

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

**ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES
26TH SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MEETING**

REMARKS

**SENATOR THE HONOURABLE GERALD HADEED
MINISTER OF TOURISM**

Date: Wednesday July 22, 2015

Venue: Headquarters of the Association of Caribbean States, Sweet Briar Road, St. Clair

Time: 9.00am

- Secretary General of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) His Excellency Ambassador Alfonso Múnera
 - Ms. Maruja Acevedo Orellana, Vice Minister of the Guatemalan Tourism Institute, Chair of the Special Committee for Sustainable Tourism
 - The Honourable Jeanne Rogers-Vanterpool, Territorial Councillor and Minister of the Tourist Office of Saint-Martin
 - Vice-Ministers of Tourism and Directors of Tourism of ACS Member and Associate Member States
 - Ambassadors, Permanent Representatives and other Country Representatives of ACS Member and Associate Member States, and Observer countries
 - Director of Sustainable Tourism, ACS, Senor Julio Orozco
 - Representatives of the Regional Council of Martinique in the capacity as project partner and chef-de-fil of the Regional Cooperation Mechanism of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean Project
 - Representatives of Regional and International Organisations
 - Permanent Secretary, Deputy Permanent Secretary and members of staff of the Ministry of Tourism
 - Meeting Delegates
 - Members of the Media
-

It is not without some measure of excitement that I stand before you this morning. The current state of Caribbean tourism is really quite sound; what with a record 26.3 million visitors coming to enjoy the Caribbean's un-equalled and diverse experiences in 2014 and

spending a record 29.2 billion US dollars. Indeed, the arrivals represented a 5.3% increase from 2013.

Indeed, the Caribbean region out-performed the rest of the world, recording a growth rate of 4.7%, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation.

Trinidad and Tobago's tourism industry itself has also shown a measure of growth. Our most recent arrivals statistics show that for the first six (6) months of 2015 there has been a nine (9) per cent increase in visitor arrivals over 2014 (*here I am specifically referring to January to June – from 203,000 visitors to 222,000 according to the Immigration Division records*).

This 26th Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism of the Association of Caribbean States is, therefore, occurring at an opportune time. In addition, your classic approach of collaboration and mutual respect underpins the exchange of ideas and learnings to resolve common challenges and harness industry potential; formulate relevant programs for development; and agree on major modalities towards a robust and agile regional tourism industry over the long term.

I have noted with interest, some of the challenges that continue to face the tourism industry presently, such as strategic human resource capacity building, the creation of sustainable tourism zones, multi destination tourism, and initiatives in area of sustainable tourism development, all issues that require a collective regional approach.

The Trinidad and Tobago government is pleased to be the host country for the Association of the Caribbean States. I would like to assure His Excellency Mr. Alfonso Múnera, the Secretary General of the ACS, of my government's active support of and commitment to the work of the Association, as it seeks to strength the collaborative network between its member and associate states.

We are very interested in working with the ACS on all its initiatives that will lead to strengthening the economic integration and the deepening of regional cooperation. We salute the organisation on its pioneering work in bringing together and providing a platform for better understanding between the peoples and Governments of Latin America and CARICOM.

Moreover, Trinidad and Tobago is endeavouring to enhance its presence and play our part in the ACS' discussions and work programmes. Our government recognises the critical importance of tourism to the national public purse, our economic diversification effort and to sustainable employment levels. We are investing the capital, people and time to ensuring the viability of our tourism industry.

We are also committed to placing Trinidad and Tobago on the path of sustainable tourism development. In this regard, we see regional collaboration and bodies, such as the Association of Caribbean States, as key to the development of our tourism industry.

Trinidad and Tobago has always been, and will continue to be, a believer and supporter of regional integration. Trinidad and Tobago will continue to support all efforts at strengthening country network linkages and collaboration with ACS member and associate states.

On behalf of the Government and people of this country, I welcome all the visiting Ministers of Tourism and other tourism professionals to the twin island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Our island has been blessed with beautiful natural attractions and a rich array of cultural and artistic traditions.

In this regard, may I formally extend the invitation to the Cocktail Reception later on this evening where you will have an opportunity to enjoy just a slice of the beautiful multi-ethnic cultural diversity that is Trinidad and Tobago.

I wish all the delegates a successful meeting, as our line of sight remains ever steady on sustainable tourism development as a vehicle to enable economic expansion, while preserving our unique and diverse natural and cultural heritage.

In closing, I recognise and applaud the commitment of all ACS member and associate states in continuing to forge strategic partnerships, and in strengthening and deepening the linkages that already exist. The end result will be to make the Caribbean region's

tourism industry the truly sustainable, cost competitive enterprise that it has the tremendous potential to be.

May I also take the opportunity to recognise the dedication and hard work of the Senor Julio Orozco and his staff, in organising this meeting; we are indeed appreciative of this work.

And I thank you for your attention, ladies and gentlemen.

July 21, 2015