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Trade Policy Unit continues consultations on the CARICOM Canada negotiations

The Trade Policy Unit continues to assist Member states to prepare their positions for the CARICOM Canada negotiations. The Unit has been working with member states to consult with relevant stakeholders on Cultural Co-operation and Innovation. Stakeholders were informed of the negotiating issues on these subjects in order to identify areas of concern and interest with respect to the Draft Texts. Their inputs were elicited on technical assistance, capacity building needs and priorities which should be taken into account in the ongoing negotiations for a Trade and Development Agreement with Canada. One-day consultations were held in Grenada, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Practitioners in the subject areas and public sector agencies which impact on the implementation of trade agreements participated in the meetings. The information obtained from the sessions will be utilised to prepare an OECS position which will include priority areas for technical assistance in Culture and Innovation, co-operation activities for performing arts, publishing, and innovation and the categories of cultural professionals and practitioners that require training. The sessions were convened in collaboration with the respective Ministry of Trade and the CARICOM Office of Trade Negotiations and funding was provided by the Hub and Spokes Project. A regional coordination meeting will be held in June in order to consolidate the OECS position on these matters.

The CARICOM-Canada Trade and Development Agreement will contain the rules which will govern trade in goods, services and agriculture products between CARICOM Member States and Canada.

OECS Member States must continue work on the reform of export subsidy programmes

The Trade Policy Unit urges member states to continue work on the phase out of subsidy programmes that are not compatible with the WTO Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing measures. The OECS-WTO Members secured an extension from other WTO members for the use of prohibited export subsidy programmes until 2015. One of the conditions of the extension is the submission of annual updating notifications to the WTO Secretariat and requests to the WTO membership for the extension of the programmes, by June 30 of each year. This year's notification would be the last request for an extension under this Agreement in order for Member States to provide export subsidies to companies for the period January - December 2013. The final phase-out of the programmes will be over a two year period 2014-2015, in order to meet the December 31, 2015 deadline for elimination. Prohibited subsidies that are being used in Member States beyond that date may be subject to challenge by other members of the WTO through the dispute settlement arrangements. Governments provide subsidies such as tax concessions and technical assistance to firms in order to increase their competitiveness. Some OECS-WTO members have already ceased using subsidies that are contingent on the export of products by amending the laws and procedures relating to their use and implementing programmes that are compatible with the WTO Agreement on Subsidies such as business facilitation measures or research and development programmes.

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An Update from the OECS Trade Policy Unit on Trade Matters of Importance to the Region