



COMMUNIQUE

62nd MEETING OF THE OECS AUTHORITY

Presidential State House, Roseau

The Commonwealth of Dominica

November 18 – 19, 2015

The Sixty-Second Meeting of the OECS Authority was convened at Presidential State House, Roseau, The Commonwealth of Dominica, under the Chairmanship of Dr. the Rt. Hon Keith Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada over the period November 18 – 19 November 2015.

All Member States with the exception of Anguilla were represented. The Regional Council of Martinique was also present. Also in attendance were the Director General of the OECS, the Secretary General of the Caribbean Community, The Director General of the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority and a representative from the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank.

The meeting was preceded by an opening ceremony, which was attended by His Excellency Charles Angelo Savarin D.A.H, President of the Commonwealth of Dominica and Mrs. Savarin and the Speaker of the House, Justices of the High Court, Parliamentarians, and distinguished guests.

In the main, the Meeting focused on, inter alia:

- (a) Arrangements for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission
- (b) ICT Strategy for the Economic Union
- (c) Health Development Agenda
- (d) Financial Services Sector
- (e) Expansion of the Membership of the OECS
- (f) Freedom of Movement of Persons
- (g) Climate Change and Environmental Management
- (h) Assembly Matters

The Authority noted the tremendous progress being achieved by the Economic Union and reaffirmed their strong commitment to The Revised Treaty of Basseterre and the establishment of the Protocol as being extremely relevant to the economic, social and political advancement of the OECS.

The Authority expressed their support for Dominica after the passage of Tropical Storm Erika and applauded the leadership of the Government of Dominica in the reconstruction efforts. Further, The Authority reiterated the continuing support for Dominica's reconstruction efforts and called on the international community to assist in providing critical support for Dominica's rebuilding efforts.

The Authority agreed that the lessons from the devastation wrought by tropical storm Erika in Dominica, has served as a wake-up call to the dangers of Climate Change and mandated the Commission to pursue initiatives aimed at further strengthening the OECS disaster response and post recovery mechanisms.

Heads of Government (HOG) expressed their profound condolences to the government and people of France for the brutal attacks on Paris which claimed the lives of so many innocent people. OECS Heads affirmed their solidarity with the Government and people of the French Republic.

(a) Arrangements for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission

To enable the OECS Commission to fulfill its strategic priorities under the Revised Treaty of Basseterre, The Authority approved a proposed organizational re-structure which includes the establishment of a new Health Unit. Heads agreed to the proposed budget and work-plan until the period June 30, 2016 and reconfirmed their commitment to measures for financial sustainability of the Commission.

Heads reaffirmed their Treaty commitment to more closely coordinate positions in foreign policy and further agreed to rationalize Foreign and Diplomatic mission as a matter of urgency. The Authority mandated a meeting of OECS Foreign Ministers at the earliest opportunity to advance these and other issues critical to the deepening of the OECS Economic Union.

Heads agreed to give effect to the decision adopted at the 60th meeting of the Authority to provide for the automatic financing of the Economic Union including the Pharmaceutical Procurement Services (PPS) as well as key integration projects such as CARICOM IMPACS.

(b) ICT Strategy for the Economic Union

The Authority noted the tremendous progress being recorded by the OECS in developing an ICT strategy for the Economic Union. HOGs expressed satisfaction at the Economic Union membership of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and their collaboration with the Service Research and Innovation Institute (SRII) in advancing key aspects of information and telecommunications in the

sub-region. Heads continued to coalesce around a vision of high quality and affordable broadband services throughout the region.

(c) Health Development Agenda

The Authority acknowledged that a healthy population is inextricably linked to Member State economic prosperity. Under this precondition, The Authority noted the work and progress made in the areas of Health during the Ebola crisis, execution of various HIV/AIDS projects and the operations of the Pharmaceutical Procurement Service (PPS).

In particular the Authority noted the continued success the PPS continues to make in centrally procuring pharmaceuticals and other medical supplies while leveraging substantial group discounts for all Member States. The Authority noted the challenges in the present fiscal climate of ensuring the PPS remains sustainable and responsive to the needs of all citizens. The Authority committed to continuing allocating appropriate resources toward the financing of the PPS and exploring options for the financial sustainability of the Health Sector as a whole. The Authority noted that select Member States have been pursuing National Health Insurance options.

(d) Financial Services Sector

Heads agreed to the establishment of the Financial Services Task Force which is a technical body chaired by the BVI but involving top experts from OECS Member States as well as persons from the OECS and ECCB and the Association of Indigenous Banks. The Task Force will monitor the landscape of financial services, to review compliance with international requirements, to advise the OECS Authority on proactive measures for the protection of our financial services sector and will offer support to the CARICOM Ministerial sub-committee on financial services.

(e) Expansion of the Membership of the OECS

The Authority noted the progress of negotiations leading to the possible accession of Guadeloupe and St. Martin to associate membership of the OECS. The Authority endorsed an Action Programme presented by Martinique, which included inter alia, initiatives in areas of Health Care, Climate Change and Disaster Response and Mitigation, Transportation, Trade, and Youth Exchange Programmes for deeper integration into the OECS.

(f) Freedom of Movement of Persons

Heads emphasized the imperative of expanding rights pertaining to Economic Union membership consistent with the revised Treaty of Basseterre. In this context, Heads noted the progress made on the policy pertaining to the rights contingent to the free movement of persons.

(g) Climate Change and Environmental Management

The Authority affirmed their commitment to climate change talks within the framework of COP 21. Heads agreed that the OECS, within the framework of CARICOM would intervene through CARICOM Spokesperson, The Prime Minister of Barbados, The Hon. Friendell Stuart and the Lead of Sustainable Development, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Dr. the Hon Kenny Anthony in order to articulate a strong united Caribbean position.

Further, The Authority approved the Marine Research Strategy and mandated the Member States to work closely with research institutions and other stakeholders in the implementation of the policy.

Heads of Government noted the progress being made in the development of a model Water Policy and Bill for Member States within the context of climate change and mandated the Commission to expedite and move to finalize this initiative.

(h) Assembly Matters

The Authority agreed to convene the second Sitting of the Assembly in the first quarter of 2016 with a motion on the OECS Growth and Development Strategy. Given the critical projected impact of climate change on Member States, The Authority decided to convene a development seminar on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction to coincide with the second Sitting of the Assembly.

The Sixty-Third Authority meeting was agreed to be held in Montserrat on the 20th – 21st May 2016 when the Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis Dr. The Hon. Timothy Harris will assume the Chair.