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FAITH TOURISM TAKES OFF IN SAINT LUCIA



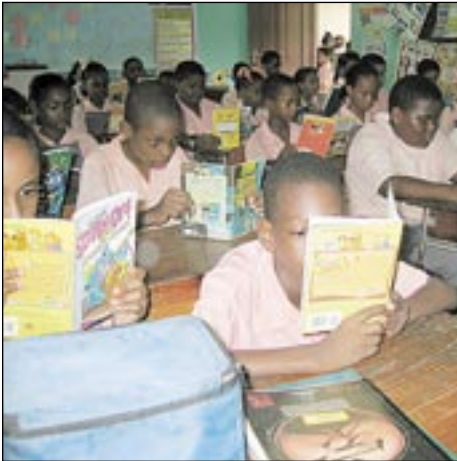
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GOVERNMENT POLICY ON HIV/AIDS

STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE DAMIAN E. GREAVES MINISTER FOR HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES, FAMILY AFFAIRS & GENDER RELATIONS TO THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN REALIZING THE TARGETS SET OUT IN THE 2001 DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT ON HIV/AIDS NEW YORK, JUNE 02ND, 2006

The Government of Saint Lucia is committed and has an unflinching obligation to reverse the spread and mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on the entire population of Saint Lucia. This goal is eloquently promulgated in the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan for 2005-2009, which the Cabinet of Ministers endorsed as the blueprint for the national response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in 2004. This goal is also consistent with the goal of universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support – that is, providing access to the information and services to all those who need it by 2010.

In response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and on the basis of the National Strategic Plan, the government is dedicated to the development and implementation of a comprehensive and integrated package of prevention, treatment, care and support programs and initiatives to reach all citizens of Saint Lucia who need them.

This process involves the participation of a wide range of stakeholders including Civil Society Organizations and particularly persons living with HIV/AIDS. This broad-based participation is at all levels from the planning to implementation stages and at community to sub-national to national levels.

The government is receiving additional support for this process from international agencies, bilateral institutions and donors such as the World Bank, the Global Fund, UNAIDS, DFID, PAHO, CAREC, CARICOM/PANCAP, FHI, UWI, friendly governments, and other agencies and institutions.

Situation and Response Analysis

Saint Lucia faces special development challenges due to its small size and vulnerability to natural disasters (particularly due to storms and hurricanes) and other external shocks. Our country has witnessed several fluctuations in economic growth since its independence in 1979. Negative growth in the early 1980s was followed by annual growth rates averaging 3 percent in the 1990s. The economy experienced major structural transformation between 1993 and 2001 with the growing importance of services, especially tourism, and the reduction of the contribution of the agriculture and manufacturing sectors to overall GDP.

The country faces institutional capacity weaknesses in a number of areas and per capita costs of basic social and infrastructure services are high due to the small size of the population (just over 160,000 in 2005).

The first case of AIDS in Saint Lucia was reported in 1985. By the end of 2005 the total number of reported cases of HIV infection climbed to 546. About 51 percent of reported cases have advanced to AIDS, and 48% have succumbed to AIDS-related conditions. Surveillance data from official sources indicate that from 1990 to 2001, HIV prevalence among women attending antenatal clinics has ranged from 0.6 percent to 4.0 percent, suggesting that the epidemic in St. Lucia is still at a low level. Saint Lucia, therefore, is well poised to prevent the epidemic from escalating and posing a significant problem to its current and future socio-economic development.

Gross underreporting of cases is suspected due to inadequate monitoring, poor surveillance systems and a reluctance of persons to come forward for HIV testing because of high levels of stigma and discrimination. These factors have resulted in a poor understanding of recent trends of the epidemic, particularly with respect to important vulnerable groups such as commercial sex workers (CSWs), men who have sex with men (MSMs), sexually transmitted infection (STI) clients, pregnant women and other sub-populations.

Like most countries in our region, the HIV epidemic in Saint Lucia is propelled by heterosexual intercourse – with transactional sex as a significant component



Hon. Damian Greaves

– within a milieu of poverty, unemployment and gender inequalities. Bisexual transmission occurs among 10 percent of reported cases. However, strong cultural and social taboos that stigmatize homosexual relations, including the criminalization of buggery, connote that the true attributed proportion may be reasonably higher. Mother-to-child transmission accounts for about 4 percent of reported cases.

About 70 percent of reported cases occurred during the last decade ending in 2005 – in spite of all our efforts at prevention for almost two decades.

The findings of a Situation and Response Analysis conducted in 2003 surmised the following to provide some explanation for this phenomenon: Poor and incomplete surveillance systems; Lack of resources; Low levels of buy-in from policy-makers; High levels of staff turnover; Malaise to plan, monitor and manage the epidemic in a sustainable manner; Limited focus on treatment, care and support for persons infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.

The apparent need to intensify and expand the national response to be more multi-sectoral, multi-dimensional and coordinated has now become clear and urgent.

Expanding the Response using “Three Ones” Principles

At the 26th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGASS) in June of 2001, the world acknowledged the threat and challenges of HIV/AIDS and pledged to take action through the adoption of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. This Declaration of Commitment provided a strong foundation for important developments which occurred subsequently at the global level, and which I believe will make significant contributions toward the goal of universal access by 2010 and beyond. These major developments include: The establishment of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to provide additional funds to low and middle-income countries; The significant reduction in prices of some important AIDS medicines; The 3 by 5 initiative which has served as a catalyst to quickly move countries and regions to increase the number of people on antiretroviral treatment; and The “three ones” principles which have been endorsed globally and implemented by many countries to achieve effective and efficient use of resources.

In order to intensify its response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic to provide easy access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for all who need it, the Government of Saint Lucia produced and endorsed the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan 2005-2009. This first critical step was taken early in 2004. The plan is based on a situation and response analysis of HIV/AIDS in the country and broad consulta-

tion with all major stakeholders. This ambitious plan proposes four main strategies: (1) Advocacy, policy, legislation and socio-economic development; (2) Comprehensive HIV/AIDS care for all people living with HIV/AIDS; (3) Prevention of further transmission of HIV; and (4) Strengthening national capacity to deliver an effective, coordinated, multisectoral response.

Consequently, the Government sought and received assistance from the World Bank for the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Project to support the implementation of the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan. This project is part of the third phase of the Bank’s Caribbean Multi-Country HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Adaptable Program Lending (APL) instrument approved in June 2001. The Saint Lucia HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Project articulates four components: (1) Community and Civil society HIV/AIDS Initiatives; (2) Line (non-health) Ministries HIV/AIDS responses; (3) Strengthening the health sector response to HIV/AIDS; and (4) Strengthening institutional capacity for program management, monitoring and evaluation, and legal technical assistance.

The National AIDS Coordinating Council (NACC) was established in 2005. This body is the authority charged with the responsibility for overseeing and coordinating the national response. The Prime Minister is the chairman of the NACC. Its membership is broad-based and comprises representatives from public and private sector stakeholder groups including government ministries, Civil Society Organizations, the private sector, support groups for persons living with HIV/AIDS and other relevant organizations and institutions. The NACC meets every quarter to discuss and make important decisions about the national HIV/AIDS response. The establishment of the NACC marks the second important step towards a coordinated national response to HIV/AIDS.

The National AIDS Program Secretariat (NAPS) – which became fully operational in January 2006 – is in-charge of coordinating the national response and serves as the administrative and operating arm of the NACC. The NAPS bears direct responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the national response. A monitoring and Evaluation framework for the national response was developed in 2005. This framework is based on indicators from the National Strategic Plan, UNAIDS, the Global Fund, UNGASS and other sources. The NAPS is working with implementing agencies and other regional and international partners to establish and/or strengthen the requisite surveillance and information-generation systems for continued and systematic monitoring and evaluation at programmatic, sub-national and national levels.

Saint Lucia has now established the three pillars required to facilitate the unity of coordinating entities, partnerships and funding mechanisms for concerted and collaborative action against the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Key Issues for Achieving Universal Access

HIV prevention and HIV treatment must both be given top priority and equal focus. It will be impossible to provide antiretroviral therapy to all who need it if HIV prevention fails and new infections continue to increase year after year.

We can not even dream of getting close to universal access without placing children and young people at the centre. The full range of HIV programs and services must reach these two very important groups – otherwise the conditions that fuel this epidemic will persist and HIV/AIDS will prevail. Top priority must be given to children and young people who are most at risk, most vulnerable and most disadvantaged.

We must also acknowledge that we need to address the needs of our women. With the growing feminization of the epidemic

many more women in all our countries are becoming infected. As more and more women become infected, more and more children will become infected through mother-to-child transmission.

It is quite distressing to find out that only 10 percent of pregnant women worldwide have access to programs and services that address mother-to-child prevention. This statistic is even lower in some countries, including severely affected countries. This is really appalling because it is about 10 years since research has convincingly demonstrated that this seemingly simple and straightforward intervention can save all babies from being born infected with HIV.

This experience with mother-to-child interventions provides important lessons for universal access in particular and what we are trying to achieve in general. It tells us that solid scientific evidence, a straightforward intervention and money are not enough. For all these to work we must also mobilize and involve the community, we must address the stigma, we must garner political support in the community and at the highest levels, and we must associate them with education and counseling. We must also shake and modify some of our established conventions, traditions and taboos. For example it may no longer be true that “breast is best” for infants in all circumstances.

In closing I will look to the future and posit the question: What about the next twenty, thirty or even forty years?

In my humble view, the movement towards universal access must be supported by a social movement. This means that we must approach the epidemic in a very comprehensive manner. We must also address the long-term agenda even as we deal with the crisis of the epidemic on a daily basis.

I must mention five critical points which must be addressed from now to realize the goal of universal access by 2010 and to maintain it in the future: (1) Sustainable, predictable, guaranteed long term funding – We must start and keep talking about where the money will continue to come from in five, ten, twenty or thirty years from now. We must maintain and increase the political momentum to keep the money flowing. Thirty or forty years from today the people who started treatment now will still need antiretroviral therapy; (2) Human resources capacity is absolutely critical for small resource-constrained countries such as mine – not only in health services but also in social services as well. We must also move speedily to strengthen the health and social service delivery systems. We are now paying the price for decades of not making the requisite investments in the public and private services and staff. We have seen a professional “brain drain” with key professionals in the health and social sectors, and a “brain hemorrhage” in the case of qualified nurses. The public sector delivery systems must be given priority for support and strengthening because in many countries this is the only place that the poor could afford to go to; (3) Availability of and access to medicines and diagnostics needs to be enhanced and accelerated to reach all who need them in the shortest possible time. We also need concerted efforts to discuss and resolve the issues around generics versus patents within the context of fundamental and basic human rights; (4) The broader determinants which drive the epidemic: stigma and discrimination in all forms, gender inequality, poverty, illiteracy. We need to take concrete actions against these drivers of the epidemic – particularly AIDS-related stigma and the inferior position of women – if we are to have any hope of ending the pandemic; (5) Sustained leadership and political support, not only from heads of state and other political leaders, but also from leaders in all walks of life. This is critical for continued political engagement, support in public opinion and normalizing of the epidemic. I thank you very much for listening.

Faith Tourism Takes Off In Saint Lucia

Following the success of the Air Jamaica-sponsored “The Walk: Sanctuary for the Soul” women’s seminar held in St. Lucia last month, the organizers have confirmed they will return to St. Lucia next year for another “faith tourism” meeting from June 21 to 24, 2007.

Kaye Chong, one of Air Jamaica’s managers of Community and Special Market Sales, said the Jamaican flag carrier was pleased to support the ground-breaking seminar which attracted women of faith from the Caribbean and the

eastern seaboard of the United States.

“We at Air Jamaica are committed to tapping into the faith market in the United States and the Caribbean and look forward to another inspiring meeting next year,” said Chong who, along with the participants, benefited from powerful guest speakers, interactive sessions, a money management session, and ‘Biblical Aromatherapy’ as registrants sampled essential oils which were used in Biblical times.

“Faith, excellence and integrity were the order of the day and I was personally blessed to be a part of this confer-

ence and gospel concert,” said Chong, who added it was a blessing to see the “faith tourism” vision she shared with events producer Andria Hall, President of SpeakEasy M.E.D.I.A., become a successful reality.

The conference challenged women to balance their lives by embracing the practicality of their Christian faith, centered on the Word of God. Held at the four-star Coco Palm in Rodney Bay, conference organizers say they exceeded their own expectations. “Clearly, faith tourism is viable and valuable to a destination.

God blessed us by transforming a vision just a few months ago to a life changing reality for the more than 40 women,” said Hall, whose team also produced a Gospel concert at Sandals Grande St. Lucian, featuring the New Jersey-based Carl Jenkins and X’altation and Special Blend, a Castries-based choir of 10 women.

Sponsors and supporters of the conference and concert included Air Jamaica, Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, Coco Resorts, LUCELEC, Ruder Finn, St. Lucia Tourist Board and TRENMEDIA Ministry Services.



Andria Hall (left) and Air Jamaica’s Kaye Chong (second from right) join members of Special Blend in St. Lucia.

Education Minister Congratulates 14 Year Old Calypsonian Floopsy

One of the most pleasing outcomes of the 2006 Carnival season was the emergence of a sensational 14 year old calypsonian whose brilliant performances catapulted him into national prominence and stamped him as a star, not merely of this year’s festivities but one of the future. Everton Hippolyte, the Mighty Floopsy, placed second in the Calypso Monarch finals, losing out by a mere ten points. However his participation in the calypso monarch final was the subject of some controversy. In the following statement to Nationwide, Minister for Education, Youth and Sports, Mario Michel, congratulates Floopsy and speaks on the controversy.

As Minister for Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports I want to commend and congratulate Everton Hippolyte – the Mighty Floopsy – on his excellent performance and placement in the 2006 Calypso Monarchy.

It was indeed unfortunate that some venerated veterans in the calypso arena, who never questioned Floopsy’s participation in a Calypso Tent, chose to question his selection for the Calypso Semi Finals and (by extension) the Calypso Finals; as if to suggest that it is OK for youngsters to participate, as long as they do not excel. The view expressed by some that 14 year-olds like Floopsy should only be competing in school’s ca-



Floopsy receiving his prize from David Hippolyte of Consolidated Foods

lypso competitions is tantamount to saying, for instance, that Under 19 cricketers should participate only in Under 19 tournaments and should never play test cricket, even if they have the talent and ability to do so.

Fortunately for Floopsy and for St. Lucian calypso, the Calypso Association was not swayed by the comments and threats by some influential veterans and Floopsy graced both the Calypso Semi Finals and Finals with his excellent performances.

As it turned out, Floopsy was easily the most popular competitor in both the semis and the finals and it was only the lyrical and musical mastery of Jason “Bachelor” Joseph that prevented Floopsy from becoming St. Lucia’s and the Caribbean’s youngest ever National Calypso Monarch.

Incidentally, by his performances in the 2006 Calypso Competition, Floopsy showed that his ambition to be a calypsonian has already been realized and that his mother is in fact deserving of honour for producing such



Hon. Mario F. Michel
Minister for Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports

a fine and talented young son.

So congratulations to Everton Hippolyte, his family, his writer and manager, and the principal, teachers and students of the Bocage Secondary School who supported him. Congratulations also to the Take Over Tent for producing yet another calypso sensation after giving birth to the likes of Wally and Alpha. Thanks are in order to Michels’ Customs Brokerage for sponsoring Floopsy’s semi final appearance and to Digicel for sponsoring him at the finals and beyond.

2006 COMMON ENTRANCE RESULTS

THE PERFORMANCE OF THE SCHOOLS

THE DISTRICTS

The performance of candidates at the district level is presented in Table 6. The means of the districts ranged from 41.24% to 50.06%. Districts 1, 2, 3 and 7 attained means greater than the national mean of 45.80%.

TABLE 6
2006 Common Entrance Examination Results
PERFORMANCE OF DISTRICTS

Districts	No. Sat	No. at and Above the National Mean	Mean Performance (%)	Standard Deviation
District 1	643	331	46.73	17.10
District 2	616	351	50.06	17.42
District 3	559	300	47.99	16.37
District 4	499	215	43.50	16.14
District 5	596	258	43.06	15.73
District 6	584	270	45.08	17.88
District 7	365	182	45.88	15.54
District 8	279	93	41.24	13.34
TOTALS	4141	2000		

THE SCHOOLS WHICH FORM THE DISTRICTS

- District 1 - schools in Gros Islet and Babonneau
- District 2 – schools in North Castries
- District 3 – schools in Central and East Castries, and parts of South East Castries, that is Ti Rocher and Forestiere
- District 4 – parts of South East and South Castries, from Bexon through to Anse la Raye
- District 5 – schools in the Mabouya Valley, Dennery, Micoud and Mon Repos
- District 6 – schools in Vieux Fort North and Vieux Fort South
- District 7 – schools in Choiseul and Laborie
- District 8 – Schools in Soufriere and Canaries

THE SCHOOLS

Thirty-seven (37) schools attained means above the national mean. Thirty-three (33) of these schools were public and four (4) were private. Table 8 presents the performance of all schools registered in the 2006 Common Entrance Examination.

TABLE 8 (Part 1 of 4)
2006 Common Entrance Examination Results
MEAN PERFORMANCES OF ALL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

School Code	Name of Primary School	No. Registered	No. Sat (With birth records)	No. at and Above the National Mean	Mean Performance (%)	Standard Deviation
29	Anse La Raye Primary	47	37	25	50	11
49	Augier Combined	82	80	37	47	18
65	Aux Lyons Combined	46	46	18	43	14
05	Ave Maria Girls' Primary	180	180	120	53	15
09	Babonneau Primary	92	84	35	45	15
24	Balata Combined	39	39	20	48	13
63	Banse La Grace Combined	38	38	13	43	16
52	Belle Vue Combined	50	48	26	47	14
15	Bexon Primary	91	87	43	47	18
58	Blanchard Combined	59	49	18	43	17
23	Bocage Combined	34	32	14	47	13
10	Boguis Combined	21	21	14	49	17
14	Bonne Terre Preparatory	30	30	29	67	10
33	Bouton Combined	9	9	5	48	11
20	Camille Henry Memorial	105	105	74	56	19
32	Canaries Primary	40	40	15	41	13
08	Canon Laurie Anglican Primary	140	140	73	48	18
22	Carmen Rene Memorial	128	128	89	56	17
27	Castries SDA Primary	17	17	9	50	18
13	Ciceron Combined	83	81	41	48	17

TABLE 8 (Part 2 of 4)
2006 Common Entrance Examination Results
MEAN PERFORMANCES OF ALL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

School Code	Name of Primary School	No. Registered	No. Sat (With birth records)	No. at and Above the National Mean	Mean Performance (%)	Standard Deviation
44	Laborie Boys' Primary	39	39	14	39	16
45	Laborie Girls' Primary	28	28	19	49	13
37	Les Etangs Combined	27	27	10	42	13
11	Marchand Combined	94	81	15	34	13
53	Micoud Primary	115	113	35	40	15
30	Millet Primary	77	76	38	44	18
54	Mon Repos Combined	26	26	16	48	18
03	Monchy Combined	70	67	23	37	14
43	Mongouge Combined	37	35	17	45	17
25	Morne Du Don Combined	58	56	34	52	15
17	Odsan Combined	79	72	26	42	14
66	Patience Combined	47	45	22	46	17
47	Playe Combined	23	23	15	50	16
62	Pierrot Combined	80	74	45	50	17
51	Plain View Combined	92	85	55	54	18
38	Reunion Primary	42	41	15	42	14
68	Richfond Combined	46	46	23	42	14
39	Riviere Doree Anglican Combined	21	21	14	53	14
42	Roblot Combined	17	17	10	48	15

TABLE 8 (Part 2 of 4)
2006 Common Entrance Examination Results
MEAN PERFORMANCES OF ALL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

School Code	Name of Primary School	No. Registered	No. Sat (With birth records)	No. at and Above the National Mean	Mean Performance (%)	Standard Deviation
71	Dame Pearllette Louisy Primary	174	168	118	54	18
41	Delcer R.C. Combined	51	51	31	49	15
60	Dennery Primary	157	155	62	42	16
64	Derniere Riviere Combined	46	46	23	48	14
18	Des Barras Combined	10	10	7	48	13
55	Desruiseseaux Combined	67	66	36	45	18
40	Dugard Combined	20	19	14	51	14
56	Emmanuel SDA Combined	19	19	17	57	12
21	Fond Assau Combined	43	43	15	39	13
36	Fond St. Jacques Primary	59	59	25	43	14
07	Forestiere Methodist Combined	25	24	16	53	16
06	Gordon & Walcott Mem. Meth.	113	109	34	40	15
50	Grace Combined	29	29	5	38	11
01	Grande Riviere Combined	71	71	31	43	14
02	Gros Islet Primary	86	72	22	38	13
16	La Croix Maingot Combined	73	72	30	43	13
19	La Guerre Combined	37	37	16	47	18
61	La Ressource Combined	27	27	15	48	19
28	L'Abayee SDA Primary	17	17	4	35	11
75	Lady Gordon Opportunity Centre	5	5	4	52	10

TABLE 8 (Part 3 of 4)
2006 Common Entrance Examination Results
MEAN PERFORMANCES OF ALL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

School Code	Name of Primary School	No. Registered	No. Sat (With birth records)	No. at and Above the National Mean	Mean Performance (%)	Standard Deviation
31	Roseau Combined	58	52	4	30	9
46	Saltibus Combined	53	53	20	44	14
34	Soufriere Primary	165	144	38	40	13
04	St. Aloysius R.C. Boys' Primary	201	197	115	49	17
26	Tapion Private	16	16	14	60	12
12	Ti Rocher Combined (Castries)	36	29	4	35	9
57	Ti Rocher Combined (Micoud)	74	73	27	40	14
67	Vide Bouteille Combined	65	62	39	50	12
48	Vieux Fort Primary	156	153	48	38	17
TOTALS			4141	2000		

Towards OECS Economic Union

When the Heads of Government of the OECS met in Basseterre St. Kitts for the 43rd meeting of the Authority, the highest decision making body of the organisation, they signed a declaration of intent to establish an economic union among their member states by 1st July 2007. In the communique at the end of the meeting, they also outlined the steps that are to be taken between now and July 2007, to bring their "Declaration of Intent" to fruition and to involve the people of the OECS in the move to wards economic union. The following is the Text of the Declaration of Intent and the section of the Communique on the Treaty of Economic Union.

Declaration of Intent by Heads of Government of the OECS on the participation of their countries in the OECS Economic Union

WE, the Heads of Government of the Member States of the OECS meeting in St. Kitts on the 21st day of June 2006 who have affixed their signature hereunder.

RECALLING that the decision to strengthen cooperation between our respective states and peoples and establish common institutions is enshrined

in the Treaty of Basseterre of 1981.

CONVINCED that continued social and economic development in a challenging global environment requires greater cooperation and collaboration in the elaboration and execution of development policies for the benefit of all our peoples.

RECOGNISING that the benefits realized under the Treaty of Basseterre will be enshrined through establishment of an Economic Union.

DETERMINED that the benefits of cooperation resulting from an Economic Union should be shared equitably among all our members.

MINDFUL that our States while being an integral part of CARICOM are a distinct group with special shared peculiarities of an economic and social nature.

NOW SOLEMNLY AFFIRM our commitment to the establishment of an OECS Economic Union by 1st July 2007.

The Treaty on Economic Union

The Meeting received a presentation on the OECS Economic Union Treaty from the Task Force on Economic Union. The Meeting commended the excellent work of the Task Force to

date, and generally accepted the proposed Treaty as developed to this point. The Authority however directed that some additional provisions be formulated to allow for a role for national parliamentary representatives in the form of a regional Assembly of Parliamentarians comprising representatives of government and opposition in the Member States. This body, it was felt, was necessary to act as a legislative filter to the Authority in its law making capacity. The Heads further directed that the Treaty be reviewed by a meeting of members of the Task Force, Attorneys General, the drafts- person for the Treaty and representatives of the OECS Secretariat. The Meeting agreed that the Treaty should be taken to the OECS public, following the steps indicated above, through a mass national and regional education programme with strong political leadership and direction. In their discussions on this matter, it was recognized that steps should be taken to ensure recognition of the OECS Economic Union Treaty under the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. Note was taken of the fact that the original Treaty of Chaguaramas had formally recognized the Treaty of Basseterre, but that this was omitted in the Revised Treaty.



Len Ishmel
OECS Director General

First OECS Flag Flown at St. Lucia Carnival Spectacle

History was made on Sunday night July 16, 2006 when the first Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, OECS Flag was flown at the Caribbean Soca Monarch Competition in St. Lucia. The OECS Flag was officially unfurled on Wednesday June 21st 2006 in St. Kitts-Nevis, during activities to mark the OECS 25th Anniversary.

At Sunday night's St. Lucia Carnival event the OECS Flag was flown as a symbol representing the OECS Member Countries taking part in the unprecedented showcase at Mindoo Phillip Park.

The presence of the OECS Flag at this Caribbean event also seeks to demonstrate the unconditional commitment of the OECS to regional integration. Head of the OECS Economic Affairs Division Randolph Cato spoke on the significant development at a welcoming reception for the Caribbean Soca



Randy Cato Director Economic Affairs Division OECS

Monarch competitors on Sunday.

"This event is an important one for us and our association with it is a continuation of marking the 25 years that the OECS has been in existence... We are now an important institution in the Caribbean. We are an important force for bringing the smaller countries of the Caribbean together and in many ways the OECS have been leading the rest of the Caribbean. This activity which has moved from an OECS into a wider Caribbean activity is indicative of how much we are showing the Caribbean what can happen once we apply goodwill and good sense in doing things."

Besides fielding liaison officers and facilitating communication with the competitors, the OECS Secretariat also sponsored the winning trophy for the Caribbean Soca Monarch.

Of the 9 member grouping, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, former OECS

Soca Monarch winner St. Kitts-Nevis, along with two time OECS Soca Monarch champions St. Vincent and the Grenadines and St. Lucia were the OECS Member Countries taking part in the novel event.

Fielding two competitors, Trinidad and Tobago made a historic appearance, winning the unprecedented event through Patrick "Mista Vybe" Gorden's Ting for De Road Song. OECS competitors, St. Lucia's Jonathan Ninga Dan St. Rose's Labouwe finished second, while Wendhal Alpha Gerald and George "Platinum George St. Croix, shared third place singing Happy Birthday Carnival and May I respectively. Barbados also took part in this year's regional musical entertainment showcase.

Antigua-Barbuda, Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands were unable to compete in the 2006 Caribbean Soca Monarch.

CARICOM HEADS ON IT, CARIFESTA, YOUTH

At the 26th Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Caricom, held from the 3-6th July in Basseterre, St. Kitts, the Heads took a number of decisions on the subjects of Information and Communication Technology, Carifesta and Youth. The following is the section of the Communique, issued at the end of the meeting, dealing with those subjects.

Information and Communication Technology

The Conference received a comprehensive report from the Lead Head of Government responsible for Science and Technology, including Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Dr., the Hon Keith Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada, on the progress of the Connectivity Agenda approved by Heads of Government in July 2003.

They recommitted to the urgency to develop ICT including telecom-

munications along two priority tracks of social and human development and advancing the trade and economic agenda, particularly the CSME.

Heads of Government acknowledged the potential threat of social exclusion posed by the digital divide, and the real presence of a "digital hole" in the Caribbean, excluding it from connectivity through education, knowledge and research networks among Member States and with the rest of the world.

In that context they endorsed the development and implementation of a Regional Research and Education Network for the Caribbean (CARIBNET). They also endorsed the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network (CKLN), established by Heads of Government as a CARICOM Project in March 2004, as the agency to co-ordinate and manage the development of CARIBNET.

The Heads of Government mandated their Ministries charged with national ICT strategies and connectivity to be-

come engaged with the CKLN to drive the implementation of CARIBNET. Heads of Government pledged their continued financial support to CKLN.

The Heads of Government acknowledged the establishment and successful testing of a video-conference facility in all Member States which will eventually be enabled by CARIBNET, and noted that the facility would be expanded to Associate Members and CARICOM institutions in the near future.

CARIFESTA IX

Heads of Government pledged their support to CARIFESTA IX, "Celebrating our People; Contesting the World Stage", scheduled to take place in Trinidad and Tobago from 22 September to 1 October 2006, and agreed to ensure high quality representation from country delegations. They endorsed the strategies put forward for the "new CARIFESTA" as one mechanism for promoting the Region's cultural industries.

Heads of Government also agreed to provide support for the Regional Endowment Fund for Culture and the Arts, and to contribute to the financial sustainability of CARIFESTA. They called on the private sector to support the endowment fund for the arts in the Caribbean.

The Heads of Government expressed appreciation to Trinidad and Tobago for its role in hosting CARIFESTA IX as a transition to the new model Caribbean Festival of the Arts. They also noted that The Bahamas will host CARIFESTA X in 2008.

Youth

The Heads of Government mandated the Council for Human and Social development (COHSOD) to establish a Youth Development Commission to address the challenges confronting the young people of the Community and to assist each other in the identification of best practices.

CONCERN ABOUT OIL PRICE INCREASES



The Hess Oil Facility at Cul De Sac

Alarm bells have begun to ring across Saint Lucia and other Eastern Caribbean islands because of another sudden increase in the world market price of oil. On Friday, July 14, 2006) the price of oil was quoted on the world market at approximately US \$78 per barrel.

This latest increase has been blamed on the break-out and spread of hostilities in various parts of the Middle East, including the latest armed tensions in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and the Israeli military attacks on Lebanon. The latest fighting has also led to a sudden drop in the value

of stocks on the US Stock Exchange. Meanwhile, officials at the Ministry of Finance are expressing concern about the potential consequences of a continued increase in the price of oil on the world market. That is because the Government of Saint Lucia is subsidizing the price of fuel at the gas pumps and

the finance officials are concerned as to how long this policy and practice can be maintained. Ministry officials have again warned that if the trend continues the Government will have no choice but to follow others in the region by also increasing the price of fuel, as the situation would have become untenable.

Bar Association to Hear Public Complaints Against Lawyers

Members of the public who have filed complaints against local lawyers have been invited to indicate whether they wish to continue their proceedings. The invitation has come from the Secretary to the Disciplinary Committee of the Saint Lucia Bar Association.

The Secretary has invited 17 persons – all of whom had filed complaints against locally-registered lawyers between November 1991 and November 2002 -- to indicate whether they were still interested in pursuing their complaints. In an advertisement in a recent issue of the Saint Lucia Government Gazette, the Association's Disciplinary Committee advised the 17 complainants that if they still wanted to pursue their complaints against the accused Attorneys at Law, they were to contact the Secretary's Office of the Registry of the Supreme Court.

The 17 complainants were given a deadline of June 28, 2006 by which to indicate their desire to pursue their respective complaints. They were also told that if the Disciplinary Committee received no indication of their desire to do so by that deadline, the said matters would be deemed dismissed and would be removed from the list.

WORKS PROCUREMENT NOTICE

CONSTRUCTION OF NEW NATIONAL HOSPITAL COMPLEX

GOVERNMENT OF SAINT LUCIA/EUROPEAN UNION

(PUBLICATION REFERENCE: 122461/D/WKS/LC)

The Government of Saint Lucia has received a grant from the European Commission from the 9th European Development Fund (EDF) for the construction of a general hospital which will form part of the new national hospital complex at Coubaril just off the Millennium Highway. The objective of the project is to improve the quality, access and range of acute care general services available in Saint Lucia by establishing a new general hospital to complement improved primary care services.

In pursuance of this objective, the Government of Saint Lucia, herein represented by the National Authorising Officer for EDF Operations, therefore wishes to invite tenders from suitably qualified and experienced contracting firms. Details on the Contract, the Terms of Participation, and Tendering Procedure are as follows:

Description of the contract

The Works comprise the construction of the New National Hospital of approximately 14,000 square metres in floor area and incorporating thirty-three departments that include A&E, Outpatients, Acute General Wards, Operating Theatres, Radiography, Intensive Care, Special Care Baby Unit and associated support facilities. The proposed hospital is a two-storey reinforced concrete structure with additional lower ground floor levels at the western end of the building. External walls are a single skin infill of concrete blocks that are externally rendered and internally finished with smooth gypsum plaster. Internal walls are of hollow partition construction. The building has a coated pitched metal sheet roof and brise soleil sun shading. Strategically placed elevators and a central ramp provide vertical circulation and movement. The building shall be finished for fitting out and includes all M&E service provisions. External areas provide for car parking and vehicular/pedestrian access.

Terms of participation

Participation is open on equal terms to all natural and legal persons [participating either individually or in a grouping (consortium) of tenderers] of the Member States of the European Union and the countries and territories of the regions covered and/or authorised by the Regulation or other specific instruments applicable to the programme under which the contract is financed. All goods supplied under this contract must originate in these countries.

Tendering

Tenderers (including firms within the same legal group, other members of the same consortium, and sub-contractors) may submit only one tender. Tenderers may submit a tender for a variant solution in addition to their tender for the works required in the tender dossier.

Tenderers must provide a tender guarantee of 180,000 euros when submitting their tender. This guarantee will be released to unsuccessful tenderers once the tender procedure has been completed and to the successful tenderer(s) upon signature of the contract by all parties. Tenders must remain valid for a period of 90 days after the deadline for submission of tenders. An optional information meeting and/or site visit will be held on Wednesday August 09, 2006. Attendance to be confirmed through the contracting Authority, the National Authorising Officer, 5th Floor, Conway Business Centre, Waterfront, Castries; Tel. 758-468-2180; Fax. 758-453-6552, e-mail: projects@candw.lc

How to obtain the tender dossier

The complete tender dossier, in hard and electronic copies, are available from the National Authorising Officer, 5th Floor, Conway Business Centre, Waterfront, Castries; Tel. 758-468-2180; Fax. 758-453-6552, e-mail: projects@candw.lc upon payment of EC\$4,250.00 which excludes courier delivery. It is also available for inspection at the premises of the Contracting Authority. Tenders must be submitted using the standard tender form included in the tender dossier, whose format and instructions must be strictly observed.

The Official Invitation to Tender, Instructions to Tenderers and the Form of Contract are available on the Commission's Website at: <http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/cgi/frame12.pl> or at the Government of Saint Lucia's website at: <http://stlucia.gov.lc>.

Tenderers with questions regarding this tender should send them in writing to projects@candw.lc and National Authorising Officer, 5th Floor, Conway Business Centre, Waterfront, Castries (mentioning the publication reference) at least 21 days before the deadline for submission of tenders given in item 19. The Contracting Authority must reply to all tenderers' questions at least 11 days before the deadline for submission of tenders.

Deadline for submission of tenders

1200 hours (noon) local (St Lucia) time on October 11, 2006. Any application received after this deadline will not be considered. The deadline for submission of tenders will coincide with the public opening.

Tender opening session

1400 hours local (St Lucia) time on October 11, 2006

PROTECTING YACHTING TOURISTS

The Marine Industries Association of St. Lucia (MIASL) is assisting the authorities in the fight to reduce crime against the island's yachting tourism sector. President of the MIASL, Keats Compton in a statement issued this week, said that the Association had proposed a number of concrete measures to the Ministry of Tourism in order to reduce the incidence of criminal acts against members of the visiting yachting fraternity in Rodney Bay, Marigot and Soufriere.

These measures are: The introduction of a special short-code (e.g. HELP) distress telephone number at appropriate locations at Gros Islet, Marigot and Soufriere – police station or Port office; Locating a VHF radio with dedicated emergency channel along with the phone; Placing billboards at appropriate locations advising of emergency numbers and crime prevention tips; Producing leaflets/web info with tips on basic safety precautions and important phone numbers; Instituting a requirement that all small flotation devices which can be used to move from shore to yacht, such as kayaks and surfboards, are secured ashore by their owners, or be subject to confiscation; The publication of these initiatives in appropriate media; Discussion with SLASPA on extending patrols to the ports of Marigot and Soufriere; Training boat-boys and others to "meet and greet" yachting visitors

The Aquarius Incident

The initiative by MIASL follows a crime committed against the owners of a visiting yacht, the Aquarius, in Rodney Bay last month. On Sunday, Jun 18th Christine Belaud from France and Francis Abeln, a Dutch citizen, traveled from Martinique to Rodney Bay on their yacht Aquarius for what was meant to be a routine electrical maintenance job by Egbert Charles of Rodney Bay Marina. The Customs post at Rodney Bay Marina had closed for the day, so they anchored outside of the Marina entrance, where they would spend the night before clearing Customs the following morning.

What followed has been the subject of much media comment and prompted a torrent of emails from justifiably outraged cruisers – three men boarded the Aquarius at about midnight, allegedly bound and assaulted Francis, and two of the three allegedly proceeded to commit rape, following which items were stolen and the culprits made good their escape.

Quick Action By The Authorities

This was by far the most serious assault against the yachting fraternity in recent memory. However the authorities and members of the local yachting sector moved quickly to aid and comfort the traumatised couple and to catch the perpetrators of the crime. The Minister of Tourism, Hon. Phillip J. Pierre paid a personal visit to the couple to express his regrets. Rodney Bay Marina provided the services of a counselor and Egbert Charles, stayed with the couple throughout Monday. The Marine Industries Association of St. Lucia (MIASL) kept in close touch with the Royal St. Lucia Police Force, in an effort to ensure that the facts surrounding the case were accurately disseminated.



Rodney Bay Marina, Gros Islet

Three suspects, aged 16, 17 and 33 years, were arrested within one week of the incident. The three were arraigned on Jun 30th charged with robbery, two with rape, with the third charged with assisting rape. They were all remanded in custody. All the charges are indictable, and maximum sentences are severe.

Christine and Francis were at the Magistrate's Court and were requested to reappear at the preliminary hearing on Jun 12th, where evidence was taken from both of them, with assistance from an interpreter in Christine's case. Throughout their ordeal, Francis has commended the support from the Police, public, Rodney Bay Marina and the MIASL. More evidence will be taken from Police and others at the continuation of the preliminary hearing on Aug. 8th, following which the magistrate will rule on whether the case should be referred to the High Court.

Much has been made of whether the authorities have adequately discharged their responsibilities, specifically, whether sea patrols were or were not being conducted using a boat provided by a group made up of Rodney Bay Marina and three members of the MIASL, for that purpose. According to Keats Compton, there has been some confusion surrounding the deployment of the boat and this may have been caused by reports appearing in some media several months ago, that the patrol boat had been formally handed over to the Port Authority.

The facts are that Aquarius was attacked on the evening of Sunday Jun. 18th, whilst the boat was delivered to the Port Authority on Tuesday Jun 21st, by prior arrangement with Rodney Bay Marina the week before. The reality is that the Marine Police were on the scene within 10 minutes of receiving a call from the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC), based in Martinique, which Francis contacted once he managed to free himself. The Marine Police had in fact been patrolling the area earlier, but obviously did not encounter the three. Meanwhile

the Police have acknowledged the role played by members of the public in coming forward, willingly, to assist them in fingering the suspects as quickly as they did. The Courts must now decide on their innocence, or guilt and punishment.

Other Miasl Measures

In addition to the proposals that the MIASL has sent to the Ministry of Tourism, the President of MIASL, Keats Compton, says that the Association is taking other practical steps to combat crime against visiting yachtsmen and women. According to him, MIASL has asked its members to donate fixed line telephones; redundant vehicles – to compliment existing ones at Marigot and Gros Islet. The Marigot Bay Business Association (MBBA) has produced a RHIB for use in the Bay, and MIASL is discussing its use with Ports & Regular Police.

MIASL has also requested the donation of a Jet-ski to the Marine Police as a quick response vehicle; its Safety

& Security Committee (comprising Customs, Marine, Ports & Regular Police plus MIASL) is considering arrangements for the Soufriere Bay area, which they intend to place before the authorities soon. Patrols are ongoing at the Rodney Bay Seaport and they are expected to become a regular feature at Marigot and Soufriere.

Statistics from the Safety & Security Net are now factored into the country's national crime records – special thanks to Second Millennium. The St. Lucia Hotel and Tourism Association's (SLHTA) Management Council (which includes MIASL) expects to meet with Government to discuss the crime situation on the island. MIASL has welcomed the Prime Minister's recent announcement that seven UK policemen would soon begin an attachment to assist the Royal St. Lucia Police Force, as has been done in Jamaica, and so it intends to ensure that its interests receive equal consideration with land-based anti-crime measures.



HIGHLIGHTS

Sat. July 22nd to Fri. July 28th 2006

NTN – PROVIDING INFORMATION YOU NEED

CWC Officials discuss food & security ahead of CWC 2007 – Sat. July 22nd, 9:30 a.m.

From the archives of the GIS: Prime Minister's Tour of Castries South. - Sun. July 23rd, 9:30 a.m.

PROUD is a programme geared towards rationalising lands for persons occupying crown lands - Mon. July 24th 7:30 p.m.

How does a hurricane develop? Find out much more information about hurricanes on "Hurricane Watch" – Tues. July 25th, 8:00 p.m.

Get the tips needed to cope with arthritis - Wed. July 26th, 8:00 p.m.

Travel through Haiti and learn about the sufferings and triumphs of a people deliberately oppressed – Thurs. July 27th, 8:30 p.m.

Christian Wayne and Danielle Beaubrun discuss their swimming exploits on "Sports Talk" – Fri. July 28th, 6:30 p.m.

Remember to tune in for:

GIS News Breaks and Kweyol News daily from 6:30 p.m.

Issues & Answers/Mondays at 8:00pm:

Interview/Tuesdays at 6:15pm :

Konsit Kweyol/Tuesdays at 8:00pm (Kweyol Discussion):

Your Right to Know/Thursdays at 6:15 p.m. (Min. of Ed. Prog).

Take 2/Fridays at 6:15pm (Week in Review)

Weflechi/Fridays at 6:40pm - (Week in Review—Kweyol)

Saint Lucia NATIONWIDE is published every week by the Department of Information Services.

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