



COMMUNIQUE

64th MEETING OF THE OECS AUTHORITY

St. Kitts and Nevis

March 3, 2017

All Member States were represented at the Sixty-Fourth Meeting of the OECS Authority, which took place at the St. Kitts Marriott Resort on March 3rd 2017, under the Chairmanship of Dr. the Honourable Timothy Harris, Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis.

The Meeting was preceded by an Opening Ceremony where remarks were made by the Chairman; the Director General of the OECS Commission, Dr. Didacus Jules; Prime Minister of St. Lucia, Honourable Allen Chastanet; and President of the Territorial Authority of Martinique, His Excellency Alfred Marie-Jeanne.

Among the statements made, the central theme revolved around “collective positioning in a world in which all grounds are shifting, all alliances are fluid, and the old certainties have become the new unpredictable.”

Dignitaries in attendance included the Governor General of St. Kitts and Nevis, Sir Tapley Seaton; Former Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis, Dr. The Rt Excellent and Rt. Hon. Sir. Kennedy A. Simmonds; and members of the Diplomatic Corps.

Among the various items proposed for discussion, the Meeting focused mainly on:

- (a) The changing global environment
- (b) External representation
- (c) Non-independent and associate member states
- (d) Applications for membership
- (e) Capacity and modus operandi of the Commission

Other items proposed on the agenda such as Health Insurance; Civil aviation and air services; Agriculture and support services (regional transport); The Blue Economy; Climate Change and sustainable land management; and Security and Sustainable

financing, were deferred for a subsequent meeting. The Authority agreed that this would allow an opportunity for deep discussion by, and with, heads in relation to these matters of concern for the OECS.

THE CHANGING GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

The OECS Heads of Government deliberated extensively on the current global atmosphere, the inevitable exit of Great Britain from the European Union (Brexit) and the new, and very different, administration in the United States. Heads of Government agreed that the current situation requires a strategic approach to accelerate the integration process through convergence of efforts and a stronger bond of unity, solidarity, and fixed purpose.

EXTERNAL REPRESENTATION

The Authority noted the need to strengthen the external presence of the OECS in some significant locations, such as the Mission in Brussels and the Economic Mission in Geneva. The meeting focused on the parameters of strategic collaboration and ways of sharing resources, such as diplomatic representation, to ensure that the region has a more powerful voice in these critical arenas. Heads of Government noted that following Brexit, it will be necessary to have a strong presence in Britain and an equally strong presence in the European Union, which is a major source of support to the region.

NON-INDEPENDENT AND ASSOCIATE MEMBER STATES

OECS Heads of Government outlined the importance of establishing a synergy between independent and non-independent Member States of the Organisation to ensure that members are working together, and that the interests of non-independent states are championed and supported by the independent states and vice versa. The Authority also noted that, with the accession of Martinique and the potential of St. Martin and Guadeloupe joining as Member States, the number non-independent members has become significant. The Heads of Government agreed to discuss this matter further at the next Authority Meeting.

APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

The OECS Authority received a report on the status of negotiations with territories in the Eastern Caribbean who have expressed a desire to join the OECS. Heads of Government also considered the formal application for membership submitted by Guadeloupe and noted the advanced stage of negotiations with St. Martin towards membership.

CAPACITY AND MODUS OPERANDI OF THE COMMISSION

OECS Heads of Government critically examined the capacity of the OECS Commission and its modus operandi, with a view to ensuring the Commission is flexible and responsive to the current international environment. The Authority expressed concerns on certain modalities of work and provided very distinct guidance with respect to the institutional nimbleness expected of the Commission in these challenging times. The Meeting focused on the need to address issues that are closely aligned to the Revised Treaty of Basseterre, such as the free movement of people and the free circulation of goods and capital. The Authority also noted that the nimbleness with which the Commission operates also applies to other organs of OECS integration such as the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, to ensure a seamless realisation of common objectives.

NEXT AUTHORITY MEETING

The Authority agreed that the 64th Meeting of the Authority will be concluded on April 12th 2017 in St. Vincent & the Grenadines.



COMMUNIQUÉ

CONTINUATION OF THE 64th MEETING OF THE OECS AUTHORITY

Beachcombers Hotel, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

April 12, 2017

A continuation of the Sixty-Fourth Meeting of the OECS Authority was held at the Beachcombers Hotel, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, on April 12th, 2017, under the Chairmanship of Dr. the Honourable Timothy Harris, Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis.

Other Heads of Government or Representatives in attendance included:

- Honourable Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda;
- Honourable Francine Baron, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Commonwealth of Dominica (representing Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica, Dr. Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit);
- Honourable Nickolas Steele, Minister for Health, Grenada (representing Prime Minister of Grenada, Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell);
- Honourable Donaldson Romeo, Premier of Montserrat;
- Honourable Allen Chastanet, Prime Minister of St. Lucia; and
- Honourable Ralph Gonsalves (PhD), Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Didacus Jules (PhD), Director General of the OECS, and the following Commissioners were also in attendance:

- Ambassador Colin Murdoch, Commissioner to the OECS for Antigua and Barbuda;
- Ambassador Felix Gregoire, Commissioner to the OECS for the Commonwealth of Dominica;
- Ambassador Patrick Antoine (PhD), Commissioner to the OECS for Grenada;

- Ms. Murielle Lesales, Commissioner to the OECS for Martinique; and
- Ambassador Elma Gene Isaac, Commissioner to the OECS for St. Lucia.

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

- (a) Sustainable Financing of the OECS Commission
- (b) Security Enhancement
- (c) Joint Representation
- (d) Health Insurance
- (e) Membership
- (f) Agriculture and support services

(A) SUSTAINABLE FINANCING OF THE OECS COMMISSION

The Authority reviewed the financial obligations of Member States to the OECS Commission with a view to improve the timeliness of subvention payments. Heads of Government agreed that the timely payment of contributions is essential to the efficient functioning of the Organisation and committed to the expeditious settlement of outstanding contributions.

(B) SECURITY ENHANCEMENT

Heads of Government deliberated on current matters of regional security and proposed recommendations for ongoing support in the areas of border security and intelligence sharing. The Meeting recognised the importance of the Regional Security System (RSS) as well as the CARICOM Implementing Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS), which continue to be focal points for regional law and order, and considered the benefits of deepening practical cooperation among Member States as a deterrent to criminal activities. The OECS Commission will investigate the feasibility of a regional cooperation framework for policing in the sub region.

(C) JOINT REPRESENTATION

Heads continued discussions on strategic options for external representation with a view to consolidate diplomatic missions. The Meeting received a detailed report on the current expenditures for external representation by Member States and considered the

recommendations for increased collaboration. Heads also reflected on the re-establishment of a joint diplomatic Mission in Canada.

Further, the Authority considered a stronger outreach into the African Continent and in particular improving relations with the African Union as an entity, and with individual Member States of the African Union. This outreach to Africa, the Heads affirmed to be an important strategic element in the OECS' thrust to deepen south-south cooperation and strengthen ACP relations.

(D) HEALTH INSURANCE

OECS Heads of Government discussed the financial sustainability of the Health Sector in the region and noted the need to implement a regional Health Insurance capable of providing specialised care to Member States at reduced costs. The Authority commended the progress that individual Member States have made towards the implementation of National Health Insurance programmes and considered viable options for the adoption of an OECS Health Insurance in these Member States.

(E) MEMBERSHIP

The Authority considered the status of negotiations with St. Martin and agreed that discussions should continue towards its logical conclusion.

(F) AGRICULTURE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Heads of Government received a report on the progress of the Agri-shipping Initiative being piloted in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and commended the Ministry of Agriculture for the progressive approach to improve standards and approach new markets. The Meeting noted the significant economic potential of the Initiative and proposed that the OECS Commission continue to work with St. Vincent and the Grenadines to ensure the engagement of all Member States.

All Heads expressed their deep appreciation of the hospitality extended by the Government and People of St. Vincent & the Grenadines and looked forward to the speedy implementation of decisions made at the meeting.