



**OECS Secretariat, Castries, St. Lucia, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010.** The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the United States Virgin Islands (USVI) have undertaken to embark upon a process of formal engagement in a number of areas of mutual interest. The two parties gave this undertaking via the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Technical Cooperation in a wide range of fields including Law Enforcement, Agriculture and Fisheries, Tourism, Health, Environment, Education, Emergency Management, Sports, Art and Culture, and Historical Preservation.

Her Excellency Dr Len Ishmael, Director General of the OECS, and His Excellency Mr. John de Jongh, Governor of the USVI signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Tuesday September 28<sup>th</sup> 2010 at the offices of the Secretariat of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States in Castries.

In her welcome remarks, the Director General drew attention to the significance of the signing by pointing to the formal character of the new engagement, acknowledging that while the previous long-standing relations were no less significant, the signing marked; ***“the commencement of a new relationship, one that will involve public commitment, and a conscious effort by both the USVI and the OECS to collaborate on an array of issues of mutual concern...”***

According to Dr Ishmael, the Memorandum of Understanding served not only as an important mechanism through which both parties can exchange knowledge and experience. It also served as an instrument which would provide a framework within which they could work together to find solutions to core issues of mutual concern, while serving as a platform for the pursuit of opportunity.

The signing of the MOU was also viewed in the context of South-South cooperation, which had assumed, according to Dr Ishmael, ***“an increased prominence in the search for new forms of cooperation among the world’s tiniest and most vulnerable group of countries.”***

In response, the Governor expressed the view that the signing represented the formalization of a long standing relationship between the two sides, one which was enriched by the significant Eastern Caribbean presence in the USVI. He acknowledged the significant contribution which had been made by OECS nationals in the development of the USVI in various fields including commerce and Government: ***“We are a territory of 110 thousand people located on four islands but with an economy and community whose history is founded by those in the Caribbean who have come to our location to be a part of our community and help us to grow in so many respects. Our educational system whether it be the elementary, the high school or our university is founded by the constant flow of individuals who have come from so many islands in the Caribbean.***

The Governor of the USVI said the signing also reflected the desire of the USVI to continue the relationship along lines that would allow for its participation in the integration of the wider Caribbean, both as a beneficiary and as a contributor. ***“We are one region. The integration between us needs to be much tighter, the facilitation of trade and culture and education are what we can build upon. We can learn from each other.”***

Both parties expressed their commitment to ensuring the successful implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding for the benefit of the people of the region, and looked forward to strengthening the bonds of friendship that have long existed between the Governments and people of the OECS and the USVI.