

# *Association of Caribbean States Leaders to Gather in Cuba to Discuss Regional Challenges*

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Havana, May 25 (RHC-Xinhua) -- Leaders attending the VII Summit of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) will discuss the region's challenges and threats to its peace and stability, a top foreign ministry official said on Tuesday.

The summit to be held on June 4 in Havana would contribute to revitalizing cooperation and concerted action mechanisms within the bloc, said Manuel Aguilera, director general for Latin America and Caribbean Affairs at Cuba's Foreign Ministry.

"We cannot remain indifferent to actual attacks against left-leaning governments in Latin America and the Caribbean. That is an issue Cuba will raise at the summit," Aguilera said at a press conference.

The Cuban diplomat confirmed the participation of 16 presidents and heads of state at the meeting, including Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro, Colombia's Juan Manuel Santos, Panama's Juan Carlos Varela, Costa Rica's Luis Guillermo Solis, and Cuba's Raul Castro.

"The participation of high-level delegations will allow the ACS to adopt important decisions for the future of the area and embark on new regional cooperation projects," he added.

Aguilera said prior to the summit, technical teams and foreign ministers will meet to review the achievements of the ACS over the past two years since its last meeting in Mexico.

The summit is expected to approve the Havana Declaration, regarding various issues of importance for the organization as well as lay out a plan of action for the next two years.

"We will work to include important topics in our agenda such as regional sustainable tourism, transportation, economic cooperation and the challenges of climate change," he stated.

A new secretary-general will also be elected to replace Colombian Alfonso Munera, who has headed the organization since April 2012.

The ACS was created in July 1994 with the aim of promoting consultation, cooperation and concerted action among Caribbean countries. It currently comprises 25 full member economies and three associate member economies.

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