

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ZONE OF THE CARIBBEAN

We, the Ministers, Secretaries and Heads of Departments responsible for Foreign Affairs of the States, Countries and Territories of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS);

DETERMINED to consolidate and strengthen the process of regional co-operation and integration with the aim of contributing to the future economic, social and cultural development of our peoples and fulfilling the mandates emanating from the Second Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the ACS, held in Havana, Cuba on December 13, 1996, regarding the establishment of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean;

TAKING into consideration the goals that led to the establishment of the ACS in the city of Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, on July 24, 1994;

BEARING in mind the Plan of Action on Tourism, Trade and Transport adopted at the First Summit of Heads of State and/or Government and Representatives of the ACS, held in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on August 18, 1995;

REAFFIRMING the commitment made in the Declaration of Santo Domingo on the occasion of the Second Summit of Heads of State and/or Government of the ACS, held in the city of Santo Domingo on April 17, 1999;

RECOGNISING that the tourism industry depends heavily on the environment and that the quality, competitiveness and sustainability of this sector are intrinsically linked to the preservation of the natural and cultural environment of the Caribbean;

AWARE of the need to strengthen existing co-operation ties in the Caribbean region, as well as to encourage tourism among the Member States and Associate Members of the Association, and of the importance of taking measures to preserve the environment;

CONSIDERING that tourism is one of the key sectors for fostering the development of the Member States and Associate Members, and is a strategic industry operating in a highly competitive global environment ;

Have agreed on the following:

- I. To formalise, by virtue of this Memorandum of Understanding among the States, Countries and Territories of the ACS, the creation of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean and to collaborate with the Association's other Special Committees and Technical Groups and the international and specialised agencies involved in the areas outlined in this Memorandum of Understanding.
- II. The Signatories, recognising the importance of tourism to the Caribbean region, agree to execute the Immediate Plan of Action containing strategies which, when implemented, will lead to the establishment of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean.
- III. The Immediate Plan of Action will comprise the following strategies:

1. Culture and Identity - Develop projects to research, popularise, preserve and disseminate the culture of the Caribbean as a means of helping to strengthen Caribbean identity and preserve the cultural values which are likely to strengthen the image of the region as a tourist destination;
2. Community participation - Establish mechanisms for promoting community participation in decision-making, planning, development and the benefits derived from tourism, thereby improving, at the same time, the infrastructure and basic services of tourist destinations;
3. The Environment - Design research and development programmes and projects to promote the preservation, conservation, utilisation and sustainable management of natural areas for purposes of tourism development;
4. Technology for sustainability - Use of the best technologies available for the management of waste water, drainage systems and solid waste, the use of alternative sources of energy and processes to prevent pollution.
5. Economic policies and instruments - Foster the development of economic and financial policies and instruments which facilitate the development of sustainable tourism enterprises;
6. The Tourism Market. Encourage the implementation of specific strategies and plans of action with a view to facilitating: the development of tourism products, increased value added to the tourism product of the Caribbean, and increased demand in the region;
7. Education - Develop programmes to educate, train and sensitise people with respect to sustainable tourism, which would help to improve the quality of life of communities, as well as the provision of tourism-related services and the level of tourism awareness of service providers and tourists alike;
8. Legal Framework - Develop, refine, sign and ratify the legal and regulatory frameworks enabling the establishment of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean;
9. Sustainability Indicators - Foster the establishment of sustainability indicators, as well as systems for classifying both businesses and tourist attractions, which would enable consumers to have a guarantee of environmental quality, in the medium and long terms;
10. Air and sea transport - Promote the development of inter-regional air and sea transport systems to facilitate the movement of tourists;
11. Coordination with the private sector - Promote concerted action with the private sector in the areas of developmental organisation and planning, so as to consolidate the development of sustainable tourism in the Caribbean region;
12. Information Centre - Promote the establishment of an Information Centre on the Development of Sustainable Tourism, which will be accessible to all ACS Member States and Associate Members. In this regard, governments agree to provide the necessary information for the creation of the Centre's database.

IV. This Memorandum of Understanding shall enter into force on the date of signature, except for the States, Countries and Territories that sign subject to ratification. The instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Government of the Republic of Colombia.

Signed in the city of Santo Domingo de Guzmán, Dominican Republic, on April 17, nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, in one original, in Spanish, English and French, all equally valid, which will be deposited with the Government of the Republic of Colombia, the depository country of the Convention Establishing the Association of Caribbean States.