



OECS Secretariat, Castries, St. Lucia, Monday December 20th 2010. The OECS Member States are to make a gradual shift from drafting individual Trade legislation, to implementing uniform legislation that help make doing business better in the OECS.

This was among the major issues at a meeting of Trade Policy Directors and Permanent Secretaries which identified areas for immediate attention by OECS Member States as they move towards implementing a Trade Policy Regime in the OECS Economic Union.

The meeting on Friday December 17th recommended that institutional arrangements for the free flow of goods and services should be effective and not impose additional cost to business houses and to the Member States.



Head of the OECS Secretariat's Trade Policy Unit (OTPU) Virginia Paul says in light of the current socio-economic situation in the region, OECS Trade Officials are **“very concerned”** tha

t Member States try to maintain an attractive cost of doing business.

The policy makers spoke extensively to the critical need for uniformity in Trade related laws and arrangements to facilitate business opportunities across the OECS. Paul says people will have to move away from the deviations to reflect their particular needs or interests and think more about the union and the new movement towards the best possible practice of uniformity. This will reflect a gradual departure from the norm where the OECS Secretariat will draft legislation for Member States which is normally further revised by individual member states to meet specific domestic Trade and investment needs: ***“For instance if it has been agreed that to make doing business in the OECS better we have to update and revise our customs control and management laws, given that this is an area related to trade, Member States will agree on what should be included in that legislation to make customs work more efficiently and reflect international best practices. It will then go through a thorough process of consultation by officials, ministers and parliamentarians with final approval by the OECS Authority and then it will take effect in all Member States which are part to the OECS Economic Union without further revision.”***

Paul adds that the meeting noted the importance of a closer working relationship between Member States and the OECS Secretariat which will be transformed into a Commission to ensure that the OECS Economic Union is successful.

The meeting of Trade Policy Directors and Permanent Secretaries also called for immediate action on the regime for the facilitation of Travel and movement of people across the OECS. Another recommendation is the immediate enactment of the legislation to establish a Competition Authority to deal with matters related to restrictive trading practices.

OECS Member States are moving closer towards ratifying the OECS Economic Union treaty by January 21st the planned indicative date for implementing operations associated with the new dispensation. The OECS Trade Policy Unit says in the new dispensation, Permanent Secretaries and Directors of Trade, who are also key advisors to the Ministers and Heads of Government, will continue to guide an effective common Trade Policy Regime in the OECS Economic Union.

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