

**PROGRESS REPORT FROM
FEBRUARY TO SEPTEMBER 2015
SPECIAL FUND**

Association of Caribbean States (ACS)

XXVIX MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL OF NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SPECIAL FUND
Port of Spain: October 1, 2015

SPECIAL FUND PROGRESS REPORT **From February to September 2015**

The Special Fund Unit, following the Forum of Observer Countries and Organizations, sent the Project Concept Documents (PCD's) of the initiatives to all the countries that participated in said forum, as well as the ACS Member countries, focusing on having individual meetings with each participant in order to concretize the offers made during the forum.

In this regard, meetings have been held with the following Observer Countries and Institutions: Australia, Japan, South Korea, United Kingdom, India, Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Chile, International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), European Union (EU), SIECA, InterAmerican Development Bank (IBD) and Turkey.

RESULTS OF INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS

- **MEETING WITH TURKEY**

The PCD's of the initiatives were sent to the Embassy of Turkey in Venezuela, who in turn sent them to the Turkish Cooperation Agency in order to evaluate each initiative and to support those that were closest to their priority areas. Based on this, Turkey made a donation of US\$100,000.00 towards the project on Sustainable Management of the Caribbean Sea which was formulated by the Special Fund. Also the government of Turkey presented a proposal for technical cooperation in various areas of interest on account of which the Special Fund prepared a concrete counter-proposal detailing the necessities of the region in various priority areas for the ACS. As a result of this concrete proposal under the theme of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise, the government of Turkey through its support agency in this sector KOSGEB, has presented a proposal to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the ACS for a programme of support to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and to hold a workshop on entrepreneurship topics, dissemination of the culture of entrepreneurship development of new market opportunities, creation of financial instruments and the construction of public-private alliances to emphasize the process of cooperation and integration in the region.

- **MEETING WITH AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER**

We met with Ambassador Ross Tysoe of the Australian High Commission to talk about the Special Fund and sell our initiatives. There was interest in some of them like climate change, the issue of fishing in the context of the Caribbean Sea, support for Micro, Small Medium Enterprises and support for women entrepreneurs. Although it was clear that at this moment their funds are non-existent or limited because the cycle of cooperation goes from 2014 to 2015, and they have already committed their funds, they nevertheless have interest in supporting the ACS in the next cycle. The Unit will continue to follow up on these topics with Australia. Another matter of interest to them is the preservation and protection of the coral reef – we already have the first draft of this initiative – which was already sent to Australia for their final evaluation and consideration.

Australia, for the moment, has channeled its support funds through CARICOM, but nevertheless have said to us that the Memorandum of Understanding with them had ended in 2014 and as such, there are possibilities for the ACS to initiate something concrete with them.

- **MEETING WITH INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (IADB)**

We met with IADB to follow up on the Forum of Observer Countries and Organizations of the ACS and to look for other ways of joining together with the different donor institutions for financing our initiatives. The meeting was positive and they sent us guidelines for a call for proposal so we can apply for funding. On the other hand, they are interested in supporting the Institutional Strengthening of the ACS as a first project and the topic would be reviewed by IADB specialists who were also sent the PCD's and who would indicate their interest in supporting, if not an entire project, they could do specific components. We have asked for another meeting with the IADB in order to follow up and concretize the support offered.

- **MEETING WITH SOUTH KOREA**

We met with Ambassador Wonkun Hwang who informed us that his term was ending soon and that he would send the PCD's to his government to be considered. It would be necessary to restart relations with the new Ambassador for which we have requested a meeting to follow up on the process already initiated by the Special Fund.

- **MEETING WITH CHILE**

We met with the Ambassador of Chile as a follow up to the Forum of Observer Countries and Organizations of the ACS and to discuss the possibility of support to some Special Fund initiatives. Various possibilities were suggested:

- Have workshops on Disaster Risk Reduction which could be carried out at the ACS Secretariat to which end, we requested that the Ambassador send an official letter. Chile is working with CDEMA and CARICOM and the ACS will also be involved and Chile would pay for airline tickets for participants from the Caribbean, meals and hotel stay in Trinidad. They asked if the ACS would support with the room and translation. Again, we requested that Chile send an official letter which they will send in the coming days.
- In the context of the project on Institutional Strengthening under the theme of trade and supporting export and investment agencies, Chile would like to support with internships (this is a component we have in the Trade projects). Here they have asked that we identify which countries are interested in internships.
- Training for Spanish teachers: this is a very new programme about which (in fact) the Ambassador received a communication just days ago about scholarships to bring Spanish professors from the English-speaking Caribbean to Chile to learn new teaching methodologies for the Spanish language. Since this is a topic of great interest to them, the Ambassador is discussing directly to be able to roll out this initiative jointly with the ACS.
- There remain still some themes to discuss and the possibilities that have been opened which will be implemented jointly with the Chilean Cooperation Agency through their embassy in Trinidad and Tobago, but at least there are already concrete things upon which they can begin to work on together.

- **MEETING WITH UNECLAC**

A meeting was held with Mrs. Diane Quarless, Director of UNECLAC in Trinidad who attended the Forum of Observer Countries and Organizations of the ACS as part of the individual visits and follow up of potential donors of funds to finance our initiatives. UNECLAC is very interested in supporting the initiatives which seemed to them to be able to create the greatest impact in the region, nevertheless, the project financing strategy was already committed for the 2014 – 2015 cycle. Still, the new strategy 2016 – 2017 is in the process of being structured and they will consider supporting projects in the cycle. The

Unit will continue following up to concretize financing for some of the initiatives.

- **MEETING WITH THE HIGH COMMISSIONER OF INDIA**

A meeting was held with High Commissioner of India, Ambassador Gauri Shankar Gupta. The projects of the Special Fund were discussed and they are interested in supporting the Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises and the Climate Change projects and the training component of the Institutional Strengthening of the ACS project. The Ambassador asked that the ACS send him a comprehensive summary of the projects which includes the budgets which have already been sent. On the topic of training, as part of the technical cooperation with the Association, the High Commissioner noted that they can provide support to send two to three (2 to 3) persons who work with the Association, to India to be trained in high level courses on subjects which it defined as priorities. As such they can support the capacity building of the ACS in the areas of trade, tourism, accounting and the like. On the other hand, he also noted that once he had the summaries of the PCD's, they will define what other support they could apportion to projects. The meeting was considered very productive and of great potential.

- **MEETING WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION**

A meeting was held with Mr. Luca Pierantoni, Section Chief of Development and Regional Integration of the European Union and although a first meeting, it was sufficiently positive. The European Union is researching the different national, regional and sub-regional organizations with a view to defining with whom they could work, financing projects in the future. They are interested in working with the ACS inasmuch as it is a platform which will allow for major coverage and regional impact for implementation of projects.

As a follow up to the Special Fund having met with the EU, the next steps include the ACS participating in meetings, tentatively in October, with the focus groups formed by the EU and CARIFORUM, in the areas of climate change and regional integration in order to concretize financing through the EU's programmes.

- **MEETING WITH GERMANY**

A meeting was held with Ambassador for Germany Dr. Lutz H. Gorgens, who mentioned that his country had interest in strengthening ties with the ACS. With respect to the Special Fund, Dr. Freudenberg was present during the Forum of Observer Countries and Organizations and we sent them the PCD's of the initiatives presented, as agreed upon. To this effect, they were very clear in mentioning that the

German cooperation agency has worked with CARICOM and the OECS who are Observer members. Recently they donated €10M to CARICOM for projects of regional impact in the areas of protection of coastlines, climate change, renewable energy and private sector promotion. They wish to continue participating as invited guests to ACS events and meetings in order to define the things they are able to accomplish together but at this moment they cannot commit themselves. For the time being, they agreed that the PCD's would be sent to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation in order to obtain support for some of our initiatives and we will continue conversations in order to concretize support for the future.

- **MEETING WITH BRAZIL**

A meeting was held with the Ambassador of Brazil, Mr. Paulo Sergio Traballi Bozzi to follow up on offers of support during the Forum of Observer Countries and Organizations held last year. There were three (3) areas mentioned for this opportunity: support to Micro Small Medium Enterprises, Virtual Archives of the Afro-Caribbean Diaspora and the Carnival Network.

Based on these three (3) areas, they indicated the following:

- SEBRAE (Serviço Brasileiro de Apoio às Micro e Pequenas Empresas) has some possibilities – it was recommended to us that we pay a visit to this institution in Brazil in order to enter into a technical cooperation agreement – and they offered us contact details. Brazil has quite a lot of experience, even more than Mexico, with programmes supporting Micro, Small, médium Enterprises and it was the second country that implemented with great success, the SBDC model and another model called Exporta Fácil (Easy Export).
- Carnival Network: it was mentioned that Brazil is very strong in this area because it is an industry which produces a lot of income for the businesses that work around this event and based on this strength they can contribute a lot in this area in the region.
- Virtual Archives of the Afro-Caribbean Diaspora: it was recommended that a close relationship be established with some universities which have information and books on the topic and could share them. It was agreed that contact details of these institutions be sent to us to consider developing relationships directly with them.

- **MEETING WITH JAPAN**

A meeting was held at the Japanese Embassy with Ambassador Yoshimasa Tezuka who is the CARICOM representative and informed us that historically Japanese Cooperation always worked with CARICOM and have five (5) Japanese Embassies in the region. He seemed interested being able to enter into relationship with the ACS owing to the coverage of countries in the region, considered it important that something be concretized in the future and is interested in being invited to ACS meetings in order to get to know the organization. Ambassador Tezuka agreed that he would study the project profiles and will be in contact with the Secretariat to familiarize himself with respect to the support that they would consider for the future. He also ended his mandate in Trinidad & Tobago and we have asked for a meeting with the new ambassador of Japan to Trinidad and Tobago in order to resume the process of introducing the ACS and the Special Fund.

- **MEETING WITH SIECA (CENTRAL-AMERICAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION SYSTEM)**

The Trade Directorate and the Special Fund Unit travelled to Guatemala in order to hold a technical meeting with the directors of SIECA to develop a work plan together and the areas of interest for SIECA with respect to the Special Fund were focused on two (2) initiatives: the Implementation of the SBDC Model in the Caribbean region and the initiative on Strengthening the Investment and Export Agencies in the Greater Caribbean, topics that address CENPROMPELA and the possibility of searching for funds together in order to implement the model in the region and setting up an Entrepreneurial Forum. A joint work programme was developed with activities for 2015 and 2016.

- **MEETING WITH THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO)**

A meeting was held with the new representative of the ILO in Trinidad and Tobago, Mrs. Claudia Coenjaerts, along with Mrs. Dagmar Walter and Mr. Kelvin Sergeant to whom the PCD's were also sent to evaluate prior to the meeting. The areas of support to rural development, climate change, information on the labour market, job creation and the network of artisans were accommodated by the ILO. They showed interest working jointly with the ACS on the initiatives on implementation of the regional branding, and vocational training. The next step as suggested by the Secretary General, was a technical meeting with the Directors of the priority areas of the ACS in order to

develop a plan of action together and define the initiatives to be supported. This technical meeting will be convened in September.

- At this time we are working jointly with the Sustainable Tourism Directorate in order to present a proposal to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – on the theme of sustainable tourism – Pilot Project of Certification of Destinations in Sustainable Tourism – with the purpose of obtaining funds to finance the pilot project.
- Also the unit is working to present a proposal for financial support to the French Development Agency (AFD) and other potential donors, in order to support the second phase of the Project TVET and the implementation of the regional brand in this specific area.
- The Unit continues working closely with INTERREG so that once its 2014-2020 strategy is approved, the Special Fund can present its projects for potential financial support. It is expected that the strategy will be approved at the end of 2015.