



OCTAssociation

ASSOCIATION OF THE OVERSEAS COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

PAYS ET TERRITOIRES D'OUTRE-MER

LANDEN EN GEBIEDEN OVERZEE

OVERSØISKE LANDE OG TERRITORIERS

OCTA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Tahiti, French Polynesia, 27 February 2019

POLITICAL DECLARATION

PREAMBLE

The Representatives of the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) met in Tahiti, French Polynesia, on 27th February 2019 on the occasion of the OCTA Ministerial Conference. They discussed the implementation of the current Overseas Association Decision (OAD) and the post 2020 relationship. They also reviewed ongoing programmes such as the Thematic and Regional activities of the 10th and 11th European Development Fund (EDF), the OCTA roadmap for 2019 and the preliminary findings of the Background study on Oceans commissioned by OCTA.

1. Reiterating the mutually beneficial partnership between the European Union (EU) and OCTs, taking into account the geostrategic role played by the OCTs, their contribution to the international and ocean dimension of the EU Member States, their immense Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and marine resources, their exceptional biodiversity and the potential of their contributions to tackle major global challenges such as the fight against climate change and ocean protection, and to reach the SDGs;
2. Reaffirming the concept of OCT's "belonging to the same European family" as the keystone principle for the OCT-EU partnership;
3. Welcoming the proposal for a Council Decision on the Association of the Overseas Countries and Territories with the European Union including relations between the European Union on the one hand, and Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark on the other which shall enter into force in January 2021 in coherence with the next multiannual financial framework;
4. Taking into account the current transformations of the EU and the importance of the upcoming European Parliament elections followed by the renewal of the European Commission and the consequent need to sensitize the future EU decision makers on the numerous assets of the EU-OCT partnership;
5. Noting the progress achieved in terms of preferential dialogue with the European Commission, in particular with DG DEVCO but also increasingly with other DGs, and the EEAS, and the efforts made to maintain sufficient capacities in the management of our files;
6. Underlining the uncertainties and concerns about the impact of the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the EU on the partnership established amongst OCTs;



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7. Acknowledging the effectiveness and flexibility of the EU support measures to OCTA which constitute an essential contribution to OCTA's activities, to the reinforcement of its capacities and also to the EU-OCT dialogue through a common platform;
8. Recognizing the satisfaction expressed by the OCTs' stakeholders who attended the OCTA events organized in 2018 with the support of the European Commission on the Union programmes and International Tax Cooperation, and the usefulness of the studies on the impact of Brexit on OCTA membership and on trade relations;
9. Acknowledging the efforts made by the European Commission and the OCTs in the finalization of the programming process and the implementation of the financial assistance under the EDF.

Under this political declaration, the OCTs:

Concerning the post 2020 partnership

10. **Remain** mindful of the current negotiations led by the Council and the European Parliament and **Invite** them to confirm substantial improvements in favour of the EU-OCTs partnership, under the proposal for a Council Decision on the Association of the Overseas Countries and Territories with the European Union including relations between the European Union on the one hand, and Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark on the other and other regulations of interest for OCTs.
11. **Call for** a substantial increase of the global allocation dedicated to OCTs compared with the initial proposal of the European Commission, adapted to the ambitious objectives of the Council Decision on the Association of the Overseas Countries and Territories with the European Union including relations between the European Union on the one hand, and Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark on the other, to reach EUR 669 million as recommended in the report of the European Parliament, and **Reiterate** the importance to reach further progress on 5 main issues already detailed in the 2018 OCTA common position by:
 - **Securing** the same level of flexibility as under the EDF and adapted measures for the programming and implementation of the OCTs' financial assistance;
 - **Ensuring** an efficient intra-regional cooperation through clear and adapted modalities for OCTs and their partners;
 - **Providing** for more adapted modalities to access EU programmes, such as the dedicated programme for overseas biodiversity in the future LIFE programme, and **Lifting** specific constraints imposed on OCT's eligibility in LIFE post 2020;
 - **Maintaining** the same level of support currently provided by the European Investment Bank (EIB) in the OCTs through dedicated tools - taking into that the European Commission has not been in a position to share with OCTs and their Member States a comparative table on the present and future modalities.
 - **Securing** post-disaster financial assistance for the OCTs, making sure that the administrative burden remains at the lower level, and provide a comparative table on the present and future modalities.



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12. **Underline** the necessity for all OCTs with permanent population to benefit from financial bilateral support, and the OCTs without a permanent population continue to access the regional allocation.

Concerning the EU-OCT dialogue:

13. **Call for** a reinforced coordination of the OCT unit of all the Commission's Directorates General on OCT issues in order to ensure the coherence of the Commission's actions and initiatives which may be of interest for OCTs or have an impact on the EU-OCT partnership (including trade negotiations, regional integration and cooperation, climate change, conservation and sustainable management of oceans, renewable energy, innovation and research).
14. **Ask** for the support of the European Commission to raise the profile of the EU-OCT partnership and its added value in 2019 through events and materials for the new EU decision makers and facilitate the association of OCTs to EU events of interest (including regional partnerships, blue economy and outermost regions) in close cooperation with OCTA.

Concerning the financial assistance:

15. **Invite** the European Commission to draw lessons from the difficulties faced in the programming exercise of the 11th EDF thematic envelope, which will be finalized after more than 5 years of discussions, and to include OCTA, where appropriate, in the selection process of the entities which will be in charge of the implementation of the programme.
16. **Welcome** very positively the Commission's agreement on the support measures for OCTA for 2019 and the ambitious programme which will further contribute to improve the sustainable development of the OCTs and **Express concern** on the potential adjustment of the grant contract which may occur in case of a "no-deal Brexit".
17. **Recognize** the added value of the report prepared by OCTA on the state of play of the participation of OCTs in the Union programmes and **Call upon** the European Commission to support OCTA, in coordination with the Member States, on the elaboration of an action plan to alleviate the obstacles faced by the OCTs in accessing these programmes.
18. **Stress** the expectations that the new call for proposals of the BEST 2.0 programme will be launched in the first semester 2019, the necessarily close involvement of OCTA and the OCTs in the governance of the programme and the need for securing the continuity of the currently effective regional hubs.
19. **Welcome** the "Joint Pacific Initiative for biodiversity, climate change and resilience" to which the EU is contributing EUR 9.9 million, **Regret** that the OCTs are not eligible for this funding and **Request** the European Commission and the Member States to identify additional funds to ensure the implementation of regional projects with components in the OCTs.
20. **Invite** the European Commission to launch the discussions regarding the programmes of the next programming period sufficiently early to allow the implementation phase to start in 2021.



Concerning regional cooperation and integration:

21. **Reaffirm** the need to closely associate OCTs in the Post Cotonou discussions and in the EU partnerships with OCT's neighbours, part of the ACP group of States or not, **Recognize** the efforts made by the European Commission to rely on OCTs as EU outposts in their regions and **Reiterate** the need for a stronger technical assistance in the long term, for the development of regional programmes.
22. **Support** a specific treatment for territories which do not benefit from regional funding, the so-called isolated territories, and **further call** for a specific treatment for the distinct situation of the least developed OCTs.
23. **Advocate** for the European Commission to further develop a common approach dedicated to European overseas, taking into account the similar challenges faced by the OCTs and ORs, particularly in the fields of youth, education, research and innovation, nature, blue economy, while recognizing the differences in their statutes.

Concerning Financial Services:

24. **Invite** the European Union to continue to engage in policy dialogue and consult OCTs via trilateral consultations, partnership working parties, and other appropriate forums on EU initiatives (i.e. regulations, decisions and laws) on tax governance and banking and finance to be applied to Third Country jurisdictions which could potentially impact the sustainable development of the OCTs .
25. As the EU continues to update the 'Common List of Non-cooperative Jurisdictions for Tax Purposes', **Invite** the EU to commit to convening a Partnership Working Party in the second quarter of 2019 where partners would be able to exchange on the process.

Concerning the main areas of cooperation:

26. **Request** the active support of the European Commission for the organisation of the 4th Summit of OCT Energy Ministers and an event on the Oceans agenda in the OCTs.
27. **Emphasise** the need for the EU to better take into account OCTs, where relevant, in the EU commitments on conservation and sustainable management of the oceans and to associate them more actively to discussions related to inter alia Climate Change and biodiversity.
28. **Invite** the European Commission to maintain OCTs informed on trade negotiations which may impact them and to take into account their interests to limit the erosion of their preferential trade regime, **Ensure** their association to regional business events to promote trade regional integration, and **Promote** the inclusion of the OCTs wishing to do so into existing or up-coming EU free trade agreements including Economic Partnership Agreements.



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29. **Recognise** that the existing tariff and quota-free access to EU and UK markets has been beneficial to the OCTs, has contributed significantly to their development, and is important to their future progress and **Request** the European Commission and the UK Government to ensure this access can continue in the context of a future trade framework between the UK and the EU.
30. **Call** the European Commission to further support research and innovation in OCTs, through the EU programmes on research and innovation and the available expertise developed for the EU regions, as well as building on the 10th EDF thematic programme for OCTs, Territorial Strategies for Innovation.

Concerning the collaboration among OCTs and between OCTs and the EU

31. **Urge** the European Commission to clarify the impact of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU on the financial assistance and the governance of the 11th EDF thematic and regional programmes, including the support measures to OCTA and BEST 2.0 programme, in case of (1) a no-deal Brexit, (2) withdrawal agreement with a transition period.
32. **Call** the European Commission to recognize the importance of preserving and facilitating the cooperation between all current OCTA members in particular following the decision of the UK to withdraw from the EU.

REFERENCE

33. This Declaration shall be referred to as the “Political Declaration of the OCTA – 2018 Ministerial Conference”.

Signed in Tahiti, French Polynesia, this 27th February 2019



For the Delegation of **Anguilla**
The Honorable Victor F. BANKS
Chief Minister

For the Delegation of **Aruba**
The Honorable Xiomara RUIZ-MADURO
Minister of Finance, Economic Affairs and Culture, and Territorial Authorising Officer

For the Delegation of **Bermuda**
Mr. Brandon SOUSA
Consulate Officer, London Office

For the Delegation of **Bonaire**
Mr. Edison RIJNA
Lieutenant Governor



For the Delegation of **British Virgin Islands**

Mr. Joseph SMITH-ABBOTT

Deputy Secretary - Ministry of Natural Resources and Labour

For the Delegation of **Cayman Islands**

Mr Robert LEWIS

Deputy Chief Officer (Administration)

For the Delegation of **Curaçao**

The Honorable Zita JESUS-LEITO

Minister of Traffic, Transport and Spatial Planning

For the Delegation of **Falkland Islands**

The Honorable Roger EDWARDS

Member of the Legislative Assembly



For the Delegation of **Greenland**

The Honorable Ane LONE BAGGER

Minister for Education, Culture, Church and Foreign Affairs

For the Delegation of **Montserrat**

The Honorable Colin OWEN

Financial Secretary and Territorial Authorising Officer

For the Delegation of **New Caledonia**

The Honorable Jean-Louis D'ANGLEBERMES

Vice-President of the Government

For the Delegation of **Pitcairn**

Mr Leslie JACQUES

Councillor



For the Delegation of **French Polynesia**
The Honorable Edouard FRITCH
President of French Polynesia

For the Delegation of **Saba**
Mr Menno VAN DER VELDE
Senior Policy Advisor and Territorial Authorising Officer

For the Delegation of **Saint-Barthelemy**
The Honorable Bruno MAGRAS
President of the Territorial Council

For the Delegation of **Saint Helena, Ascension, Tristan da Cunha**
The Honorable Anthony GREEN
Member of the Executive Committee, MLC



For the Delegation of **Saint-Pierre-and-Miquelon**
The Honorable Stéphane LENORMAND
President of the Territorial Council

For the Delegation of **Sint Eustatius**
Mr Maldwyn TIMBER
Deputy Territorial Authorising Officer

For the Delegation of **Sint Maarten**
Mr Michael SOMERSALL
Deputy Minister Plenipotentiary

For the Delegation of the **French Southern and Antarctic Lands**
On behalf of Mrs Evelyne DECORPS, Prefect, High Commissioner
Her representative, Mr Guillaume COTTAREL



For the Delegation of **Turks and Caicos Islands**
Mrs Athenee HARVEY-BASDEN
Permanent Secretary - Ministry of Finance

For the Delegation of **Wallis and Futuna**
The Honorable David VERGÉ
President of the Territorial Assembly