



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

ASSOCIATION PTOM

LGO ASSOCIATIE

OVERSØISKE LANDE OG TERRITORIERS ASSOCIATION

**Political Declaration
of
OCTA's 2011 Ministerial Conference
In Brussels 23rd January 2012**

The Undersigned representatives of the Governments of the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) of the European Union (EU) have met together in Brussels and have

AFFIRMED

Overseas Countries and Territories' (OCTs) desire to strengthen a mutually beneficial, comprehensive and unique partnership with the European Union based on European citizenship and on the concept of European family, considering the diversity of the OCTs' needs and assets in terms of development and regional cooperation;

OCTs' global strategic value and importance based on our rich cultural diversity, abundant and unique biodiversity and geographic locations. These valued assets provide for vast opportunities to enhance our relationship with the European Union;

OCTs share common challenges in terms of socio-economic development and have been cooperating with our regional neighbours, where possible, to overcome these challenges, lessen or eliminate constraints in areas of vulnerability such as environment, connectivity and trade, despite the remote geographic locations of some OCTs, which mitigates heavily against our efforts;

OCTs need to build capacity in support of sustainability of development, both from a human resources and institution standpoint;

OCTs require careful assessments of our vulnerability to natural and economic changes, as well as the inherent vulnerabilities of small populations seeking to preserve their cultural identity, recognizing all OCTs and their various levels of development;

OCTs willingness to comply with international norms and standards, where practicable and not in conflict with cultural norms, on the basis of a level playing field, as well as principles of good governance, accountability and transparency;

OCT political leaders' support for the OCTA Road Map and 2010 Strategic Plan adopted by all the OCT governments at the Ministerial meeting in March 2010, the launch of the long term technical assistance to OCTA anticipated for August 2012 and will continue to provide guidance in the preparation of strategies, policies and plans for OCT economic and social development and environmental resilience in the frame of the 9th and 10TH EDF thematic regional allocations;

OCT political leaders commit to greater political involvement and engagement in the execution of the principles, strategies and plans emanating from the Overseas Association Decision (OAD), the programmes of the 9th and 10th EDF, the strategic plan of OCTA and its long term technical assistance and the annual EU-OCT Forum, beginning with the Forum held in January 2012;

NOTED WITH DEEP CONCERN

The global financial crisis and economic recession has caused considerable disruption to the economies of the EU and OCTs, constrained the resources of the EC and has increased the vulnerability of OCTs to varying degrees, making the future relationship with the EU even more critical to their future sustainable development;

RECOGNISED

That the EU has taken into account the changes and developments in challenges and opportunities for OCTs since the 2001 OAD and is working in partnership with OCTs and Member States to increase OCT competitiveness, lessen their vulnerability and strengthen regional cooperation in the framework of the revision of the OAD. Following the Green paper and the Communication "Elements for a new partnership between the EU and OCTs" adopted in 2008 and 2009, the EC services reported back to the Council in December 2010 and received in February 2011 the joint position paper adopted by the Member States and the OCTs on the future partnership. The indicative

timeline is the adoption by the EC of the legislative proposal in March 2012 to be followed with the submission to the Council in mid-2012;

The Commissions' targeted call for proposals for Small Islands Developing States and OCTs under the ENRTP programme and support for a DG Research decision to allow those OCTs that meet the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS II) criteria to be eligible to the Research Potential component of the Seventh Framework Programme for Research. They welcome similar Horizontal EU programmes and thematic line initiatives in future work programmes which seek to improve access for OCTs and enable the development of regional projects of particular interest;

CALL UPON THE COMMISSION TO:

1. Partnership between the EU and the OCTs

Consider the proposals and positions expressed in the Joint Position Paper adopted on February 28th, 2011 in formulating the new OAD ensure that OCTs are fully involved in the dialogue and share preliminary proposals on the new OAD, until its submission to the EU Council in July 2012 by informing OCTs of the OAD timeline progress, relevant impact assessment results contributing to the on-going reflection process and increasing awareness within the European institutions of OCT issues and assets;

2. Management of OCTs affairs

Increase engagement and staffing levels with relevant and sufficient capacity dedicated to the management of OCTs affairs, and ensure adequate position within DG DEVCO, in support of the commitments of the renewed partnership, the programming exercise, and OCT membership of the EU family;

3. Long Term Technical Assistance to OCTA

Consider the operational requirements of the Long Term Technical Assistance to OCTA which is scheduled to commence August 2012 and create the internal awareness within the Commission of such requirements to facilitate its efficient and effective establishment;

4. Partnership Working Party (PWP)

Continue and enhance the PWP mechanism to focus on the new OAD with revised rules of procedure incorporating the input of OCTs and embracing available technology to facilitate regular meetings between the EU and OCT experts in the Territories. Physical meetings should only occur when UE and OCT experts have determined the need for such. The EU should also and recognize and respect the role of co-chairs to organize PWPs, coordinate the reflections of OCTs on technical issues and speak on behalf of OCTs;

5. Territorial Strategies for Innovation (TSI) & Regional Projects

Facilitate the timely execution of the TSI and regional projects recognizing their strategic and significant contribution to the primary development goals anticipated in the revised OAD, namely increasing OCT competitiveness, decreasing OCT economic vulnerability and strengthening cooperation of OCTs with regional partners and the EU;

6. Environment and Climate Change

Facilitate the participation of OCTs in meetings/seminars amongst OCTs, with the EC and with other relevant partners, by informing them about the EU policies and strategies on biodiversity, environment, sustainable marine management, climate change, access to appropriate resources, and assistance in generating knowledge about the OCTs' unique biodiversity, the threats faced due to climate change as well as adaptation to these changes whilst being mindful of the long term objectives of the cooperation with the European Commission on environment and climate change;

Continue funding the BEST Scheme with the objectives of strengthening the EU-OCT partnership, increasing awareness of biodiversity and climate change in the OCTs, building the bridge between the OCTs and Europe on environment and biodiversity and securing the future of BEST Scheme whilst recognizing the limited human and administrative resources in the territories and the need to simplify the application process; further consider the challenges faced by some OCTs in accessing the programme, the right of OCTs to control access to their environmental assets and their desire for more robust guidelines that respect the environmental interests of the OCTs and appropriately balance them with those of third parties conducting programmes under BEST;

7. Trade

Take into account the interests of the OCTs when negotiating bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements in regions where OCTs are located with the aim to limit the tariff liberalization eroding OCTs preferences and increasing the competitive pressures on OCTs industries that export similar products to the EU market and supporting them in adapting to these additional challenges for a sustainable development to improve their economic competitiveness, particularly in sectors like fisheries which lack economies of scale but remain vitally important for OCT economies;

Recognise that a number of OCTs who contribute significantly to international trade, investment and business are acknowledged by global standard-setting bodies as meeting the highest standards of regulation whilst facilitating the operation of global capital markets which aid economic growth; further recognise that OCTs support the exchange of information between EU and OCT experts through the Partnership Working Party on Financial Services utilising available technology as appropriate and ensure there are no unfair barriers to OCT market access to the EU;

Support a follow-on plan for the implementation of the recommendations of the Report on Statistical Systems of OCTs recognising the critical role statistics play in ensuring the benefits of all projects, including the TSI and SME, are realised;

8. Equal treatment for all OCTs

Continue efforts to establish with more certainty its ability to cover additional travel and subsistence costs incurred by the most isolated OCTs when participating in Forums and other activities organized by OCTA under EU funding such as workshops and seminars;

9. Rights of OCT Citizens

In conformity with the provision of Chapter 1, Article 1.2 of the Charter of the United Nations, we call on the Commission to support all OCTs and urge the Commission to ensure that the absolute rights of the citizens of OCTs are not compromised in negotiations and relations with countries and regional bodies;

10. Green Growth

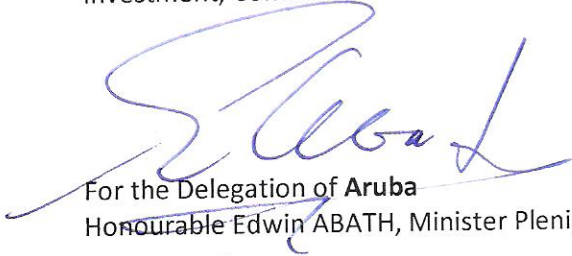
Recall that the main elements of the future EU-OCT partnership is to enhance OCT competitiveness, strengthen OCT resilience and promote cooperation. Therefore the 2012 Chair has chosen a theme, which is in compliance with the areas of cooperation between the OCTs and EU. Green growth is a priority, which follows the focus of sustainable economic development. The focus will be on education, innovation and research and will aim to show the OCTs specificities and how they add value to our common green growth.

REFERENCE

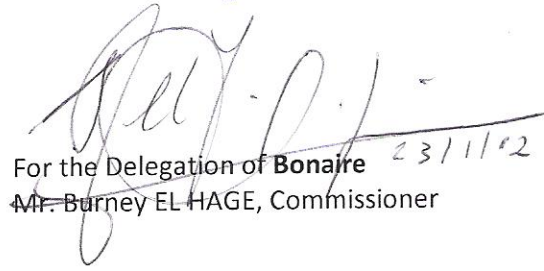
Signed in Brussels, this 23rd day of January 2012



For the Delegation of **Anguilla**
Honourable Hubert B. HUGHES, Chief Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development,
Investment, Commerce and Tourism



For the Delegation of **Aruba**
Honourable Edwin ABATH, Minister Plenipotentiary



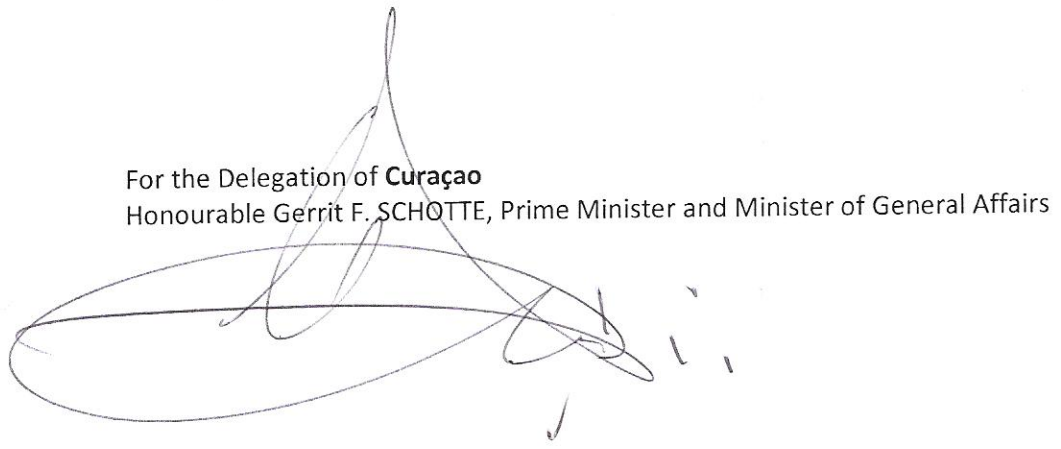
For the Delegation of **Bonaire** 23/1/12
Mr. Burney EL HAGE, Commissioner



For the Delegation of **British Virgin Islands**
Dr. the Honourable Kedrick PICKERING, Deputy Premier and Minister of Natural Resources and
Labour



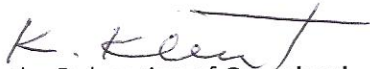
For the Delegation of **Cayman Islands**
Mr. Charles PARCHMENT, Acting Representative to the United Kingdom



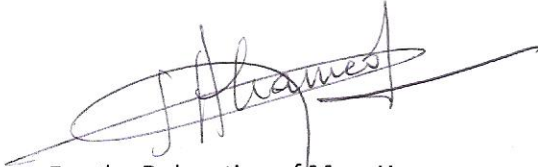
For the Delegation of **Curaçao**
Honourable Gerrit F. SCHOTTE, Prime Minister and Minister of General Affairs



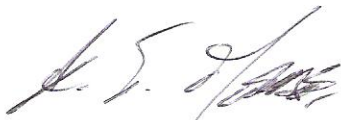
For the Delegation of **Falkland Islands**
Honourable Roger EDWARDS, Member of the Legislative Assembly



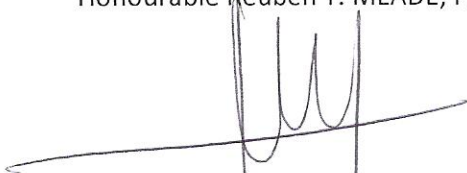
For the Delegation of **Greenland**
Honourable Premier Kuupik KLEIST



For the Delegation of **Mayotte**
Monsieur Saïd AHAMADI, 3ième Vice-Présent du Conseil Général de Mayotte



For the Delegation of **Montserrat**
Honourable Reuben T. MEADE, Premier



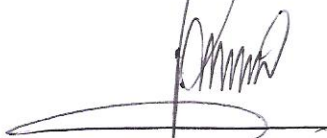
For the Delegation of **New Caledonia**
Monsieur Harold MARTIN, Président du Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie



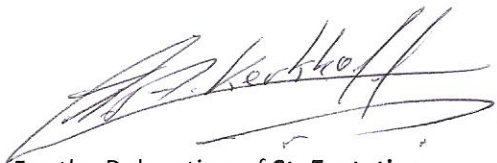
For the Delegation of **French Polynesia**
Monsieur Jacky BRYANT, Ministre de l'environnement, de l'énergie et des mines



For the Delegation of **Saba**
Mr. Menno VAN DER VELDE, Island Secretary



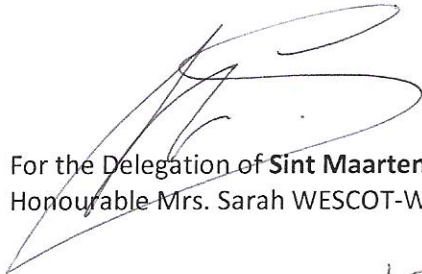
For the Delegation of **Saint-Barthélemy**
Monsieur Bruno MAGRAS, Président de la Collectivité territoriale




For the Delegation of **St. Eustatius**
Mr. Koert KERKHOFF, Commissioner of Finance



For the Delegation of **Saint Helena, Ascension, Tristan da Cunha**
Honourable Anthony GREEN, Elected Member of the Executive Council



For the Delegation of **Sint Maarten**
Honourable Mrs. Sarah WESCOT-WILLIAMS, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs



For the Delegation of **Saint-Pierre-and-Miquelon**
Madame Odile BEAUPERTUIS, Vice-Présidente du Conseil territorial de Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon



For the Delegation of **Territory of the French Southern and Antarctic Lands**
Monsieur Patrick VENANT, Secrétaire Général



For the Delegation of **Turks and Caicos**
Mr Delton JONES, Permanent Secretary Finance



For the Delegation of **Wallis and Futuna**
Monsieur Pesamino TAPUTAI, Président de l'Assemblée territoriale