

**REMARKS AT OPENING OF 59<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE OECS  
AUTHORITY BY DIRECTOR GENERAL DR. DIDACUS JULES 26  
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It was President Obama's Advisor Axelrod who famously said that a crisis is too good an opportunity to waste. And we who are trapped in the lengthening shadows of the global crisis can simply not allow the enveloping gloom to infect our spirit nor dim the apprehension of our possibilities.

The Revised Treaty of Basseterre conceptualized and signed by many of our leaders who are here today represents the reinstatement of the vision of a deeper and more profound unity of these smaller islands. In many ways this Treaty and the forms of integration that it mandates is in itself an accomplishment because it emanates from the recognition that the ultimate defense of our sovereignty lies in the collective expression of a singular will.

This leadership of the OECS has faced and survived a crushing concatenation of crises: the global economic crisis, our own financial meltdown in the CLICO collapse, and other threats. We have stared into the heart of catastrophe but we have reasserted our resilience.

As difficult as these challenges have been, they also represent a remarkable alignment of historical opportunity and our leaders gathered here have reiterated their consensus that challenges of this magnitude cannot be successfully resolved by piecemeal or patchwork solutions. We have before us the opportunity to shape solutions that are bigger and bolder than what could have been conceptualized before.

Leon and Smith (2011) have laid out in stark detail the scope of the historical opportunity:

“For Caribbean economies to realize **growth with equity**, we have to **reframe our thinking** about growth, and we must **recalibrate our socio-political-economic strategies** in the context of global competitiveness. A holistic approach to growth requires strong policies for **macroeconomic stability**, a proactive effort to foster **competitiveness against global partners**, a **social agenda** that can be communicated and received as reasonably fair, if not equitable, and a governance structure to engender **trust and respect for authority**. The imperative to act is urgent; the question is do governments and the people of the region have the will to see this through in a timely manner?”

We must therefore be bold and transformational and I offer three principles to guide our deliberations in this crucial moment.

1. Convergence - because duplication can no longer be afforded; because a unity of will and action is the glue that will strengthen our defences
2. Vision priorities - because times are tough, and we must focus on the essential few rather than the necessary many. The identification and picking of low hanging integration fruit is essential to improving the appetite of the people of the region for deeper and wider initiatives
3. A sense of urgency - because opportunity is a time sensitive commodity which, if not seized in the moment at which it presents itself, evaporates.

With a more convergent range of interests, the OECS is well placed to invigorate the regional integration movement and the Commission is undertaking its own process of organizational change to better respond to that historical challenge and to serve the Authority. Stronger, wider and tighter unity is not just possible but necessary.