

**OPENING REMARKS DELIVERED BY
THE HONOURABLE SEAN SOBERS M.P., MINISTER OF
FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO,
AT THE 28TH INTER-SESSIONAL PREPARATORY
MEETING FOR THE 31ST ORDINARY MEETING OF THE
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF
CARIBBEAN STATES
VIRTUAL MEETING - 12 JANUARY 2026**

It is my distinct pleasure to address this 28th Inter-sessional Preparatory Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), as we lay the groundwork for the 31st Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council.

At the outset, allow me, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, to extend warm wishes to all Member States, Associate Members and the Secretariat of the ACS, for a happy and productive New Year. We look forward to continued cooperation as we advance our shared priorities in the year ahead.

As Host Country to the ACS, Trinidad and Tobago attaches great importance to the effective functioning of this organization and to its continued relevance in responding to the evolving needs of the Greater Caribbean. We remain committed to supporting the Secretariat and Member States in strengthening the ACS as a platform for consultation, cooperation and concerted action.

Effective stewardship of the Ministerial Council is essential to the efficient functioning of this organization. It is therefore fitting to

acknowledge those who have guided the Council's work during this period.

Trinidad and Tobago extends appreciation to the Republic of Panama and in particular, His Excellency Javier Martínez Acha-Vásquez, Minister of Foreign Affairs, for Panama's stewardship as Chair of the Ministerial Council. Your Excellency, we look forward to your reflections and to engaging further on the Report of the work undertaken under your Chairmanship.

Trinidad and Tobago also acknowledges, Her Excellency Noemí Espinoza Madrid, Secretary-General of the ACS, and we express our appreciation for her leadership and dedication. We welcome the presentation of the Report of the Secretary-General, on the progress achieved, challenges encountered and opportunities for deepening cooperation across the priority areas of the ACS.

Further, we commend the Secretariat for its continued efforts to implement the mandates entrusted to it by Member States, in increasingly complex regional and global dynamics.

This Inter-sessional Preparatory Meeting serves a critical role in preparing us for a focused and productive Ministerial Council. In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the work undertaken by the Special Committees in reviewing and advancing the various Reports and proposals before us.

As we prepare for the 31st Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council, it is timely to reflect on the broader context in which the ACS

operates. Our region faces interconnected economic, environmental and structural challenges, including transport and connectivity vulnerabilities, the impacts of climate change and natural disasters, pressures on sustainable tourism and the importance of deepening trade and cooperation to strengthen regional resilience.

As we consider the work programme and priorities leading into the next Ministerial Council, Trinidad and Tobago encourages continued emphasis on implementation and measurable outcomes. Aligning our activities with available resources, strengthening partnerships with international and regional institutions and ensuring coherence with national development priorities will be central to sustaining momentum and delivering tangible benefits to our peoples.

In closing, Trinidad and Tobago looks forward to constructive and focused engagement during this Inter-sessional Preparatory Meeting, as we prepare for a successful 31st Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council.

As Host Country, we remain committed to working closely with the Secretariat and Member States to ensure that the ACS continues to deliver meaningful outcomes and remains responsive to the priorities of the region.

Thank you.