



October first 2011 has been identified as the date for OECS Member Countries to receive a final OECS Common Tourism Policy document.

That is among the major successful outcomes of the second meeting of private and public sector tourism stakeholders which looked at the draft tourism policy for the OECS.

Programme Officer at the OECS Secretariat Dr. Lorraine Nicholas says OECS Member States are “pretty close” towards unveiling their first Common Tourism Policy: ***“The Consultants are refining the Policy document to reflect decisions taken at the workshop***

***We expect to disseminate the revised Policy to officials in our Member States. The Member States have requested a deadline of September 14***

***th***

***for submission of their final comments; and we expect to have a final Common Tourism***

***Policy document by October 1st."***

The OECS Secretariat adds that the focus on tourism development within the OECS Economic Union and how it further enhances the life of the sector's thousands of employees as well as the region's economies was high on the agenda of OECS Member States at the recent meeting of private and public sector tourism stakeholders: ***"I think I can say with some level of confidence that the OECS Member States have produced a very comprehensive relevant and action oriented Tourism Policy"***

-Nicholas

The OECS Secretariat says the meeting in Antigua and Barbuda from August 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> was a success as tourism professionals from the private and public sector in the OECS and other stakeholders agreed on the key areas to be addressed in the OECS Tourism Policy. Antigua's Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation & Culture, the Hon. John Maginley, advised the delegates on the way forward for the region's vital economic sector and called for greater involvement of the private sector in tourism development activities. He said it is the private and not the public sector that generates most of the revenue from tourism.



Minister Maginley also urged participants to appreciate of the value of yachting to the region's tourism product. The meeting identified the operationalisation of the OECS' single yachting space as a top priority under the Policy area entitled: Product Development. Other key areas include: Harmonisation of customs & immigration procedures, including the universal implementation of eSeaClear throughout OECS; improvement in air access to the region; standardization of human resource development initiatives across the region; transportation; and enhancement of tourism awareness throughout the region to provide empirical evidence of the economic impact of tourism. Improved research and statistics as well as attracting greater investment to the region were also flagged as major policy measures.

The recent meeting 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. Nicholas believes the extensive discussions will soon result in the formulation of a comprehensive, relevant and action-oriented Tourism Policy for the OECS.

Looking ahead, Nicholas says having formulated the plan, funding has been identified under the 10<sup>th</sup> EDF programme to implement the OECS Common Tourism Policy.

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