The Association of Caribbean States Celebrates 29 Years of Regional Cooperation



Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago - The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) commemorated its 29th anniversary on July 27, 2023. The event took place at the ACS Secretariat in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. It featured H.E. Rodolfo Sabonge, the ACS Secretary General; H.E. Miguel Ceara-Hatton, Minister of the Environment and Natural Resources of the Dominican Republic, Ms. Reita Toussaint, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs; H.E. Dr. Ruben Silie Valdez, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, H.E. Tania Diego Olite, Ambassador of Cuba to Trinidad and Tobago and Head of the Diplomatic Corps; and Professor Winston Dookeran, Secretary General of Euclid University, ACS Social Actor.

In his welcoming remarks, Secretary General Sabonge defined the core purpose of the ACS as “consultation, cooperation and concerted action.” He expressed: “We are a people bound by geography and common historical experiences, continuously facing common struggles and painful realities. However, what makes us stronger is our commitment to creating a regional space that embraces equality, justice, peace, development, tolerance, and solidarity”, referring to the devotion of the ACS Membership.

Reita Toussaint complimented the work of the Secretariat for the past year, which was described as an intense period. “From a regional perspective, we are well on our way to rise above the setbacks that have been levied against us during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through inter-regional cooperation dedication and perseverance, we have emerged stronger and ready to face the challenges that lie ahead of us, it is these issues of regional and global concern for which have been the focus of the hard work of the ACS,” she added.

In her congratulatory remarks, Ambassador Tania Diego referred to the scope of work of the ACS, stressing that out of all the diplomatic missions currently accredited in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, twenty (20), in one way or another, are related to the work carried out by the Association.

The ceremony featured the virtual participation of H.E. Rubén Arturo Silíe Valdez, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic and former Secretary General of the ACS from 2004-2008. He highlighted the ACS's influence in making the Greater Caribbean community aware that it is a single community because of its cultural, political, economic and commercial affinities and how the environment affects its citizens to the same extent.

The Vice-Minister also invited those present to work together to strengthen the Cooperation: "This, the Association of Caribbean States, must make itself felt, must be present, because the voice of the Caribbean must be one voice, as is its sea, that heritage that all Caribbean people have and that we must preserve".

Also participating virtually was the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of the Dominican Republic, H.E. Miguel Ceara-Hatton, who also held the position of Director of Trade and External Economic Relations of the ACS. The Minister emphasised the importance of leveraging the 35 countries and territories that comprise the ACS to strengthen the Greater Caribbean space.

Professor Winston Dookeran described ACS as an Institution solidly placed in the almanac and calendar of global institutions, a Frontier Organization, a Global Institution with the capacity to build resilience in all its deliberations and dialogues. “The last 2-3 difficult years signify the Evolution of the ACS beyond the institutional strength that it has created for itself, into one that can provide comfort and support to the Greater Caribbean in its quest for sustainability and survival”, he added.

He also referred to the recent conference ACS hosted on identification, protection, restoration, and management of the Greater Caribbean beaches, from June 28-30 in Panama, as an example of how ACS has moved on with intensity to build a new platform based on science for development.

Professor Dookeran commended every Member State for sustaining the organisation and Secretary General Sabonge for his pioneering work in a difficult time, developing the building blocks he had inherited and showing the light of what is the real potential of the ACS. He noted that the 29th anniversary is at a turning point where all will begin to see the real rewards of those who had envisioned the organisation in time for action.

The event was attended by representatives of ACS member states, associate members and observers, as well as social actors.