



(Castries December 8, 2010)-The OECS Secretariat, in collaboration with UNESCO, organised a regional consultation on education as part of a process of developing a UNESCO Education Support Strategy (UNESS) for OECS and Barbados.

The consultation, from December 8-10, 2010, at the Palm Haven Hotel, Saint Lucia, provides a forum for senior education officials in the region to exchange views on key challenges and priorities in education, and to discuss their country's strategies to address them.

The process will analyse existing donor support for the education programmes in the respective countries in order to determine the needs and gaps as well as to consider the possibilities for UNESCO collaboration and support for the development of education in the region.

UNESCO has adopted the approach of developing United Nations Education Support Strategy (UNESS) documents as the organisation's new framework of assistance to developing countries. This approach is aimed at adopting more appropriate responses to sector needs and to ensure that UNESCO better aligns its assistance to UN Programming at the country level. Jamaica is the only Caribbean country for which a UNESS has been developed and the OECS is programmed to be next.

Head of the OECS Education Reform Unit OERU Marcellus Albertin welcomed the Sub-regional consultation as the start of a new partnership with UNESCO. He said for some time UNESCO has not been significantly engaged in the OECS Education Reform Agenda: ***"I need to say that I welcome what is the start of a new and fruitful partnership. It's one that promises a lot. It promises for us greater support for the work we are doing in this region. We hope that the support is going to be more targeted as this process should help establish and we really look forward to fruitful relationship with UNESCO."***

The OECS Education consultation is among several others to have taken place in 2010 including a CIDA sponsored seminar on TVET Education, a World Bank programme on the development of an Education Strategy and an Education development seminar under UNICEF: ***“I think this is significant and it also signals that in this business of Education we need to plan properly. We need to have a good basis for going forward in terms of what are the issues we are tackling, the priorities and to develop sound and evidenced based strategies to ensure that by the end of the day we meet the objects that we set ourselves. So the consultations are welcomed.”-Albertin***

Albertin told the meeting of Chief Education Officers the OECS Secretariat has already embarked on the process of developing a new strategy for developing education in the region. He expressed hope that the outputs of the three-day seminar sponsored by UNESCO will feed into the development of an OECS designed Strategy for Education Development.



The United Nations Education Support Strategy UNESS is supporting this effort by OECS Member States to finalize a development strategy for the region. Programme Specialist at the UNESCO Kingston Office in Jamaica, Robert Parua says the OECS consultation process is part of a broader effort by UNESCO in developing country based education support strategies to ensure its effectiveness in response to the needs of Member States and demands for Education Development. He said it falls within part of international Development goals.

Parua emphasized the availability of UNESCO to support Education development programmes in the OECS: ***“For UNESCO to be fully engaged it is very important that we hear from you what UNESCO can do for you and assist.”***

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He indicated that UNESCO's repositioning and reform of its sector focused primarily on responding to the countries needs.

Outputs from the consultation will contribute to the formulation of a regional UNESCO strategy by June 2011 and will herald a new basis for support by the UN agency to the region up to 2015, and beyond.

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