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The Revised Treaty of Basseterre Establishing the OECS Economic Union, signed on June 18, 2010 as an instrument to foster deeper integration among OECS Member States, has profound implications for both the regional and national statistical systems in the area. Informed decision-making at the regional level, as well as the design, implementation and monitoring of regional policies, require data which are not only fit for purpose in terms of coverage and timeliness, but which are also harmonized across countries.

The challenge thus facing statisticians in both the individual OECS Member States and in the institutions serving the region – including the OECS Secretariat and the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) – has given local impetus to the increasingly worldwide phenomenon of strategic planning in the field of statistics. With assistance from various development partners including the World Bank and PARIS21 (Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century), work has commenced on the design of a Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS) in the OECS.

The RSDS aims to establish a framework for the better coordination of ongoing and prospective regional initiatives in the field of statistics, build capacity for the development of key statistical series which are harmonized across OECS countries, and improve arrangements for the governance of the regional statistical system so that it can provide stronger support for the Economic Union.

An important step in the design of the RSDS has been taken with the commencement of an assessment of the current status of the OECS regional statistical system. With assistance from a consultant, the OECS Secretariat has embarked on the process of assessing the statistical capacity, as at the end of 2011, of the national statistical systems of six of its Member States – Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, and St Vincent and the Grenadines. The statistical operations of the OECS itself and of the ECCB are also being examined.

The Assessment phase of formulation of the regional statistics strategy, which is now drawing to a close, is ambitious in scope and aims to cover topics such as statistical legislation and institutional frameworks, data dissemination policies, and both ongoing and future censuses and

statistical surveys which OECS countries plan on undertaking in conjunction with various development partners. Importantly, emphasis is being placed on the user perspective, to determine what uses are being made of statistics in the region, and to find out how satisfied users are with current data outputs.

A baseline assessment is currently being undertaken to provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the regional statistical system, of the threats it faces but also of the opportunities for enhancement. This process will assist the OECS and its Member States in fashioning a vision for the regional statistical system to support deeper integration, by providing pointers towards a prioritized action plan to help achieve that goal.