

ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE OECS

**H.E. DR. DIDACUS JULES TO THE ACCESSION CEREMONY OF GUADELOUPE
TO THE OECS 14th MARCH 2019**

[Salutations]

I would like to first of all extend the congratulations of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States to the newly elected Premier of the British Virgin Islands, Hon. Andrew Fahie who is attending his first overseas engagement in this historic encounter of the Authority here in Guadeloupe. We look forward to working closely with you Premier to fulfill the promise of the Revised Treaty of Basseterre

In the long arc of human history, the narrative of Our Caribbean Civilization has been a relatively short but intensely combative tale of contending forces. Today both history and geography have conspired to bring us to this moment in which the contradictions of our history have finally been overcome by the undeniability of our geography. Today – five years following the accession of Martinique – we welcome our sister Guadeloupe to Associate Member status in the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States. This brings to twelve the membership of our organization: six independent Anglophone territories and six non-independent territories (three of which are British Overseas Territories and three

French Departements). The argument of Sir Arthur Lewis of the need to overcome the agony of the Little Eight has been superseded by the possibility of the archipelagic twelve.

The convening of this Special Meeting of the Authority signifies the importance which the OECS Heads of Government place on the acceptance of Guadeloupe into the Organisation. The next Regular Meeting of the Authority is scheduled for June 2019 but the diligence as well as the sense of urgency brought to the table by President Chalus and his negotiating team as well as the determination of our negotiating team led by former Director General Lestrade made it imperative that we do this now and not later – there can be no postponement of the love that brings reconciliation. One of our Nobel Laureates Derek Walcott reminds us that if you break a vase “... *the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than that love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole.*”

Associate Membership of Guadeloupe in the Organisation satisfies a number of objectives in which all sides have an interest.

For the OECS, this process involves the widening of the integration process toward greater engagement and the development of

special relationships with the wider Eastern Caribbean neighbourhood, notwithstanding the national, or political/constitutional circumstances of the constituents of that neighbourhood – call it a new “sisterhood of the hood”

For Guadeloupe this accession actualizes its deep desire for recognition and acceptance of its Caribbean-ness/Caribbean identity, and for cultural, economic, social (and other) connection with the rest of the Caribbean.

We are convinced from our accession negotiations that unparalleled opportunities exist to increase cooperation initiatives in a wide range of areas that include:

- (a) Integrated Tourism Development and Marketing (inclusive of tourism statistics and the development of our health and wellness industries)
- (b) Health Sector Reform
- (c) Education Reform (with special attention to Technical and Vocational Education and Training)
- (d) Trade and Investment (with a focus on Small Enterprise Development)
- (e) Agricultural Development and Technology Transfer

- (f) Sports Development
- (g) Cultural Development (with particular emphasis on film and music industries)
- (h) Regional Air and Sea Transport
- (i) Environmental Management (inclusive of disaster risk reduction, climate change and renewable energy).

For Guadeloupe in its political persona as France, a Europe in the Caribbean, it is an expression of the EU policy of allowing, even encouraging outermost regions to integrate with their immediate neighbours: the so-called "Neighbourhood Policy".

As with any relationship, the value that is to be derived from Guadeloupe's associate membership of the OECS will depend on the amount of work that is put into making the relationship work. The signing ceremony is therefore not the end. Both Guadeloupe and the OECS have an incredible amount of work to do. Today is only the beginning of something in whose ultimate possibilities we can only discern a truly ascendant Caribbean civilization.

“and in the salt chuckle of rocks
with their sea pools, there was the sound
like a rumour without any echo

of history, really beginning. (Derek Walcott)

Thank you; Mesi beaucoup; Mesi Anpil