

OECS Secretariat, Castries, St. Lucia, February 2nd 2012- An Australian delegation visited the Secretariat of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) on Wednesday February 1st

2011 to pay a courtesy call on its Director General. The delegation comprised Mr. Richard Marles, MP and Australian Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs; H.E. Phillip Kentwell, High Commissioner of Australia to Trinidad and Tobago and Plenipotentiary Representative to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM); Ms. Glenda Price, Advisor; Ms. Hannah Bleby, Australian High Commission and Ms. Leilani Bun-Juda, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Australia.

The delegation was warmly welcomed by Dr. Len Ishmael and her team, comprising Mr. Randolph Cato, Senior Director for Economic Affairs; Ms. Beverly Best, Head, Functional Cooperation and Project Management Unit and Ms. Nerys Chiverton, International Relations Officer, Office of the Director General.

The two sides held discussions in follow up to a previous mission by the OECS Secretariat to Australia that was mounted in November 2011. The mission to Australia was undertaken upon the invitation of the Government of Australia as a gesture of its goodwill and interest in enhancing relations between Australia and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. The familiarization visit provided the Director General of the OECS with the opportunity to gain a better understanding of Australia and its foreign and trade policy priorities through a study tour of key sites and sectors around the country.

Australia has not formalized diplomatic relations with the Organisation. This initiative was a welcome first step in rationalizing the relationship between Australia and the OECS moving forward.

It is within this context that Wednesday's discussions took place with both sides eager to expound on some of the broad issues that would establish a platform for the strengthening of relations. At meeting's end, the two sides expressed their pleasure in having the opportunity for further dialogue and their enthusiasm for pursuing deeper forms of cooperation.