

**ADDRESS TO OECS LEADERS OF OPPOSITION  
BY HONOURABLE STEPHENSON KING,  
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, SAINT LUCIA**

**MAY 04, 2010**

**SALUTATION:**

Hon. Dr Kenny Anthony, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia

Fellow Leaders of the Opposition from the OECS

Director General of the OECS Secretariat

Staff of the OECS

Invited guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen, this morning we are here gathered, to embellish the inscription of our pledge to our region and its people, in our continuing pursuit for regionalism. I am delighted to have been part of the process during the last five years,

and now; from a new perspective, to continue in this ever evolving and dynamic enterprise of ours. Permit me, therefore, to commend OECS Heads of Government and the Secretariat for keeping to their timeline for ensuring that the governance structures to which we have all committed remain on track.

In this regard, permit me this opportunity to welcome you; my colleagues from the OECS, to Saint Lucia and to what I anticipate will be a day of action that should ensure the evolution of these governance structures that will lead to a more participatory approach to decision making in the region. Obviously, it is only when all of us are involved that our governance structures will evolve

and become the true democratic arrangement which will redound to the benefit of our people. Therefore as we meet today to discuss the inaugural session of the OECS Assembly, let us recall that this must be our ultimate goal.

The global economic recession and the changing fortunes of our region have propelled us towards the deepening and strengthening of our integration movement. Our Governments have demonstrated their commitment to moving the region in a direction that will ensure its sustainability. When I say **governments**, I do not mean those who have won general elections. I mean all of us **who serve** these countries, on both sides of the parliamentary divide. Throughout the region, the opposition has

rallied around the establishment of the OECS Economic Union. There was full support for the Revised Treaty of Basseterre and a strong recognition that this was the best way forward for our region; for our people; for our future.

We must now ensure, through active participation, that this commitment guarantees the evolution of approved governance structures, of joint policies, of joint legislation that will result in more jobs for our people, increasing revenue flows from our key sectors, more educational opportunities, more advanced health care, and more access to better standards of living throughout the region.

As leaders of Opposition, we have to make certain that we simply do not leave it up to Prime Ministers to make these vital decisions. We have to stand up and recognize that we are the only ones in place to represent close to fifty percent of the people of this region. The benefits must not simply be for the majority. All our people have to be able to support the integration movement and recognize that it will bring more opportunities for themselves and their relatives throughout the islands.

Colleagues, this new Treaty has made us responsible not simply for our constituencies or our countries, but for our friends and neighbours in the region. We have created a sisterhood and brotherhood of nations, where all our people can



move freely, where goods and services will soon move without hindrance and hopefully bring benefits. We however recognize that there are many challenges that we must tackle together to bring these hopes and aspirations to fruition.

At a time when the survival and viability of integration movements like the European Union are being questioned, we have the opportunity to demonstrate once again that we are world leaders, who, against all odds, can ensure the future of our region. Our integration initiatives are being studied regionally and internationally. As opposition leaders we can demonstrate how we must function in such a movement to make it a success. It will not mean that we will agree to all matters to keep the

peace. Nor does it mean we will oppose for the sake of opposition. The OECS Assembly gives us an opportunity for healthy discussion and debate. It is an opportunity for all our people to openly understand what integration can bring. The matters usually discussed solely behind close doors will now be discussed on our streets; and I believe that this will lead to a greater appreciation for this path that will lead to greater benefits. In the end we will all be accountable; we will all have to answer for our decisions and actions.

Colleagues, I submit, that we have to be true to our constitutions. That means, that the people of the region must know and recognize the Leaders of the Opposition, the same way that they recognize the

Prime Ministers. It is our challenge, but we have an opportunity through the Assembly, to stop sitting in obscurity because we refuse to take a stance on matters that are important to our people. All the good ideas do not reside on one side of the table. We must make our voices be heard with regard to our Economic Union. We must speak on our joint tourism policies. We have to speak out on our foreign relations. We must give our opinions on more focused health institutions. We have to give our views on travel and transportation, especially when we have agreed to freedom of movement. We will be given the opportunity to discuss legislation related to these matters at the regional level. Let us seize this moment to demonstrate to



the region that we can transcend party and national politics and make sound decisions for the OECS.

In the end, it must be said that Opposition parties stepped up at a critical time in our development. Our voices must be heard at all times and not only at election time. Let us ensure that this OECS Assembly is a representative assembly. I understand that we will be limited by the Treaty. However, we can influence the making of sound regional legislation. We can raise awareness among our people and we can provide the responsible opposition and leadership that will bring prosperity to the region.

Colleagues I look forward to today's discussions with much anticipation, as I am of the firm opinion

that our word, our action and our resolve are the critical ingredients in the recipe for regional integration.

I thank you.

