



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

ASSOCIATION PTOM

LGO ASSOCIATIE

OVERSØISKE LANDE OG TERRITORIERS ASSOCIATION

14th OCTA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Brussels, 25 February 2016

POLITICAL DECLARATION

PREAMBLE

The Representatives of the Overseas Countries and Territories met in Brussels, BELGIUM, on 25 February 2016 on the occasion of the 14th OCTA Ministerial Conference. They discussed the future of their Association and the implications for their partnership with the European Union as well as the opportunities for growth and investment in their respective territories on the basis of the provisions of the Overseas Association Decision (OAD). They welcomed the transformation of the OCT Task Force into a Unit for Relations with Overseas Countries and Territories and the maintenance of its direct link with the Office of the Deputy Director General. They reaffirmed their commitment to a dynamic OCTA in order to build on its past and present achievements with a view to continue to strengthen the partnership with the European Union and achieve the sustainable development of OCTs in the framework of the OAD. The outstanding issues of the Interim Strategic Plan, 2015 - 2020 were discussed and a new governance framework, structure of annual membership fees and secretarial arrangement for OCTA were adopted.

POLITICAL RESOLUTIONS

The OCTs call upon the European Commission (Commission) to:

OCT-EU relations

1. Dialogue and partnership

Support OCTs in mutually strengthening the three instances of OCT-EU dialogue identified in the OAD through the organisation of an increased number of Partnership Working Party meetings, the reactivation of the PWP on Trade, Investment and Growth and on the future OCT-EU partnership and in revisiting the methodology for the preparation of PWPs. In addition to promoting the implementation of the OAD, an enhanced OCT-EU dialogue will contribute to the

EU taking OCTs' assets, concerns and perspectives into account in the formulation of its strategies, policies and programmes.

Acknowledge the paramount importance of the Forum and the imperative to safeguard adequate and equal representation of OCTs at this annual event by maintaining the traditional number of sponsored delegates per OCT at a minimum of four for future OCT-EU Forums and in addition allowing per OCT non-sponsored delegates that best reflects the political and administrative circumstances of individual territories.

Collaborate with OCTs to ensure that existing mechanisms are used to assess the progress in implementing the Common Conclusions of the Forum.

Reinforce the necessary preferential and differentiated treatment of the management of OCTs' files, in close cooperation with all relevant General Directorates and services of the Commission as to the specific challenges and opportunities faced by OCTs in the implementation of the provisions of the OAD

To support the Chair of OCTA to ensure the 2016 EU-OCT Forum can be held in 2016.

OCTA Technical Assistance

2. Financial support for OCTA

Positively consider institutional support to OCTA in line with what was previously agreed in paragraph 15 of the Common Conclusions of the 13th OCT-EU Forum that the Commission would examine future support measures to OCTA in the context of the 11th EDF, taking into consideration the results of the mid-term evaluation of the support already provided.

Unlocking the value of OCTs

3. Research, Education and Innovation

Recognise the steps taken by OCTs to establish a framework to enable dialogue to commence on research, education and innovation with the creation of an online map of higher education institutions within the OCTs and the production of a study "Identification of potential networks in Higher Education".

Facilitate and continue to support dialogue between relevant EU Commission services and OCTs to enable research institutions in EU Member States and the OCTs to have access to each other's resources thereby making possible knowledge transfer and capacity building within the OCTs.

4. Trade, investment and growth in the OCT's:

Actively provide concrete information on the requirements and available assistance for OCTs to access the European Investment Bank, including the European Fund for Strategic Investments, in close collaboration with the EU Member States and other relevant partners.

Assess the impact on OCTs' economies of EU Free Trade Agreements and consequently take any necessary actions to facilitate the best possible market access for OCTs' goods and services.

5. Financial Services

Affirm the importance of Title III: Chapter 5 of the OAD on cooperation in the area of financial services and taxation and the importance of the OCTs, the Union and Member States regularly engaging in a comprehensive and political dialogue on financial services;

Ensure a coherent approach by Directorates General to financial services cooperation with OCTs as set out in the OAD and the appropriate engagement of Member States.

Directly engage OCT competent authorities on tax and regulatory issues as appropriate and share expertise on principles of tax and transparency.

Consult OCTs on EU initiatives (i.e. regulations, decisions and laws) pertaining to financial services, tax matters, banking and finance to be applied to Third Country jurisdictions which could potentially impact the sustainable development of the OCTs.

Continue engagement with the OCTs at the PWP level on technical discussions on matters of specific concern to OCTs and Member States.

Climate change

6. Access to EU and global initiatives and funds

Secure systematic and timely information to OCTs on the opportunities to access EU initiatives, globally and in their regions, on environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction, including activities related to the Global Climate Change Alliance+.

Support a dialogue with the Union's Member States to promote the eligibility of OCTs to Climate Change adaptation and mitigation funds, such as the Global Climate Fund (GCF) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), as appropriate.

7. Paris Climate Change Agreement

Inform and engage OCTs on relevant developments and actions related to the Union's Climate Change Strategy and the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

8. Sustainable energy

Promote strategic partnerships and collaboration between the OCTs and applied research institutions, particularly those from EU Member States, to develop energy solutions adapted to local conditions and position OCTs as regional hubs and centres of excellence in the field of Sustainable Energy.

Support OCTs in developing sustainable energy policies and regulatory frameworks to improve the conditions for the rapid deployment of sustainable energy projects.

Building on the 2015 Sustainable Energy Roadmap for OCTs, engage with OCTs in organising a second Summit of OCT Energy Ministers and stimulate participation in the 2016 EU sustainable energy week.

Biodiversity

9. BEST

Support a decision-making role for the OCTs in the establishment of a sustainable partnership following up to BEST.

10. BEST 2.0

Ensure the necessary transparency and good governance in the selection process of projects, allowing the participation of OCTs' representatives as observers to the Commission's decision-making process and with regards to the methodology on the distribution of funds regionally and among calls. This information has not been shared despite requests on the occasion of the first project steering committee meeting.

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

11. Regional integration

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.

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.

12. EDF Programming

Promote capacity building in the OCTs and ensure a quick start or 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.

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.

Union programmes

13. Accessibility

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

14. Erasmus+

To take note of our appreciation for the short-term arrangements made and to take duly into account on a permanent basis of the extreme remoteness of some OCTs with regard to the Erasmus+ Programme's mobility and transversal actions elements in the frame of the mid-term review.

15. Life+

Discontinue the restrictive interpretation of the requirements of article 6 of the LIFE regulation that currently prevents OCTs from benefitting from the programme while some activities lead in the OCTs could contribute to efficiently achieve the objectives of the Union on environment and climate change.

Include a dedicated section on OCTs in the midterm evaluation of the LIFE programme to take place in 2017 in order to address the limited access of OCTs in the recommendations for the final implementation period and the upcoming program after 2020.

16. Post-2020 framework

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

Commit at the 15th OCT-EU Forum to Common Conclusions identifying a mechanism for integrating the OCTs' views into the post-2020 framework.

REFERENCE

Signed in Brussels, Belgium, this 25th of February 2016

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

For the Delegation of **Aruba**
The Honorable Mike EMAN, Prime Minister

For the Delegation of **Bermuda**
Ms. Kimberley DURRANT, UK Representative

For the Delegation of **Bonaire**
Mr. Clark ABRAHAM, Commissioner

For the Delegation of **British Virgin Islands**
Mr. Benito WHEATLEY, Director and UK/EU Representative

For the Delegation of **Cayman Islands**
Mr. Samuel ROSE, Cabinet Secretary

For the Delegation of **Curaçao**
The Honorable Bernard WHITEMAN, MD, Prime Minister

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

For the Delegation of **Greenland**
The Honorable Vittus QUJAUKITSOQ, Minister for Industry, Labour, Trade and Foreign Affairs

For the Delegation of **Montserrat**
The Honorable Donaldson ROMEO, Premier

For the Delegation of **New Caledonia**
The Honorable Philippe GERMAIN, President of the Government

For the Delegation of **Pitcairn**,
The Honorable Leslie JAQUES, Councillor

For the Delegation of **French Polynesia**
The Honorable Jean Christophe BOUISSOU, Minister of tourism, in charge of international air transport, modernization of the government public services and government spokesman

For the Delegation of **Saba**,
Mr Menno VAN DER VELDE, Senior Policy Advisor /TAO

For the Delegation of **Saint-Barthélemy**,
The Honorable Nils DUFAU, Vice-President of the Collectivity

For the Delegation of **Saint Helena, Ascension, Tristan da Cunha**
The Honorable Lawson HENRY, Member of the Executive and Legislative Council

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

For the Delegation of **Sint Eustatius**,
Ms Astrid McKENZIE-TATEM, Commissioner

For the Delegation of **Sint Maarten**
The Honorable William V. MARLIN, Prime Minister

For the Delegation of **Territories of the French Southern and Antarctic Lands**
Mr. Christophe JEAN, Deputy Prefect and Secretary General

For the Delegation of **Turks and Caicos Islands**
Dr. The Honorable Rufus EWING, Premier

For the Delegation of **Wallis and Futuna**
Mr. Marcel RENOUF, Prefect and superior Administrator