

## **COMMUNIQUE**

### **FIFTY THIRD MEETING OF THE OECS AUTHORITY**

**NIS Conference Room, Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines**

**19-20 May 2011**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Fifty-third Meeting of the OECS Authority was convened in Kingstown, St Vincent and the Grenadines over the period May 19-20, 2011 under the Chairmanship of the Hon. Stephenson King, Prime Minister of St Lucia. All Member States were represented at the level of Head of Government, with the exception of Montserrat, which was represented by the Permanent Secretary in the Office of the Chief Minister. The Meeting focused in the main on matters relating to the operationalisation of the OECS Economic Union, including:

1. The OECS Work Programme and Budget for 2011-2012;
2. Financing of the Economic Union Work Programme;
3. Implementation of the Free Movement Provisions of the Revised Treaty of Basseterre Establishing the OECS Economic Union; and
4. Manpower and skill requirements of the OECS Commission consequent upon establishment of the Economic Union.

The Authority discussed in great depth the matters before it, and agreed by the close of business on May 20, 2011, to suspend the Meeting until June 28, 2011 when it would be reconvened in St Lucia to address matters on the Agenda requiring further deliberation and conclusions.

#### **ECONOMIC UNION GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

The Authority undertook in-depth discussions on the governance arrangements provided for in

the Revised Treaty for management of the Economic Union, and agreed to work toward the early activation of the Organisation's Organs(in addition to the Authority) in order to ensure that the work of the Organisation could be carried out expeditiously. The Heads of Government gave particular attention to the role, function and workings of the Commission, and agreed that high priority should be given to convening its first meeting. It was further agreed that those Member States which had not yet appointed Commissioners would do so as a matter of urgency.

## **RATIFICATION AND ENACTMENT OF THE REVISED TREATY**

Heads of government considered the state of progress to date on actions adopted by Member States in implementing the Revised Treaty of Basseterre, and urged Member States which had not yet enacted the required legislation to give the matter early attention in view of public commitments which had been made by the Authority in this regard, to seek enactment in Member States by June 01, 2011, or as soon as possible thereafter.. They also considered the matter of participation of the non-independent Member States in the Revised Treaty, and urged those Member States to give urgent consideration to accession to the Revised Treaty. They agreed further to provide whatever support was considered necessary to facilitate those Member States with respect to accession.

## **FREE MOVEMENT OF GOODS AND PEOPLE**

Heads of Government received an update on the implementation of a regime for the free movement of people and goods in the OECS Economic Union. In respect of the Free Movement of People, the Heads were updated on the work of the Working Group on Free Movement in relation to issues of security, the legislative and administrative framework, travel facilitation and the free movement of workers.

In respect of the Free Movement of Goods, the Heads were updated on the work which had been proceeding on two fronts, namely a regime for the free circulation of goods, and the facilitation of trade in the OECS. Heads of Government agreed with a recommendation that an implementation period of two to three years be instituted to facilitate further preparatory work in respect of free circulation, and agreed that in keeping with the urgency accorded to the matter, an operational start date of **June 1<sup>st</sup> 2013** be instituted for the free circulation of goods within the Economic Union.

Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to the provisions of the Revised Treaty in respect of the free movement of persons, and noted that unlike other arrangements in which Member States were involved where free movement was identified as a goal, in respect of the Revised Treaty of Basseterre **free movement of OECS citizens was guaranteed!** The idea of restrictions on the free movement of OECS workers, or of work permits for OECS citizens was a non-issue in the case of the OECS Economic Union. The Heads agreed that Member States which were yet to incorporate the Revised Treaty (and its provisions regarding free movement) into domestic law should do so as a matter of urgency.

Heads recommitted to the target date of August 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 for the implementation of Free Movement of OECS Citizens within the OECS.

## **FINANCING OF THE ECONOMIC UNION WORK PROGRAMME**

Heads of Government received an update from the Secretariat on the financing of the Economic Union Work Programme and endorsed the approach to financing of the Programme proposed by the Secretariat involving the mobilization and commitment of resources from the 10<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund. The Heads expressed their wish for an early release of the EDF resources.

## **ANGUILLA**

Heads of Government received an update from the Chief Minister of Anguilla on the ongoing political situation in his country. In this regard, they agreed that a delegation of OECS Prime Ministers would visit Anguilla for consultations, with a view to assisting in the resolution of difficulties being experienced by the Government of that country in respect of its relations with the Government of the United Kingdom.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Heads of Government noted with sadness, the passing of H.E. the late Arsyll Warner, former OECS High Commissioner to Canada, and extended condolences to his family, and to the

Government and people of St Kitts and Nevis.

## **SUSPENSION AND RECONVENING**

Heads of Government agreed to the suspension of the Meeting, and to its reconvening on June 28, 2011 in St Lucia in order to address those matters on the Agenda which required further deliberation.

## **DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**

Heads of Government agreed that the 54<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the OECS Authority would be held on November 24 -25, 2011 in St Lucia.

Kingstown, St Vincent and the Grenadines

May 20, 2011