



**(OECS Secretariat, Castries, St. Lucia, Wednesday June 8<sup>th</sup> 2011)** A review of the legislation of the OECS regarding the implementation of Trade in Services and Investment obligations under the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) has just been completed.

The review, launched in November 2010, involves the OECS Governments of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia as well as St Vincent and the Grenadines in the implementation of the CARIFORUM-EU EPA, with a view to:

***1. Identifying, for each OECS Member State, pieces of legislation related to Trade in Services and Investment that need to be brought into conformity with the Agreement, including suggested legislative changes and drafting instructions, and,***

***2. Identifying and designing possible projects for ensuring conformity of the OECS countries' legislation with the CARIFORUM-EU EPA.***

The Organization of American States (OAS) in collaboration with the EPA Implementation Unit of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat and the OECS Secretariat is coordinating the review throughout the participating OECS Member States.

A draft final report identifying, for each OECS Member State, legislation related to Trade in Services and Investment that needs to be brought into conformity with the CARIFORUM-EU EPA, as well as the design of possible projects to fill the gaps identified in the above mentioned report, is currently being prepared.

The Trade in Services and Investment Specialist at the CARICOM Secretariat, has revealed that the consultant's findings indicate a need for legislative changes, to allow EU nationals to enter these States to provide Services. The official has also underscored the additional need for policy and legislative development in areas where legislation is not in place, such as professional services and e-commerce."

The head of the OECS Secretariat's Trade Policy Unit Virginia Paul anticipates enhanced trade activity between participating OECS Member States and the EU once the EPA obligations are met: ***"We anticipate that existing trade will continue and even increase. Right now tourism is one of our major exports to Europe and we anticipate that this and many activities related to tourism will continue for example tours with travel agents, and health and wellness services. The EPA is a reciprocal trade agreement which means that service providers from Europe can seek opportunities in the OECS countries and OECS service providers can seek opportunities in Europe"***

A meeting for Trade and legal officials in the OECS is to be held in Saint Lucia on 14-15<sup>th</sup> June 2011, to further examine the findings of the consultancy. Paul says once the Trade in Services and Investment policies of the OECS Member States are compliant with the language of the EPA and facilitates trade, service providers in the participating OECS Member States would have an opportunity to compete on an even playing field with those from Europe when they decide to access the region's market more seriously. The OECS Trade Policy Unit is also warning the participating members states in the EPA agreement against complacency:

***" We too as OECS Member States need to be looking at the environment in Europe and if in some way it is not facilitating of our trade and of our efforts to enter that market we too should be bringing this to the attention of the Europeans so that they can take the necessary action to remove restrictive measures that might be in place."***

The fifteen signatory Caribbean Forum of African, Caribbean and Pacific (CARIFORUM) States to the EPA are the independent CARICOM Member States and the Dominican Republic.

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