



Wednesday August 10, 2011, Castries-Senior Tourism Officials are scheduled to meet in Antigua & Barbuda on August 16th and 17th 2011 at a workshop designed to finalize the first ever Common Tourism Policy for the OECS region.

Programme Officer at the OECS Secretariat Dr. Lorraine Nicholas says tourism officials are reviewing a draft final Common Tourism Policy document ahead of the meeting in St. Johns': ***"Quite a bit of work has gone into the formulation of the Policy. The consultants have done considerable work in putting together this policy which is in draft form. When we meet in Antigua next week the primary objective will essentially be to finalize the Policy. The senior tourism officials from across the region will be reviewing the draft Policy with a view to ensuring that it is in sync with their vision and aspirations for tourism development in the OECS region"***

The coming workshop follows an initial consultation held in March **2011**, where tourism professionals from the region's private and public sectors identified and prioritized key areas on which the Policy should focus. Some of the broad focus areas highlighted by the first workshop include: transportation; tourism awareness; product development; customs and immigration procedures; environmental and cultural sustainability and sustainable financing. The March meeting also identified actions to address each of the policy focus area.

Immediately following the first workshop in St. Lucia, the Consultants visited all nine OECS Member States discuss with key stakeholders key issues affecting the development of tourism and their buy-in to the emerging Common Tourism Policy. The Consultants also presented initial findings and observations to the OECS Council of Tourism Ministers at their 10th meeting held in St. Kitts on 19th April 2011. At that meeting, OECS Tourism Ministers endorsed the priority areas identified for inclusion in the Policy, emphasizing the need for immigration and border control in the OECS to be addressed as priority issues in the Policy. The pending Common Tourism Policy is within the context of the OECS Economic Union as a single financial

and economic space.

At least twenty tourism professionals from the region's private and public sectors are confirmed to attend the second workshop booked for the Jolly Beach Resort & Spa in Antigua. The primary aim of the workshop will be to review the draft document and secure agreement among OECS Member States on priorities and actions for the final Common Tourism Policy. The workshop is facilitated via technical assistance support provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat. Yellow Railroad, a consulting firm based in the UK was contracted to execute the project, which is expected to be completed at the end of August, 2011.

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