

(OECS Secretariat, Thursday, July 26th 2012 Castries) An ongoing seminar in Saint Lucia for OECS Statisticians on Poverty and Inequality Measurements has been welcomed as timely as OECS Member States work towards enhancing key economy driving sectors such as Agriculture and Tourism.

Addressing the opening of the weeklong workshop for staff of National Statistical Offices in the OECS on Monday, Head of the Macroeconomic and Sectoral Policy Unit at the OECS Secretariat Rodinald Soomer, said plans for the enhancement of the two key productive sectors, Agriculture and Tourism, fall within the OECS Growth and Development Strategy: ***“Sector development strategies for both Agriculture and Tourism in the OECS make reference to poverty reduction...It is a reality that stakeholders in these driving sectors have recognised that they have to be able to impact social development in a positive way in order for their progress to be meaningful. For example; the OECS Agriculture Sector Strategy speaks to transitioning rural populations out of poverty and out***

t of vulnerability to poverty. The question is: What are the targets that they are going to set? They can only get that specific information from the work that happens at the statistical level. So while we know generally what we are trying to achieve, in order for us to achieve it with any degree of certainty as to the effectiveness of our actions, we need to get the numbers right and I think this process will enable us to do so.”

Soomer suggested that ongoing efforts by OECS Statistical Offices to enhance their capacity to measure Poverty and Inequality and related areas such as unemployment will significantly inform growth and development targets at the sectoral level, as well as support national social development targets especially related to poverty reduction: ***“The truth is that the continued viability and sustainability of these key productive sectors really depends on a certain degree of social stability and some reasonable distribution of income. In many cases more can be done to help the plight of the poor and more vulnerable populations. I think that the major players in the productive sectors have recognised that for their own future growth and sustainability they need to impact positively on the situation with respect to poverty and human development. So what we expect to see in our development strategy is those links being made between the growth and development targets in the productive sectors and our social development targets, some of which you will be looking at directly in this workshop”***

Soomer also recognised the value of the workshop for Statisticians on measuring Poverty and Inequality as one that will help them to effectively measure the ultimate benefits of the OECS Economic Union. Soomer encouraged the OECS National Statistical Offices to seek a

standardized approach to measuring Poverty and Inequality, as well as a common approach to the dissemination of results to provide opportunities for analysis of underlying causes.

Federica Marzo an Economist at the World Bank told the media OECS Statisticians have been making significant progress in Poverty and Inequality Measurements. She also noted the need for harmonized regional approaches by OECS Member States in Poverty and Inequality Measurements and the sharing of group statistics to help adequately inform social policies that help to alleviate poverty and reduce inequality and above all improve the living standards of the population: ***“We would like to build on what has been done. Harmonization and coordination does not mean that each country will have exactly the same tool. But it means that the approach will be harmonized. We will be able to compare certain information. We will be able to say Saint Lucia is doing this Grenada is doing that and say something meaningful about it. If we don’t coordinate and harmonize, the figures will not be comparable posing limitations on what you can say.”***

A meeting of Directors of Statistics who comprise the OECS Living Standards Measurement Committee is also part of the one week seminar.