

Written by Media

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OECS Secretariat, Castries St. Lucia December 2nd , 2009: The head of a renowned Mass Communications Education and Training Facility says the regional media are critical in providing timely and accurate information on the movement by OECS Member States to an Economic Union.

Director of the Caribbean Institute of Media and Communications at the University of the West Indies, Dr. Canute James was among presenters at a media sensitization workshop in Anguilla on the proposed OECS Economic Union. He says the media are critical in educating the public on integration: *"We hear a lot about the media; the rights and responsibilities of the media, what the media is supposed to be doing and so on. At this workshop, we are addressing issues that a quite pointed, quite focused, what is the role of the media in informing the people of the region about economic integration; How do the media do that effectively, and how do we as media practitioners of all soughts achieve this effectively?...Journalists should also engage in public education and ensure that facts and information are sensibly portrayed and properly reported"*



The OECS Secretariat's Regional Integration Unit (RIU) organized the media workshop on the OECS Economic Union. Head of the OECSRIU Elma Gene Isaac says media participation is unavoidable to effectively communicate information on any issue regarding regional integration: *"Above all the conversation is not complete unless the media possesses accurate information and the where with all to dissect, analyze, critique and disseminate material which enlightens*

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*and enhances our people's knowledge base and which demonstrates that media personnel in the OECS take very seriously their responsibility for the edification of our people. We also seek to provide a forum for regional exchange on these important matters."*

Isaac told the twenty Eastern Caribbean media workers attending the conference, although the proposed OECS Economic Union involves complex and at times technical issues, she is hoping media practitioners can help simplify the message on deeper integration among OECS Member States.



The Media Workshop is the latest in a series of sensitization exercises for sectors across the board on the process towards and OECS Economic Union. In this regard, an Antigua and Barbuda Foreign Service official Sandra Joseph has praised a recent sensitization workshop for prospective "Spokespersons" on the OECS Economic Union. Joseph says the workshop which was held in St. Lucia enhanced her understanding of the proposed Economic Union and how it shows the relevance of the intended provisions to people's daily lives: *"The workshop definitely assisted in focusing my attention on the need for accurate and clear presentation and not just the content of the message. I have also become more aware of the importance of tailoring the message to the audience. With this information I am better able to and will engage in sensitising and eliciting responses from specific people groups in relation to the proposed Economic Union. I also intend to share the tips gleaned with other officers and persons involved in the consultation process."*



The OECS Economic Union Spokespersons workshop targeted Private and Public Sector

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officials. Permanent Secretary in Saint Lucia's Ministry of Tourism, Titus Preville who worked for many years as a senior Trade Official and as focal point for CSME matters in Saint Lucia said regional integration is important to create an environment that will encourage competitiveness and ensure the private sector in member states is capable of competing with the best in the international community. He advised the participants to be mentally tough in their commitment as Spokespersons on the OECS Economic Union. Preville noted the effectiveness of interacting with the various target groups at peculiar times and in peculiar places. He emphasised that Spokespersons must be patient as the anticipated support from the target audience might not always come.

The sensitization seminars were funded by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The new OECS Treaty of Basseterre, which is a significant necessity for the OECS Economic Union is due to be signed on December 29th in St. Kitts and Nevis where the original Treaty of Basseterre to establish the OECS was signed on June 18th, 1981. OECS Member States are moving towards having the OECS Economic Union come into effect on June 18th, 2010.