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8th Extraordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council

Conventions Palace, Havana, Cuba

June 3rd 2016

RAPPORTEUR's REPORT

<JAMAICA>

The 8th Extraordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), was held at the Conventions Palace, Havana, Cuba, on June 3rd, 2016.

Seated at the Head Table were His Excellency Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba and Chairman of the Executive Board of the Ministerial Council; as well as His Excellency Abelardo Moreno, Deputy Foreign Minister of Cuba; His Excellency Colin Murdoch, Permanent Secretary of Antigua and Barbuda in his capacity as Vice-Chairman; His Excellency Valdrack Jaentschke, Vice Minister of Nicaragua, in the capacity of Vice Chairman; as well as the Secretary General of the ACS, His Excellency Alfonso Múnera.

The List of Participants detailing delegations from the 25 Member States and 7 Associate Members, is attached as **Annex I** of this report.

OPENING CEREMONY

The *Chairman of the Ministerial Council*, His Excellency Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla inaugurated the meeting and noted the achievements of the Preparatory Meeting in relation to the Declaration and the Draft Plan of Action. He expressed his hopefulness that the afternoon's deliberations will enable consensus on these important instruments. He then gave SG Múnera the floor to make remarks.

The *Secretary General* expressed appreciation to Cuba and the Cuban people for their hospitality, generosity and contribution. As a founding member, he said, Cuba has always been an enthusiastic collaborator and also a front-line partner in the revitalisation of the ACS. He further took the opportunity to express thanks to the Government and people for hosting the Summit. He welcomed the presence of the Foreign Ministers and delegates from Member and Associate Member Countries.

Secretary General Múnera expressed appreciation to the Government of Colombia for offering their candidature in 2012. He also expressed his appreciation to Mexico and to Venezuela as members of the Group of Three.

The Secretary General noted that this was his third Summit, quite a record to attain, which no doubt reflects the conviction and enthusiasm that member states and associates have embraced towards the revitalisation of the ACS.

Further, he added that unity among the people of the Wider Caribbean is needed to address issues which cannot be faced alone, such as the negative impact of climate change. These consequences can be catastrophic and would thus require significant resources. There is a need to convince the world that the Caribbean is a victim of the effects of climate change. Moreover, Cuba proposed projects to lend support to some of these matters, one on coastal erosion, and the other on the repair and cultivation of coral reefs.

I. Adoption of the Agenda

Delegations at this time approved the **Agenda of the Meeting, as well as that of the 7th Summit. These are attached as Annexes II and III.**

II. Report of the Secretary General

Secretary General Múnera indicated that he would provide a summary of his report which had been circulated beforehand, in preparation for these meetings. It is attached hereto for ease of reference as **Annex IV.**

In general, the main goals set four years ago have been achieved. This has been possible through the work of the staff of the Secretariat and the support of its Members, to whom he expressed gratitude. He was also pleased to note that the ordinary budget of the ACS has been expanded after 21 years, with a resulting increase in salaries.

The equipment at the office had been modernized and there were now funds to conduct the Association's business, in contrast with the situation in 2012. Over the period, three posts have been created: Caribbean Sea Commission Coordinator, Special Fund Manager and Human Resource Manager. The working environment both in-house and with members, has certainly improved.

The Secretary General noted that the Association currently has a much better project portfolio than before, including macro Projects from Finland and Mexico, for example, which have been amply reported on. He also mentioned with great satisfaction, the Carnival network which has been established, and will have its third meeting in Barranquilla, Colombia in 2017. He also

emphasized the connectivity advances achieved with the recent flight established between Barbados and Colombia.

The Secretary General did not omit to express thanks to the government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for its support and cooperation as Host Country.

Noting the great value of this Summit to continue strengthening the ACS, Ambassador Múnera concluded that he demits office with a sense of satisfaction, joy and humility because he and his team have fulfilled their duty.

III. Review of the Draft Declaration of Havana

Regarding the considerations of the Draft Declaration, the delegation of Nicaragua took the opportunity to reiterate the severity of climate change and the unique experience of the Caribbean, with its many vulnerabilities and limited role in the creation of this crisis. The delegation continued to suggest the inclusion of some form of recourse for compensation for Caribbean territories in the Draft Declaration.

The delegation of Cuba represented by the Deputy Foreign Minister, Abelardo Moreno, made a statement in order to establish Cuba's national position, irrespective of the decision made at the meeting, which essentially coincides with the views of Nicaragua on the effects of climate change and the need for steps to compensate countries affected by the consequences of a phenomenon they themselves did not create.

Following contributions by the delegations of Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica, Barbados and Jamaica articulating their views on the language and nature of the proposed text, the decision was taken by the Chair to exclude the topic from the Declaration given the lack of consensus, despite the suggested amendments made during the Preparatory Meeting the day before, as well as separate discussions among members. The relevance of the matter to the Caribbean is, however, hereby effectively noted.

The Delegation of Martinique referred to then item 19 of the Declaration on the shipment of dangerous waste through the Caribbean Sea, and reiterated its government's support of the mention of same in Declarations issued by the 1999 and 2005 Summits of the Association. The delegate agreed that in the context of sustainable development, the region's marine resources have to be protected.

Finally, the Draft Declaration was agreed on with suggested amendments made by consensus at the Preparatory Meeting; to be further approved by Heads of State and/or Governments of the Summit.

IV. Review of the Draft Plan of Action of Havana

The Draft Plan of Action along with the suggested changes made by consensus at the Preparatory Meeting and the five (5) Meetings of the Sub-Commission was considered. Members felt that the Plan of Action adequately reflected the objectives of the ACS for the next three years. In particular, the Delegation of Panama was of the view that it covers the challenges facing the region. With reference to transportation, the delegate referred to the inauguration of the expanded Panama Canal and indicated that Panama's expertise can be useful to make the objectives of the plan of action a reality.

Similarly, the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda expressed its full endorsement and support of the Plan, taking special note of the 1st symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission and looking forward to seeing its recommendations implemented. ACS work in air and maritime connectivity is important and welcome, especially as Antigua moves to improve its port infrastructure.

The Secretary General stated that the two projects proposed by Cuba to be undertaken by the ACS had been circulated. Some funding had already been sought to commence the preservation of beaches, and there was a possibility of receiving support from CAF and South Korea for coral conservation. Both projects will contribute to the scheme to tackle climate change which was one of the actions proposed by the Caribbean Sea Commission. The initiative was welcomed by the delegates present.

The Plan of Action was subsequently approved, with an amendment to include the generous offer by the Government of the Dominican Republic in the person of its Foreign Minister, to host the 2nd Symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission.

V. Exchange on the proposals to follow up on the process of revitalization of the work of the ACS

The Secretary General then outlined, as was previously done at the Preparatory Meeting, his practical suggestions on the follow-up of the process of the revitalization of the ACS. These are attached as Annex IV, previously mentioned.

VI. Election of the Secretary General of the Association

The Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belize provided delegates with an outline of the career of Her Excellency Ambassador Dr. June Soomer, candidate for the post of ACS Secretary

General. Additionally, the Head of delegation of Saint Lucia expressed his delight at Ambassador Dr. Soomer's nomination, as well as his confidence that her tenure will advance the work done by Ambassador Múnera.

Without issue or objection, the Chairman conveyed the approval of the election of Ambassador Dr. June Soomer as the 6th Secretary General of the ACS.

VII. Election of a High Level Official to the Secretariat of the Association

The Chairman also recognized the proposal by Mexico on behalf of the Group of Three, for the appointment of a high level official to the Secretariat, and there being no objection, conveyed the approval of the appointment of Mr. Arturo López Portillo as Director of Transport and Disaster Risk Reduction.

The meeting expressed its appreciation to out-going Director George Nicholson for his work at the helm of this important unit, during the last three (3) years.

VIII. Participation of Saint Martin as an Associate Member in its own right

The Chairman asked the meeting to consider the admission of St. Martin as an associate in their own right and turned the floor over to France for comment.

The Delegate of France thanked the Chairman, and expressed appreciation on behalf of her government to the Secretary General, as well as Member States for their support for the request of the adhesion of Saint Martin. The Ambassador then introduced Her Excellency Mme. Aline Hanson, President of the Collectivity of Saint Martin who took the floor. The President stated that this development expresses the wish of the people of Saint Martin to participate and make its contribution to the progress of the Greater Caribbean. She thanked the Secretary General and his team for their efforts. (President Hanson's Remarks are appended hereto as Annex V).

The Meeting approved the admission of Saint-Martin as Associate Member in its own right, with Guadeloupe stating that while it is not always easy to occupy a seat being a part of both France and Europe, the territories are now empowered to take decisions to contribute to the Greater Caribbean.

The Delegation of Sint Maarten also thanked the Chair and welcomed its neighbour, Saint-Martin, to the fold, stating that they are unique in the Caribbean and in the world, given that they share 37 sq. miles of land, being one country both French and Dutch.

IX. Analysis of the proposals of new observers to the ACS

Further to the Secretariat's circulation of requests received, their due endorsements by members, as well as their consideration by the Preparatory Meeting the previous day, applications for Observer Status by Kazakhstan, Bolivia, Uruguay and ALBA-TCP, were approved.

X. Approval of Ministerial Agreements and Special Communiqués

The meeting then proceeded to approve all Ministerial Agreements, Nos.13-19/16, which endorsed the matters of the designations of New Secretary General; New Director for Transport and Disaster Risk Reduction; the Admission of Saint-Martin as Associate Member in its own right; as well as the Admission of the aforementioned as Observer Countries and Organizations respectively.

Also approved, was the special Communiqué presented by the delegations of Mexico during the Preparatory Meeting, as an expression of appreciation and congratulations to the Secretary General for his excellent work.

Further to this, the delegation of Venezuela proposed a special draft Communiqué indicating their proposal for a National Dialogue in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which encouraged contributions by several member states. Ultimately, after several minutes of consideration, a text was approved by the delegations.

The aforementioned were all circulated by the Secretariat as part of the Summit documents, and are available upon request.

XI. Other Matters

The representative of newly accepted Observer State, Bolivia, offered a brief intervention expressing on behalf of his country, his great satisfaction with Bolivia's inclusion to ACS Membership, and the opportunity to participate in this hemispheric dialogue.

XII. Closing Session

After noting the many achievements of the Meeting, Ambassador Múnera proceeded to acknowledge the work of chairmanships of the Ministerial Council during his term in office: Panamá, Mexico, Guatemala, Haiti and Cuba, and thanked them for the supportiveness offered during their respective tenures.

The Secretary General thanked all for a successful session, expressing his belief that the Association has been greatly strengthened throughout the past four years.

The Chairman then reiterated his affections and appreciation for the Secretary General and his work, before officially closing the meeting.