

(Friday September 30th 2011) Guided by the mandates given by the OECS Council of Tourism Ministers at their last meeting held in April 2011 in St. Kitts, the OECS Secretariat recently re-constituted the OECS Yachting Committee, which was previously dubbed the OECS Yachting Safety and Security Working Group. The inaugural meeting of the OECS Yachting Committee was convened on Wednesday, September 28, 2011 at 9:00 a.m. by videoconference.

The purpose of the meeting was firstly to follow-up on the directives given by the OECS Authority relating to the yachting sector, with a view to providing a progress report to the next meeting of the OECS Authority slated for November, 2011; and secondly, to look imaginatively and creatively at viable ways to maximise the value derived from yachting in the OECS.

The inaugural meeting of the Yachting Committee focused on key issues including:

1. Facilitation of seamless intra-regional travel for yachts visiting the OECS;
2. Security management to ensure that movement of yachts between OECS territories does not compromise the integrity of the single yachting space;
3. Revenue collection management including the adoption of a mechanism that safeguards the income-earning potential of Member States; and
4. Adoption of the ESeaClear, an online pre-arrival notification system managed by the Caribbean Customs Law Enforcement Council (CCLEC)

A unanimous decision taken at the meeting was the need for all OECS Member States to fully

implement the ESeaClear system. ESeaClear is a web portal that enables yachts to enter their clearance information online in advance of arrival, to expedite their Customs and Immigration formalities upon arrival at the port. The use of ESeaClear will serve as a platform to facilitate hassle-free movement of yachts across OECS waters.

Programme officer at the OECS Secretariat Dr. Lorraine Nicholas says the Yachting subsector of tourism remains a top priority on the work programme of the OECS Tourism Desk: ***“It has been an agenda item on the two most recently-convened OECS Council of Tourism Ministers meetings.”***

Yachting visitors represent a potentially lucrative market for the OECS with opportunities for the further development of related business services, skills development and employment.

The purpose of the Yachting Committee is to deliberate on, and make suggestions and recommendations to the OECS Secretariat for the implementation of the mandates and directives given by the OECS Council of Tourism Ministers with respect to yachting. The Committee will also play advisory and facilitative roles with respect to implementation of actions required at the national level to fulfill Ministerial mandates.”

The Committee comprises representatives from the nine OECS Member States. However, other agencies such as the Caribbean Marine Association and the Caribbean Customs Law Enforcement Council were also invited to the inaugural meeting of the Yachting Committee.