

# ORGANISATION OF EASTERN CARIBBEAN STATES

## Secretariat

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## COMMUNIQUE

**35<sup>TH</sup> Meeting of the Authority  
Malliouhana Hotel  
The Valley, Anguilla  
31<sup>st</sup> January - 1<sup>st</sup> February 2002**

### **Introduction**

The thirty-fifth Meeting of the OECS Authority opened at the Malliouhana Hotel in Anguilla with a formal flag raising ceremony.

All nine OECS Member States' delegations were led by Heads of Government. These are Hon. Lester Bird, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda; Hon. Pierre Charles, Prime Minister of Dominica; Hon. Dr. Keith Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada; Hon. John Osborne, Chief Minister of Montserrat; Dr. the Hon. Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis; Hon. Dr. Kenny Anthony, Prime Minister of St. Lucia; Hon. Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Hon. Ralph O'Neal, Chief Minister, British Virgin Islands; and Hon. Osbourne Fleming, Chief Minister Anguilla as host. In addition, OECS institutions were represented by Sir Dennis Byron, Chief Justice of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court and Sir Dwight Venner, Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank.

Regional institutions present at the meeting were the Caribbean Development Bank and the CARICOM Secretariat.

### **Opening Ceremony**

The opening ceremony received remarks by acting OECS Director-General Mr. George Goodwin, and conference host, Chief Minister Osbourne Fleming of Anguilla.

Addresses were presented by outgoing Chairman, Prime Minister Dr. Keith Mitchell of Grenada and incoming Chairman Prime Minister Dr. Denzil Douglas of St. Kitts and Nevis.

In his remarks, Mr. Goodwin applauded Member States for helping to put the finances of the OECS Secretariat in their best position for many years. This situation he said has helped to build up support from the region's international partners and silenced those who questioned the commitment of Member States to the regional integration movement.

Mr. Goodwin pointed to the efforts being made in pursuit of the OECS Economic Union, the production of the first OECS sub-regional human development report and a resource mobilization and aid co-ordination programme.

He told the audience that 90 percent of the decisions taken at the last Meeting of the Authority had been acted on.

Chief Minister Fleming, in welcoming the delegates to the meeting, noted that it was the first OECS Authority meeting to be held in Anguilla, which became an Associate Member State in 1995.

Mr. Fleming noted the co-incidence of having this 35<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the OECS Authority being held in Anguilla during the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its cessation from the Federation with St. Kitts and Nevis, but noted that times and feelings have since changed.

He said Anguilla pledges to set aside whatever resources are necessary for the survival of the organs of the integration process to ensure that concrete actions are taken on the policy level.

Outgoing Chairman Prime Minister Dr. Keith Mitchell, who passed on the baton after leading the sub-region from May 2000, highlighted key points of progress in the integration movement during his stewardship.

He commended his colleagues for effectively addressing the financial problems of the organization, and their commitment to keeping payments current.

Dr. Mitchell expressed particular pride in the commitment of Member States to the achievement of an economic union. He noted the importance however of addressing the questions about freedom of movement within the sub-region, through an effective public education programme. He commended the work of the

Prime Ministerial sub-committee under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines Dr. Ralph Gonsalves in the area of travel facilitation and Freedom of Movement.

Incoming chairman Dr. Denzil Douglas, in his address, stressed the need for urgency in creating a single economic space.

He said that if ever there was a time and an event to deepen OECS integration, that time is now and the key event is free movement of OECS people.

Dr. Douglas pledged his commitment and energy to accelerate the achievement of this vision for the people of the OECS region.

### **OECS Economic Union**

In their discussions on this important initiative, the Heads agreed on the following measures for participating States, while recognizing that due to special circumstances, Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands would not be required to implement these measures in their present form.

- ?? That the legislative arrangements to facilitate the free movement of OECS people should come into effect not later than March 12<sup>th</sup> 2002. The legislation will have its third reading and be passed on the same day.
- ?? That the Immigration Acts will be amended to allow OECS people to travel freely within the sub-region and remain in another territory for a period of six months.
- ?? In the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Alien Landholding Licences will not apply to OECS citizens but in the other Member States, while licences will remain, measures are being contemplated to exempt OECS nationals from payment of the licence fees.
- ?? That in addition to regular passports and travel permits, acceptable photo identification cards; including drivers licences and national identification cards will be accepted at port of entry.
- ?? That a common passport for OECS people should be introduced by January 1<sup>st</sup> 2003. Persons granted Economic Citizenship will not be issued an OECS passport.
- ?? That Member States retain the right to prohibit entry to undesirable persons.

- ?? That the Secretariat along with the Regional Security System will address security issues.
- ?? That the Secretariat, working with the Member Governments and through professional public relations firms, will conduct widespread Public Awareness Programmes to support the Freedom of Movement initiative.
- ?? That a common, simplified Immigration Form for use by OECS nationals will be introduced to coincide with passage of the legislative arrangements.

## **Civil Aviation**

Discussions in this area led to agreement that an autonomous Civil Aviation Authority should be established to more effectively manage the sub-regional aviation systems, and that such an Authority should also address the concerns of the US Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) and enable the granting of Category One status to the region.

In their discussions, the OECS Governments, noting the importance of strengthening security arrangements at regional airports, agreed that they should take up offers of assistance being made by the donor community to provide equipment and training. The Directorate of Civil Aviation has been mandated to coordinate the discussions with the donor community.

## **Resource Mobilisation and Aid Coordination:**

Strategies were approved for the Secretariat to intensify activities to mobilize additional resources for economic and social development; and for strengthening the capacity of the sub-region to achieve more effective co-ordination of development assistance from donor agencies. It was agreed that initiatives aimed at poverty reduction should also address the agricultural sector and rural development.

## **OECS Human Development Report**

The Heads welcomed the initiative of the OECS Secretariat to prepare the first sub-regional Human Development Report and also welcomed initiatives to strengthen the capability of statistical systems in the OECS to enable them to play a more integral role in the publication of future OECS Human Development Reports.

## **International Economic Relations**

Faced with the need to facilitate more effective representation of OECS interests in the WTO, the Heads agreed to establish a joint OECS Mission in Geneva, with external financial assistance.

## **Legal Affairs**

The Heads addressed a number of matters relating to the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court and endorsed the initiatives being undertaken to enhance the OECS Justice System.

## **Conclusion**

Heads unanimously lauded this Thirty Fifth Meeting of the Authority as historical because of the far-reaching decisions taken to strengthen the OECS integration movement and expressed satisfaction with the work of the Secretariat. The Thirty Sixth Authority Meeting will be held in St. Kitts and Nevis on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2002.