



OCTAssociation

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 Ministerial Conference  
**In Ilulissat 25th September 2012**

The Representatives of the Overseas Countries and Territories met in Ilulissat, Greenland on 25 September 2012 on the occasion of their 11<sup>th</sup> OCT Ministerial Conference. They reviewed their Country/Territory's situation, their cooperation with the European Union (EU), the European Commission (Commission) draft legislative proposal for a revised Overseas Association Decision (OAD) and the green growth challenges faced by Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs), and adopted the following Declaration:

OCTs regret that the Commissioner cancelled his participation to the upcoming OCT EU Forum. OCTs urge for political visibility and priority. OCTs call for the Commissioner and Member State Minister's attendance at these annual high-level meetings to discuss our political, economic, legal and financial relations.

**OUR COMMON VISION**

From the Arctic to the Tropics to the South Pole, the Overseas Countries and Territories' (OCTs) are of global strategic value and importance.

OCTs stress the significance of their shared history with the EU and therefore wish to be fully recognized as Countries and Territories with geostrategic, economic and environmental relevance to Europe and the world. OCTs are unique assets both individually and regionally and need to be recognised for their strategic value to the European Union having special regard for their geographic position as they are situated in the Arctic, Caribbean, Indian Ocean, South Atlantic, Antarctic and Pacific.

OCTs collectively agree to five pillars of cooperation with the Commission upon which the OCT-EU partnership should be based: inclusion, visibility, flexibility and most importantly an enhanced effective dialogue and information sharing. OCTs expect the future legal framework of association with the European Union to better address the challenges of our future development and growth.

OCTs are convinced that the strengthening of the institutional capacity by the future OCTA Bureau will have fruitful influences on our cooperation including with external partners. In this respect, the 2013 OCTA roadmap provides useful guidance regarding the short-term priority objectives of the Association.

OCTs recognize that the proposed OAD was submitted to the Council in July and request the Commission to consider additional concerns of the OCTs in the discussions with the Council.

## **SUSTAINABLE GROWTH**

OCTs are part of the European family and consider it necessary and desirable to examine how the common objectives of OCT, and the EU can be achieved.

OCTs share similar limitations and possess the same permanent characteristics and constraints as Outermost Regions (ORs) but remain a special case for sustainable development.

These factors arise mainly from remoteness and other natural conditions and the structure of OCT economies and markets. Economically, OCTs are defined by small internal markets, dependence on one or few economic sectors, undeveloped and small export bases and high exposure to external economic shocks. Environmentally, some OCTs are challenged by unfavourable climate and topography; small populations; and are among the most vulnerable societies to climate change and natural disasters. OCTs face great challenges in overcoming their vulnerability and obstacles to development unaided due to limited internal resources. Taken together these circumstances are a compelling force for EU support.

However it must be recognised that despite these synergies, the specific development needs of individual OCTs' are diverse and flexibility is required, in order to address their development priorities and achieve sustainability.

Green growth in terms of education, innovation and research are vital for OCTs' continued sustainable growth and for the diversification of their economies.

OCTs strongly urge the European Union to ensure financial resources, technology transfer and capacity building to OCTs, to a level at least comparable to that available under the former Decision. The development of a greener economy will generate significant and more sustainable economic growth opportunities, simultaneously supporting both financial recovery and preservation of the environment.

For instance, OCTs underline that there are commercially feasible options for providing energy such as wind, solar, geothermal and ocean energy, and that many OCTs are particularly suited to these options because of their energy potential. However, the technologies needed to unlock these resources must be made accessible, affordable and adaptable to the needs and particular circumstances of OCTs communities. OCTs consider it essential that sustainable and safe access to isolated OCTs be promoted.

Furthermore, OCTs call on the Commission to ensure the absolute rights of the citizens of the OCTs are not compromised in its negotiations and relations with countries and regional bodies, in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 1, Article 1.2 of the Charter of the United Nations.

## **MEANS TO IMPLEMENT**

Each OCT has a primary responsibility for its economic and social development and the achievement of its green growth targets. However, OCTs need to effectively mobilise resources and secure available funding from various sources in support of these objectives.

Despite their economic successes, some OCTs are highly dependent on support from their Member States or the EU. Economically, some are also marginalised due to their geographical remoteness from major world markets, while others are highly dependent on such markets, making them vulnerable to shifts in the global economy. These circumstances serve to increase OCTs vulnerability. OCTs believe that our partnership with the European Union should be built on the recognition of their vulnerability, accessibility and economic challenges.

## **ON NEGOTIATING THE OAD REVISION, CALL UPON THE COMMISSION TO:**

- Engage in an effective dialogue

Referring to the existing methodology, OCTs ask to formalise their co-chairing of all instances of dialogue, including Working Parties. The functioning of these consultation mechanisms should be improved through the preservation of meetings' periodicity, the systematic use of joint committees for agenda setting and of existing communication technologies.

OCTs also request for their status as Observers to be maintained where it concerns forums or other dialogue between the EU, African Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP), ORs and external partners where appropriate. This is considered essential to raising OCTs' visibility and strengthening regional cooperation

- Simplify development assistance

The OAD and its implementing regulation should include specific measures to simplify and shorten programming and implementation of the EDF allocations and to allow for greater cooperation with ACPs, ORs and non-ACPs, as well as with other OCTs whatever geographical location they may occupy.

Referring to the report on OCTs statistical systems, OCTs would welcome further technical assistance to develop their statistical systems in order to more adequately measure their vulnerability and development and to bring them up to international standards that will provide for improved comparability of their macro-economic indicators (in particular, power purchase parity measures are necessary)

- Promote participation of OCTs to EU programmes

OCTs welcome that the eligibility of OCTs to all European programs and instruments was reaffirmed and note that the dedicated calls for proposals are useful for the development of the cooperation with the other regions of the EU. Nevertheless, OCTs asks the Commission:

- To ensure that the eligibility of OCTs is mentioned in every program, since eligibility criteria are subject to specific rules and objectives of each program;
  - To generalize to all programs and instruments of the general budget of the EU, including LIFE, the commitments taken by the EU concerning the participation of OCTs to its initiatives in the domains of youth, education and research.
  - To engage the necessary preparatory work regarding the future of the BEST scheme, taking into account the success of this pilot action, its importance for the overseas entities of the EU and the need to secure their interests in this regard, and its added value in terms of efficiency and visibility.
- Support OCTs trade strategies

OCTs welcome EU's acknowledgement that they should benefit from the best possible treatment offered to any other trading partner. However OCTs note with concern the new administrative requirements based on certificates regarding rules of origin.

Accordingly, OCTs request the introduction of rules of origin that match those applicable for the least developed countries under General System of Preferences if they are more favourable than the rules in the OAD to avoid erosion of trade preferences.

OCTs ask for greater consultation including with Member States prior to the commencement of bilateral trade negotiations with third countries and regional bodies considering their possible impacts to OCTs.

Some OCTs are strategically located in regions with emerging markets and have much to offer to EU commercial entities seeking safe, reliable and accessible trade hubs. To this end OCTs ask the Commission to support them in developing this potential through specific instruments as appropriate.

Last, the programming procedure of the "territorial strategies for innovation project" should be finalised within the Commission so that implementation can start in 2013. OCTs are eager to benefit from this important programme which is being discussed with the Commission since 2009.

- Recognise the value of financial services to OCTs economies and global commerce

OCTs are acknowledged by global standard setting bodies as meeting the highest standards of regulation and a number of OCTs contribute significantly to international trade, investment and business in facilitating the operation of global capital markets which aid economic growth and recovery.

The EU is called upon to recognize that implementation of international standards of financial regulation and tax and information sharing is the responsibility of the OCTs within their jurisdictions; and to ensure that there are no unfair barriers to OCT access to the EU market.

## REFERENCE

Signed in Ilulissat, this 25th day of September 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 Mr. Edwin B. ABATH, Minister Plenipotentiary of Aruba



For the Delegation of **Bonaire**

Mrs. Dr. Lydia EMERENCIA, Governor



For the Delegation of **British Virgin Islands**

Dr. the D. Honourable Orlando SMITH, OBE, Premier and Minister of Finance



For the Delegation of **Cayman Islands**

Honourable W. McKeever BUSH, OBE, JP, Premier and Minister of Finance, Tourism & Development



For the Delegation of **Curacao**

Mr. Sheldry OSEPA, Minister Plenipotentiary of Curacao in the Netherlands

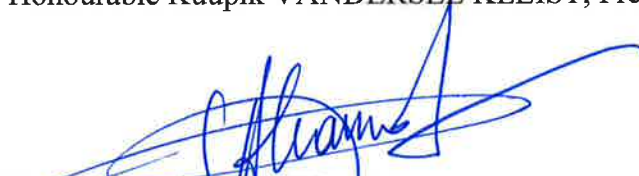


For the Delegation of **Falkland Islands**

Honourable Roger EDWARDS, Member of the Legislative Assembly



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



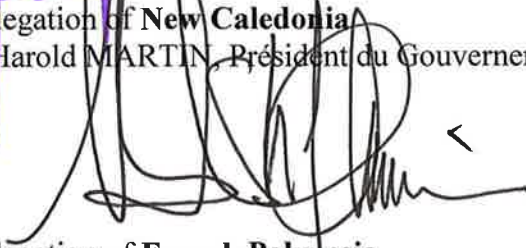
For the Delegation of **Mayotte**  
Monsieur Saïd AHAMADI, 3ième Vice-Présent du Conseil Général de Mayotte



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



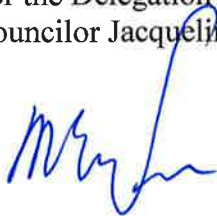
For the Delegation of **New Caledonia**  
Monsieur Harold MARTIN, Président du Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie



For the Delegation of **French Polynesia**  
Monsieur Charles GARNIER, Chef du bureau des affaires européennes



For the Delegation of **Pitcairn**  
Councilor Jacqueline CHRISTIAN, Community Development Portfolio



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



For the Delegation of **Saint-Barthelemy**  
Monsieur Michel MAGRAS, Sénateur



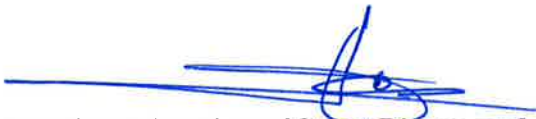
For the Delegation of **St-Eustatius**  
Mr. Nicolaas SNEEK, Commissioner of Finance



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 Mr. Mathias S. VOGES, Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten



For the Delegation of **Saint-Pierre-and-Miquelon**  
Honourable Stephane ARTANO, Président du Conseil territorial



For the Delegation of **Territory of the French Southern and Antarctic Lands**  
Monsieur Pascal BOLOT, Préfet, Administrateur supérieur des TAAF



For the Delegation of **Wallis and Futuna**  
Monsieur Michel JEANJEAN, Préfet, Administrateur supérieur des îles