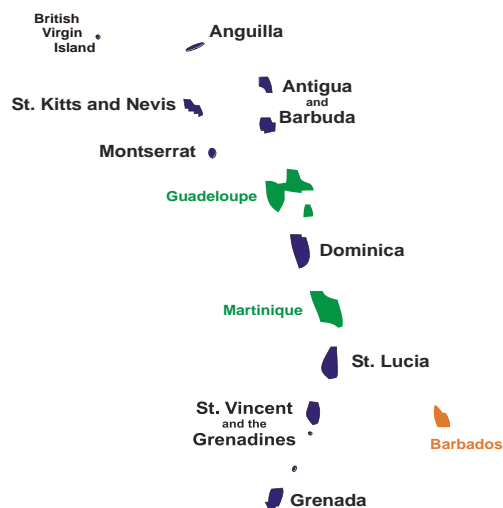




ORGANISATION OF EASTERN CARIBBEAN STATES

**REMARKS BY DIRECTOR GENERAL
ACCREDITATION CEREMONY
MR. CHRISTOPHER J. SANDROLINI
UNITED STATES ENVOY TO THE OECS**



OECS Secretariat
Castries, Saint Lucia

25th October 2011

REMARKS BY DIRECTOR GENERAL

Excellency

It is for me a real pleasure to welcome you to the Headquarters of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), and to receive from you Letters accrediting you as the United States of America's Envoy to this Organisation.

This simple ceremony is one to which we in the OECS Secretariat attach the greatest significance symbolizing as it does the process by which we differentiate an otherwise regular relationship, placing it at a deeper level of engagement with commensurate greater levels of trust, confidence, empathy and sensitivity.

This ceremony also marks in a very real sense, the incremental widening of this Organisation's circle of close and special friends, and on behalf of the OECS, as well as those who have engaged in this ritual before you, I extend the warmest welcome to you, and through you, to the United States of America as you enter into this very special circle of friendship and cooperation.

There is yet another significance which is borne by this ceremony: we view it as affirmation that the OECS is moving in the right direction, and that the OECS Development Model of building resilience through integration is continuing to capture the imagination of many countries and international institutions, and generally to receive international approbation. Multilateral institutions such as the World Bank continue to promote the OECS Model as worthy of emulation by small island developing states, The Organisation receives on a regular basis, from individual small island developing states, groupings of small developing states, and development and academic institutions, requests for presentations to be made on the OECS Model of Development, or specific aspects of it. We continue to be encouraged and motivated by the highly positive reactions that we receive wherever and whenever the OECS Model is expounded upon.

Importantly also, this ceremony constitutes an important signpost along the road of strategic repositioning along which the OECS has been travelling over the past few years. Concerned about recalibrating its focus in the context of a world very much in upheaval and transition, and conscious

of the need to continue to realize the aspirations of its citizens in the context of a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape, the OECS took a decision some five years ago to embark on a process of strategic repositioning both regionally and internationally. This process has involved a period of introspection and profound changes in the Organisation's view of itself and the kinds of relationships that are necessary in pursuit of its strategic interests. It has also involved a deliberate recalibration of its institutional machinery to ensure a more outward looking and internationalist perspective, and more progressive, articulate and purposeful identification and management of its strategic interests at the global level.

This change in strategic orientation was designed to be in parallel with, and in support of, another and more profound change. In response to the rapidly changing international geopolitical and economic environments, as well as the challenges presented by regional and national circumstances, the OECS had taken a decision to deepen the level of integration among Member States, and to work toward the creation of a single financial and economic space. This deepening of the integration process within the OECS has come during a period of tremendous dislocation and uncertainty around the world, a period which has seen the OECS region seek strength through greater unity rather than retreat into the protection of positions more nationalistic in spirit and intent which seem to have characterized so many responses to these times.

The last sixteen months have borne witness to the culmination of years of effort in this regard. On June 18, 2010, the occasion of the 29th Anniversary of the OECS, the Revised Treaty of Basseterre Establishing the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Economic Union was signed by Member States, and some seven months later, on January 21, 2011 the OECS Economic Union was brought into effect via treaty ratification. On August 01, 2011 OECS Member States met yet again, another self-imposed deadline – meeting the requirements for the free movement of persons, a most critical element of the Economic Union.

Excellency, we are truly proud of these achievements. In addition to the economic benefits to be derived from the creation of a single financial and economic space through the dismantling of barriers to the free movement of the region's productive resources, the OECS Economic Union will serve as a boost to efforts to reach beyond our region's borders and strategically position ourselves in this globalised and increasingly interdependent world. It is our hope that these new arrangements will enhance the negotiating power and leverage of this group of small but remarkably resilient states, and become a new platform for the development of closer relations, and heightened prospects for political, commercial and development cooperation with Third countries.

This last reference has special resonance here today, as this ceremony symbolizes our quest for the development of closer relations, and heightened prospects for political and development cooperation particularly in championing the cause of these small islands in the Caribbean in the theatres and the tables around which microstates such as these have neither a seat, or a voice.

We at the OECS are indeed happy that the United States has now joined the growing list of countries which have seen value in entering into a deeper and more formal relationship with us, and appointing a special representative to manage that relationship. We received with appreciation, the letter of the US Secretary of State informing us of the decision to proceed with this level of engagement making the US the eighth country to establish relations with the OECS at the diplomatic level.

Excellency, this is for us, a momentous occasion. It marks the beginning of a new chapter in the long and enduring relationship between the United States and its friends in the Eastern Caribbean. Since their attainment of political independence, OECS Member States have enjoyed a close and collaborative relationship with the United States across a wide spectrum of activities covering fields as varied as diplomacy, development cooperation and justice and security.

In recent times the focus of the engagement at the regional level has been in the broad area of justice and security. Within the last two weeks for example, the OECS and the United States (through USAID) entered into an agreement to enhance juvenile justice reform systems in the six independent Member States of the Organisation. This Agreement is to be supported with funding from the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) - the new paradigm for United States cooperation with the Caribbean on matters relating to citizen safety and security. The newly established OECS Climate Change Unit here in the Secretariat is also the direct product of engagement between the United States (through USAID) and the Secretariat for which we are most appreciative.

Excellency, you take up your assignment at an exciting time in the historical evolution of this Organisation. It has managed to achieve that which is so elusive for even the more resource endowed; the air is filled with expectation and promise. I look forward to engaging with you on ways in which the OECS and the United States can work together to realize that promise for the mutual benefit of our respective citizenry, and offer you, at the very outset, my full support and cooperation and that of my colleagues.

Finally Excellency, allow me to extend my very best wishes for the successful conduct of your new assignment as United States Envoy to the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.