-SELA Forum under the theme “Responding to the challenges of integration for the development of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)”. Held on December 16th 2022 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the forum assembled experts from leading regional and sub-regional integration mechanisms to identify and explore a roadmap that will contribute to deeper integration while promoting productive development. The Secretary General along with representatives from other key integration mechanisms thoroughly analysed the issue of regional integration and pointed to solutions for evolving the convergence for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The main objectives of this forum was to analyse the challenges of integration of the LAC region, discuss joint support strategies that can be implemented to foster integration and promote cooperation and convergence among regional stakeholders. The forum began with a panel discussion that contextualized the new challenges of integration within the region. Moderated by Ambassador Gustavo Martínez Pandiani, Undersecretary for Latin America and the Caribbean, the panel intended to develop a geostrategic analysis on the importance of addressing the priority challenges facing the region. It focused on value chains challenges, cross-border cooperation and infrastructure for integration, sustainable energy integration and food security.

During the second panel discussion, which was moderated by SELA, H.E. Rodolfo Sabonge explained how the ACS seeks to coordinate actions by implementing projects focused on disaster risk reduction, taking advantage of geo-spatial information and early warning systems, enhancing resilient tourism, and promoting PPPs to address connectivity and logistics issues in the region. The panel sought to identify synergies among the regional subregional integration mechanisms and determine pragmatic recommendations on addressing challenges of integration from a convergence of institutions perspective. H.E. Rodolfo Sabonge joined with representatives from CELAC, SELA, the Republic of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, ALADI, the Andean Community, SICA and MERCOSUR to explore these synergies and recommendations.

H.E. Rodolfo Sabonge took this opportunity to meet with Central American Integration System (SICA), a founding observer of the Association of Caribbean States to discuss the synergistic work programmes of each organization. Coming out of these discussions was drafting of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to deepen the partnership between the two organizations. Within the context of the CELAC-SELA forum and in the spirit of strengthening regional integration, the signing of this MoU is symbolic of the Association’s commitment to adding value to its membership through cooperation, consultation and concerted action. This agreement will facilitate collaborative work on key areas of development such as increasing trade, MSME development, Climate Action to name a few. The renewed partnership among SICA and the ACS exemplifies the discussion the solutions that this forum was intended to stimulate. The future of the region is dependent on regional integration, and the ACS, being mindful of this, anticipates more joint efforts with other regional partners to promote institutional convergence.