



Castries Saint. Lucia, April 28th, 2010, The OECS and the Republic of Finland have established relations at the diplomatic level.

At a ceremony at the OECS Headquarters on Wednesday May 26th , OECS Director General Dr Len Ishmael accepted Letters of Credence from Finland's first Ambassador to the OECS, H.E. Mikko Pyhala.

Dr Ishmael described the occasion as a happy one, signaling the establishment and formalization of a relationship intended to deliver benefits to the parties involved. She traced the development of relations between the OECS and Finland to an initiative being pursued by the Organisation, aimed at transforming itself into one which is more outward looking in orientation, and more proficient in the management of its strategic interests at the global level. She explained that the initiative was driven by a felt need within the Organisation, for it to be more progressive, articulate and purposeful in identifying and pursuing its strategic interests wherever opportunities present themselves.

The Director General noted that Finland's profile had been rising steadily in the region in recent years as a result of its funding of a major regional meteorology project and the expansion of diplomatic ties at the bilateral level. She pointed to the country's vast experience and expertise in environmental and sustainable development matters, and suggested that there was much to be learnt by the OECS from Finland's development experience.

In this regard, the Director General identified areas of possible cooperation between Finland and the OECS including Oceans Governance, advocacy within the EU on behalf of the OECS, training in Environmental Negotiations and Diplomacy, and adaptation to climate change.

The Director General assured the Finnish Ambassador of her full support in his new assignment.

The Ambassador made reference to Finland's recognition of the OECS "as a body that has reached an incomparable degree of integration...and has shown a unique dynamism in developing its institutions and norms", and its view that the "OECS can serve as a model for other efforts of regional integration and of good intergovernmental governance".

Referring to the challenges and dangers faced by small states in the context of globalization, and in the specific case of the Economic Partnership Agreement between the EU and CARIFORUM, the Ambassador offered Finland's assistance with advocacy within the EU on behalf of the OECS.

The Ambassador reiterated Finland's commitment to the development of the region and pointed to its record of support in various fields including meteorology and programme assistance through the European Union Development Fund, as well as recent support to the CARICOM Development Fund and the post-earthquake rehabilitation effort in Haiti.

In respect of future action, he indicated his Government's intention to sponsor in the coming months, and in collaboration with the Caribbean Sea Commission and the Baltic Sea Commission, expert consultations within the region on the governance of the Caribbean Sea.

He also indicated a similar intention by his Government to sponsor a seminar for the region on best practices in education. Finnish high school students have a high reputation internationally in respect of exam scores.

Following the presentation ceremony, the Ambassador had comprehensive discussions with the Director General and senior staff of the Secretariat in respect of future cooperation between Finland and the OECS.

Finland is the fifth country to establish diplomatic relations with the Organisation after Spain, Mexico, Brazil and Germany, and is the third European Union member country to do so.

Media Contact:

Raymond O’Keeffe [Email:rokeiffe@oece.org](mailto:rokeiffe@oece.org) Tel. 1-758- 455-6305 or 455-OECS

Subject Contact:

Anthony Sevarin - 758-455-OECS or 758-452-2537