



COMMUNIQUE

57th MEETING OF THE OECS AUTHORITY

Sandals Grande Resort, Dickenson's Bay, St. John, Antigua and Barbuda

June 2 – 4, 2013

INTRODUCTION

The Fifty-Seventh Meeting of the OECS Authority was convened at Sandals Grande Hotel in Antigua over the period June 2 – 4, 2013 under the incoming Chairman Honourable Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda. With the exception of the British Virgin Islands, all Member States were in attendance and representation of Heads of Government included the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Also in attendance were the Deputy Chief Minister of Anguilla, the Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) and the Secretary General of the Caribbean Community.

In the main, the Meeting focused on:

- (a) The OECS Development Strategy
- (b) The Role of the Private Sector in Supporting the Growth and Development Agenda of the OECS
- (c) Update on the OECS Economic Union
- (d) The Economic Affairs Council
- (e) The OECS Assembly and its Development
- (f) Oceans Governance Policy and Framework
- (g) The OECS Work Programme and Budget
- (h) Sustainable Financing of the OECS
- (i) OECS Accession to the Advisory Centre on the WTO Law
- (j) The Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court

THE OECS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

OECS Heads of Government received a presentation on the draft OECS Development Strategy which focused on the regional developmental thrust for Tourism, Agriculture, Manufacturing, Construction, ICT, Trade Policy and Trade Facilitation, Transportation, Health, Education, Social Development, Energy, Climate Change, Ocean Governance

and the Environment. Heads noted the broad consultative process which was employed (involving Commissioners and various high level national officials) to integrate the relevant inputs on the priority sectoral issues and commended the work of the OECS Secretariat in this regard.

Heads of Government agreed to the further development and refinement of the draft document, and also mandated the Commission to proceed with the development of an Action Plan for implementation. The final Development Strategy and the related Action Plan are to be presented for approval at a Retreat of OECS Heads of Government which is proposed to be held in late August 2013.

PARTNERSHIP FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR

OECS Heads of Government engaged in discussions with representatives from the OECS Private Sector and the Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL) on priority development issues for the advancement of the growth and development agenda of the region. The priority development issues include the OECS Financial System, Harmonization and Upgrading of Legislation and Border Control, Shipping (Freight and Passengers), Alternative Energy Sources with a focus on Renewable Energy, and Labour issues related to the OECS Economic Union.

The OECS Heads of Government underscored the critical role of the Private Sector and the Labour Movement in transforming OECS economies and agreed on the urgent need for strengthening the capacity of the Private Sector through continuous sharing of information on the progress made on the Economic Union Work Programme and effective representation at key national and regional forums. Heads of Government agreed that the OECS private sector should proceed with the formalization and operationalization of an OECS Business Forum/Council, and also agreed that the labour movements should formalize and operationalize a similar regional entity.

OECS Heads of Government directed Commissioners within Member States to have regular encounters with the Private sector and the Labour Movement at the national level. Additionally, OECS Heads of Government further instructed the OECS Secretariat to facilitate the coordination of regional initiatives to advance the development of private and labour organisations at the regional level.

UPDATE ON OECS ECONOMIC UNION ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

OECS Heads of Government welcomed the fact that all of the independent OECS Member States ratified the Revised Treaty and have enacted it into domestic law. Heads also welcomed the action by Montserrat in finalizing its accession to the Revised Treaty of Basseterre Establishing the Economic Union and its depositing of the instruments of Ratification and Accession.

The Heads of Government further received an update on specific issues related to the implementation of the Economic Union inclusive of initiatives related to:

- (a) The harmonization of border management systems and procedures
- (b) The development of the free movement regime for OECS citizens in conjunction with the Common Tourism Policy relating to travel facilitation and movement of non-OECS travelers
- (c) The companies legislation of OECS Member States
- (d) Aliens land holding licensing arrangements
- (e) Harmonization of labour legislation in the OECS
- (f) Continued collaboration with the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank on implementation of the programme for the creation of the ECCU single financial space
- (g) Customs reform
- (h) Trade in goods

OECS Heads of Government noted the significant legislative work which is required to advance Trade Policy initiatives which the OECS is engaged in; including the free circulation of goods, trade facilitation and trade agreements. Heads of Government noted that Member States have commenced preparations for the upcoming Trade Policy Review of the OECS Member States and the OECS grouping at the WTO scheduled for June 2014.

THE ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

OECS Heads of Government welcomed the finalization of the process for the operationalisation of the Economic Affairs Council with the submission by the Member States of the names of their representatives to serve on the OECS Economic Affairs Council (EAC). Heads of the Government noted that the convening of the inaugural meeting will signal the operationalization of the final Organ of the Organisation.

Heads of Government directed that the inaugural meeting of the EAC be held in late July 2013 to address, inter alia: the OECS Development Strategy; Mid-Term Review of CARIFORUM/EU Economic Partnership Agreement; CARICOM/Canada bilateral trade agreement; and major current regional projects in ICT, Education, Climate Change and Trade and Regional Integration.

THE OECS ASSEMBLY AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

The OECS Heads of Government provided directions for the enhanced functioning of the OECS Assembly to carry out its Treaty mandate.

Heads of Government agreed to the convening of the Second Sitting of the Assembly before the end of 2013 to debate the OECS 8-Point Stabilization and Growth Plan in the context of the region's growth and development agenda. The 8 Point Stabilization Plan was developed by the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank to provide a framework for managing the response of the OECS to the global economic crisis.

OCEANS POLICY AND GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

OECS Heads of Government approved the Eastern Caribbean Regional Oceans Policy and the three (3) year Strategic Plan which provide the framework for enhanced coordination and management of ocean resources inclusive of maritime boundaries delimitation. Heads of Government reiterated the agreement that Member States will act collectively on matters related to Oceans Governance; in particular maritime boundaries delimitation.

Heads of Government mandated the OECS Secretariat to mobilize resources and to seek all possible assistance for the implementation of the Eastern Caribbean Regional Oceans Policy and three-year Strategic Action Plan.

THE OECS WORK PROGRAMME AND BUDGET

Heads of Government approved the Secretariat's Annual Work Programme and Budget for the period July 2013 – June 2014.

SUSTAINABLE FINANCING OF THE OECS

Heads of Government agreed to hold in-depth discussions on this matter at the upcoming Retreat which is tentatively scheduled for August 2013.

OECS ACCESSION TO THE ADVISORY CENTRE ON WTO LAW (ACWL)

The OECS Heads of Government considered and endorsed the proposal for OECS Member States to become members of the Advisory Center on the WTO Law (ACWL) given the potential for accessing legal counsel at affordable costs to protect the economic interest of Member States at the WTO.

Heads of Government agreed that the OECS Geneva Mission will negotiate with the ACWL on behalf of the Member States to secure the optimal arrangements for their membership to ACWL.

THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN SUPREME COURT

The OECS Heads of Government took the opportunity to welcome the newly appointed Chief Justice of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (ECSC), Dame Janice Pereira.

Heads received an update on the Halls of Justice Project and also approved the work programme and budget of the ECSC for the fiscal year 2013 – 2014.

However, Heads of Government expressed their concern in respect of the apparent delays by coroners in undertaking inquest and underscored the need for the Organisation to improve in this regard.

CUBA

The OECS Heads of Government expressed great concern on the retention of Cuba on the list of “State Sponsors of Terrorism” issued by the United States Government. Heads of Government were of the view that there was no justification for this action and reiterated their solidarity with Cuba, as well as their appreciation for the continued beneficial relations between Cuba and OECS Member States.

OECS CANDIDATURES

OECS Heads of Government announced their intention to advance OECS candidates for leadership in international organizations such as the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Commonwealth Secretariat, and to work towards securing a position on the UN Security Council among others.

REPARATIONS

Heads of Government agreed that the OECS would raise the matter of reparations at the upcoming CARICOM Heads of Government and also agreed to propose the establishment of a Caribbean-wide Committee on Reparations to address the issue of native genocide and slavery.

Heads 58TH MEETING OF OECS AUTHORITY

The 58th Meeting of the Authority will be convened under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Honourable Baldwin Spencer on November 27 – 28, 2013 in Montserrat.