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OECS Secretariat, Castries St. Lucia September 18th, 2009: The OECS Electronic Government for Regional Integration Project (EGRIP) will be officially launched on Thursday, September 24th 2009 in Saint Lucia. Ms. Karlene Francis is the Project Manager of the Regional E-government Unit which is responsible for implementing the project. "In the same way we have the OECS we want a regional integration project that will result in a greater economic impact for the region. The launch which is the official start of the project and will bring together all the major stakeholders. This includes the participating countries, other OECS Member States, government agencies, the public and civil society. We want to emphasize to the public the critical aspects as well as the benefits of the project."

The EGRIP project is geared towards developing cost effective ways of promoting efficiency, quality, and transparency in the public service of participating Member States through regionally integrated e-government applications. It will result in the over all reduction in the cost of doing business with government in the Participating OECS Member States. While it enhances transparency the EGRIP project will also reduce opportunities for corruption and fraud and lessen the cost of Public Service delivery: "It will facilitate reduction in corruption because the process will be automated. You will have what we call in computer science audit trails and you will be able to have checks and balances in the system to ensure that the procedures.

Therefore governments can be assured of more revenues to utilize for overall social and economic benefit... In the offering of these online e-government applications to the public"

Another tremendous benefit is that while reducing government spending, the EGRIP project will facilitate an increase in opportunities for financing social and economic development programmes towards a better way of life for the people of the OECS: "I want to tell the people of the OECS that EGRIP can benefit them tremendously because it will ensure that they get better overall service in terms of the government. It will facilitate the attraction of more investors which will have an indirect positive impact on the overall economic situation in the country and it will result in a higher caliber of public servants in terms of retraining and providing capacity building and so in the long run the country will be better off overall and services provided to the "man on the street" will be faster more efficient and more convenient."-Francis

The EGRIP Project, which became effective on 18th June 2009, is being implemented by the Regional E-Government Unit (REGU) headquartered at the Saint Lucia based OECS Secretariat . The Governments of the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada and Saint Lucia are participating in the programme with support by soft loan financing from the World Bank, while St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Antigua and Barbuda are considering opportunities for participation in the project. The project seeks to address some of the huge challenges of size and isolation faced by small island developing states. It emerged from an increasingly strong articulated political will and determination for sub-regional cooperation and in particular the realization that cooperation in the area of e-government can produce important outcomes in terms of: (i) reduction in the cost of doing business (ii) improvements in public sector efficiency, transparency and accountability and (iii) greater sub-regional harmonization and integration. The Electronic Government for Regional Integration Project will also contribute to the current thrust towards the attainment of an OECS Economic Union. By using a regional approach to promote integration, competitiveness, public sector efficiency and transparency, the OECS EGRIP will offer the countries in the region the benefits

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of economies of scale and technical synergies associated with the use of common policies and technologies for the delivery of government services to business entities, communities and private citizens in the OECS.

The Project is structured in two phases and will run over a four-year period commencing June 2009. Phase one (1) focuses on cross-sectoral e-government issues as well as specific applications in the public finance area, and an e-government in health pilot project. Phase two (2) is expected to deepen the assistance provided under Phase 1, while expanding the program to cover other sectors, in particular, tourism, agriculture, health and education, among others that may emerge during the early stages of implementation of Phase 1