



OCTAssociation

ASSOCIATION OF THE OVERSEAS COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (“OCTA”)

ASSOCIATION PTOM

LGO ASSOCIATIE

OVERSØISKE LANDE OG TERRITORIERS ASSOCIATION

15th OCTA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Oranjestad, Aruba, 23 February 2017

POLITICAL DECLARATION

PREAMBLE

The Representatives of the Overseas Countries and Territories met in Oranjestad, ARUBA, on 23 February 2017 on the occasion of the 15th OCTA Ministerial Conference. They discussed the OCT-EU partnership post 2020 and the joint position coordinated by the OCTA Chair. They also reviewed ongoing programmes such as the BEST initiative and the Territorial Strategies for Innovation (TSI) programme and future actions such as EDF 11 Thematic and Regional activities, the OCTA secretariat and institutional strengthening.

POLITICAL RESOLUTIONS

The OCTs call upon the European Commission (Commission):

OCT-EU relations

1. *Dialogue and partnership*

To engage with OCTs to ensure that the progress in implementing the Common Conclusions of the Forum is reviewed at each tripartite.

To acknowledge the paramount importance of the Forum and the imperative to safeguard adequate and equal representation of OCTs at this annual event by ensuring no further reduction in the number of sponsored delegates per OCT for future OCT-EU Forums and in addition allowing per OCT the number of non-sponsored delegates that best reflects the political circumstances of individual territories.

To establish a calendar and finalize a written methodology applicable to tripartite and partnership working party (PWP) meetings in close cooperation with the Executive Committee of OCTA.

To reinforce the necessary preferential and differentiated treatment of the management of OCTs' files, and ensure a greater impact of the transversal function of the EC DEVCO Unit 07, particularly sensitized to all relevant Directorates General including but not limited to: EAC, RTD, TAXUD, TRADE, ENV, CLIMA, ENER, REGIO, MARE, GROW and the European External Action Service (EEAS) as to the specific challenges and opportunities faced by OCTs in the implementation of the provisions of the Overseas Association Decision (OAD).

To associate OCTs with relevant fora such as the Outermost Regions (OR) forum organized by DG REGIO in March 2017.

OCTA Technical Assistance

2. Financial support for OCTA

To continue the process of facilitating institutional support to OCTA in the form of an operating grant, in accordance with the Common Conclusions of the 14th OCT-EU Forum (points 9 and 10) and the decision made pursuant thereto.

To put in place such ad hoc measures as the Commission and OCTA may agree from time to time to address the financing gap until the start of the grant, through the use of the second tranche of the 11th EDF TCF (event, studies), on the basis of the pipeline of activities to be submitted by OCTA.

Support OCTs

3. Research, Education and Innovation

To prioritize dialogue between EU (DG Research and DG Education and Culture) and OCTs to enable research institutions in EU Member States and the OCTs to facilitate access to each other's resources thereby making possible knowledge transfer and capacity building within the OCTs.

Trade, investment and growth in the OCTs

4. Trade negotiations

To regularly consult the OCTs on current and upcoming trade negotiations which may impact upon them and to consult them (OAD, art 13) and to adequately take into account OCTs interest when trade agreements are negotiated by the EU.

Climate change

5. Main developments

To support the OCTs to advance the climate change sub-component of the 11th EDF thematic envelope by:

- Facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experience among the OCTs in relation to the integrated and sustainable management of their land, coastal and marine resources; and
- Assisting the OCTs to identify the areas with the biggest need to carry out a cost-benefit analysis of climate change strategies, and identification of desired strategy outcomes, within the management of land, coastal and marine resources.

To support a dialogue with the Members States to explore and promote the inclusion of OCTs in Union programmes and initiatives relating to climate change adaptation and mitigation, such as the Global Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility.

To inform and engage OCTs on relevant developments and actions related to the Union's Climate Change Strategy and the implementation of the Paris Agreement. To endeavour to take into

account the priorities of the OCTs in climate change negotiations and support the dialogue with Member States ahead of the UNFCCC COP 23 in Bonn, Germany in November 2017.

To engage with the OCTs in the finalisation of the modalities of the Paris Climate Change Agreement at the UNFCCC COP23.

6. *Sustainable energy*

To continue to support the deployment of the 2015 Sustainable Energy Roadmap for OCTs, and engage with OCTs in organizing a third Summit of OCT Energy Ministers and stimulate participation in the 2017 EU sustainable energy week.

To continue to support research into innovative energy applications for the OCTs such as the mobilisation of the EU Technical Assistance Facility (EU TAF) for the participation in the desk study and international workshop on marine energy for OCTs.

To promote OCT policy frameworks for investments (OCT-PFI) to improve investment conditions and increase bankable project proposals.

To build on the momentum for rapid Sustainable Energy Deployment in OCTs by embracing new funding mechanisms such as crowd funding as part of the investment mix.

Biodiversity

7. *BEST 2.0*

To recognise the achievements of the BEST initiative and to acknowledge our appreciation for the additional funding which has been allocated to the programme.

To pursue its effort to ensure the success of this project, with a particular attention to the quality of communication with all partners.

To allocate additional resources to enable the continuation of the calls for proposals for BEST grants in 2018 and 2019 in acknowledgement that a number of high quality proposals were not funded as demand for projects exceeded the available budget.

8. *Sustainable development partnership*

To continue the dialogue and cooperation on biodiversity, climate change and environment related issues through the organization of a PWP by the end of the second quarter of 2017.

To support the creation and development of a sustainable mechanism, with a decision making role by OCTs, through the auspices of OCTA .

To welcome the BEST group as a means for active dialogue to accompany this transition, which for the avoidance of doubt, shall include the OCTs acting through the auspices of OCTA.

Implementation of OAD and 11th European Development Fund (EDF) programming

9. Regional integration

To support OCTs' efforts for enhanced regional cooperation, in line with the 2015 Common Conclusions of the 13th OCT-EU Forum held in BVI, allowing for greater flexibility in the application of the programming guidelines concerning regional allocations for the OCTs and common projects funded by the EDF and the ERDF.

To convene a partnership working party to allow a technical discussion on regional integration and cooperation issues where partners will be able to exchange on the proposed "Action Plan for Closer Regionalism of the OCTs" of the Regional Integration Study (2015) funded by the EU under the TA to OCTA Project.

10. EDF Programming

To finalize the programming of regional and thematic programmes in 2017.

To promote capacity building in the OCTs and ensure a smooth continuation of the technical assistance in support of the RAOs for the 11th EDF regional programming process, including programming of joint regional projects involving cooperation with OCTs, ORs and ACPs.

To continue to facilitate appropriate consultations and exchanges among OCTs, ACPs and ORs, where appropriate, to ensure synergies in the regional and thematic programmes and the development of joint projects.

11. Mid-term review of the external aid instruments

To take into account adequately the views expressed by the OCTs in the consultation evaluations carried out in 2017.

To keep OCTs informed of the process, the results and the following steps toward 2020

Union programmes

12. Mid-term reviews, evaluation, public consultations

To keep OCTs regularly informed on the reviews in order to maximize their level of involvement and participation and make sure their views are adequately taken into account (including through field visits when possible).

13. Accessibility

To support OCTs' participation in calls as well as contribute to building their capacity to manage EU-funded programmes.

To organize in 2017 ad hoc PWPs on the main Union programmes of interest for OCTs (H2020, Erasmus+, COSME, Life+) with the relevant directions and services of the commission in order to allow for an exchange of view on the current level of participation of OCTs and possible improvements to remove the obstacles they face in accessing those programmes.

14. H2020

To take into account the particular challenges faced by OCTs in the mid-term review of the programme (low level of participation in the program, low level of EU funds on research in OCTs) and the upcoming working document of the commission expected mid-2017.

15. Erasmus+

To take note of our appreciation for the short-term arrangements made in the 2017 work programme regarding the extreme remoteness of some OCTs.

To recognize that the challenges faced by some remote OCT's cannot be compared with any other EU region

To provide a top up amount for distances over 12000 km in order to better support the travel costs from those OCTs on a permanent basis, with regard to the mobility and transversal actions elements, especially in the frame of the mid-term review.

Post-2020 framework

16. Joint Position

To ensure a broad political consultation on key aspects of the OCT-EU partnership in light of the post-2020 framework.

To commit at the 15th OCT-EU Forum to Common Conclusions identifying a mechanism for integrating the OCTs' views into the post-2020 framework, taking into account the preparation, by the commission, of a recommendation for the negotiations which shall be ready by October 2017 (and will then become the mandate for negotiations)

To commit to convene a partnership working party, in presence of the "Post Cotonou task force" within DG DEVCO, together with the Outermost Regions Committee at DG REGIO, where partners will be able to exchange on the post cotonou process, orientations and ways to take into account OCTs, and on the future EU-OCT partnership on the basis of the proposed "Guiding principles for the future relationship between the overseas countries and territories and the European Union" presented to the European Commission at the 15th OCT-EU Forum held in Aruba.

Financial Services

17. EU development of list on non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes

To continue to engage in policy dialogue with OCTs on the establishment of an EU list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes via both Financial Services Partnership Working Parties

in the second and third quarters of 2017 and bilateral engagement with individual OCTs per their request or as requested by the General Secretariat of the Council.

To provide individual OCTs placed on the scoreboard list with the reasoning for their inclusion and provide clarification on the steps which would be required for a jurisdiction to be removed from the final adopted list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes.

18. International tax cooperation workshop

To support the OCTs organisation of an international tax cooperation workshop in the second quarter of 2017 designed to provide technical support to the OCTs on the implementation of international tax cooperation standards set by the OECD including the Multilateral Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters and Common Reporting Standard and Base Erosion and Profit Shifting Inclusive Framework.

19. Communication

To support the improvement of communication between OCTs, DG DEVCO and DG TAXUD, taking into account all the information gathered in the frame of the EDF programming and implementation process such as PEFA and annual reports.