



ORGANISATION OF EASTERN CARIBBEAN STATES

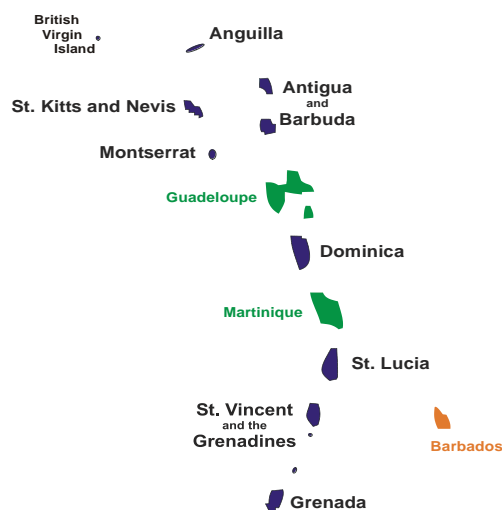
SIGNING CEREMONY

**The Revised Treaty of Basseterre
Establishing the OECS Economic Union**

18th June 2010

Saint Lucia

**REMARKS BY
DR LEN ISHMAEL
DIRECTOR GENERAL**



**OECS Secretariat
Saint Lucia**

**OECS Director General
Remarks
At the Signing Ceremony of the
Revised Treaty of Basseterre Establishing the OECS Economic Union**

Welcome

Your Excellency the Governor General of St Lucia, Honorable Heads of Government, members of Cabinet, His Lordship the Chief Justice, Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, Deputy Secretary General of CARICOM, Ambassadors accredited to the OECS and other Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Heads of OECS, Regional and International Organizations, members of the media, Directors and staff of the OECS, Citizens and friends of the OECS who are connected live through various media: Welcome: It is with much pride that I welcome you into this room, into the soon to be christened "OECS space" - to share with us this OECS date with history.

Tonight, as the evening light ebbs from western skies we gather in a short but powerfully symbolic ceremony to pay witness to history in the making as the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States continues a journey of its own making, perfecting its own union and daring to go where no other small island developing states have gone before. Some 29 years ago to this date six Founding Fathers and one Mother – Bird, Charles, Bishop, Tannis, Simmons, Margetson and Cenac - gathered in much the same spirit to affix their signatures to the *Treaty to Establish the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States* and in so doing, gave the breath of life to the OECS and its special and unique architecture.

Twenty nine years later history is again being made as we gather to build on the vision of the first seven and the many others who have devoted their lives into turning that moment in history into something which was real. Tonight the cast is different and so is the stage; the world too is an enormously different place, but the play, its story, its spirit and the journey remain the same as a new generation of Leaders move bravely forward, committed to a sense of common purpose and firm in the resolve that there can be no turning back. Tonight the names Douglas, Skerrit, King, Tillman, Gonzalves and Spencer will join those who went before, and they too will take their place in history. In so doing they create for all OECS citizens, finally, the reality which our hearts have long since known, that, despite the accidents of birth which would dictate the individuality of our nationality, we belong together, it is our fate, and our destiny: we in the OECS are One People. A people bound by a sense of place, of size of history and of destiny.

Tonight, the gloom which has been the landscape of the recent past – the crippling effects of the financial crisis, the heartbreak of Haiti and the flaming rage of Kingstown, has been given a moment's respite. History and fate conspire to give us this window for hope and celebration. The six leaders of the independent countries of the OECS will, in a few minutes, affix their signatures to sheaves of parchment pregnant with the hopes, the dreams and the aspiration of OECS people.

The fact that we have come so far is testimony to the uncommon courage, vision and leadership of men in these the smallest of countries in the Caribbean guided with remarkable skill over the most recent leg of this journey by a man of uncommon stature and resolve: the OECS Chairman, Dr. the Hon Denzil Douglas.

Tonight four years to the date on which the OECS Authority first gave official notice of its intent to form an Economic Union, that goal will have been met, and in so doing the OECS continues to demonstrate tremendous leadership in the integration of this region.

And yes, if truth be told, without a doubt, there have been moments, when the journey was difficult, when the road ahead seemed mired with obstacles, when the goal seemed to be slipping away and Sir Arthur Lewis's reference to the Agony of the Eight - in his piece on the future of these islands some 45 years ago in the aftermath of the failed attempt at West Indian Federation and his question born of frustration: "Have we not this much Statesmanship left in these little islands" - may have echoed. Tonight the answer is provided in sparkling relief: Yes, Yes we do!

Sir Shridath Ramphal in writing a reflective piece last month on the future of CARICOM puts it this way: "the OECS islands are developing a model of economic unity among themselves which would be worthy of all, if it could subsist for all..it remains to be seen at the level of action whether even for them, the 'agony' lingers on." Tonight with heads held high we say: the only thing which lingers is joy.

Tonight what we have here is a Treaty minted fresh and new. It is far from perfect, but then again, instruments such as this never are, born as they are in the spirit of compromise. But its spirit and intent are what count most, and these are honorable in depth and scope.

Tonight at the very end, when all is said and done, the words of Sir Arthur have special meaning: he tells the story of another time when Norman Manley and Eric Williams met secretly in Antigua in August 1960, to resolve their differences on Federation. That meeting he said was, "A triumph of common sense".

And so too it is, that tonight we come together to witness this moment in history which is both a triumph of common sense and tremendous good will!