



OCTA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Nouméa, New Caledonia, 21 November 2022

POLITICAL DECLARATION

PREAMBLE

In a global context severely marked by the epidemic and security crises, the representatives of the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) associated to the European Union met on 21 November 2022 in Nouméa, New Caledonia, on the occasion of the annual Ministerial Conference of the Overseas Countries and Territories Association (OCTA).

The exchanges between the representatives of the 13 OCTs mainly focused on the evolution of OCTA's governance as well as on the results and prospects of the partnership with the European Union (EU), with reference to the Decision on the Overseas Association, including Greenland (OADG) of 5 October 2021.

1. Deploring the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused considerable loss of life in the OCTs, and throughout the world, and has triggered a deep health, social and economic crisis with high risks of long-term effects on populations and the main economic sectors of the OCTs;
2. Condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the violation of international law as well as the suffering inflicted upon the people of Ukraine. Expressing concern of the detrimental repercussions on the already fragile economies of all the OCTs, given their strong dependence of imports of energy and food;
3. Reaffirming the concept of "belonging to the same European family" as the central principle of the OCT-EU partnership;
4. Reaffirming the mutually beneficial partnership between the European Union (EU) and the OCTs, taking into account the geostrategic role played by the OCTs, their contribution to the international, territorial and oceanic dimension of the EU, their vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of marine resources, their exceptional biodiversity, and the potential of their contributions to meeting major global and European challenges, such as adaptation to climate change and the protection of the oceans, and to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;



5. Welcoming the implementation of the Council Decision on the Association of the Overseas Countries and Territories with the European Union, including relations between the European Union, of the one part, and Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark, on the other hand (Overseas Association Decision, including Greenland) adopted on 7 October 2021, in line with the multiannual framework for 2021-2027; also acknowledging the progress made through the implementation of the previous Overseas Association Decision, which has modernized and further differentiated the EU- OCT partnership;
6. Recalling that the COVID-19 crisis has had a constraining impact, on the one hand, on the gathering of the dialogue bodies, which have met virtually for the last two years, and, on the other hand, on the implementation of the OCTA's annual action plans;
7. Recognizing the efforts made by the European Commission in the support related to the COVID-19 crisis under the 11th EDF, and the effectiveness of the EU support measures to OCTA, which constitute an essential contribution to the activities of the OCTA, capacity building of OCTA, as well as to the EU-OCT dialogue through a common platform;
8. Recognizing the satisfaction expressed by OCT stakeholders who participated in OCTA activities in 2021 and 2022, such as webinars on energy, ocean, the LIFE programme, Horizon Europe programme, Erasmus+ program and European Solidarity Corps, the Archipel.eu program and the modernization of OCTA communication tools; congratulating the European Commission for the establishment of the "OCT Youth Network" which contributes to the influence of the OCT-EU partnership among the youth of the OCTs; congratulating the European Union on the initiative to shine a light on the importance of the European Youth to build a better future, with the announcement of 2022 as the European year of Youth;
9. Stressing the impact of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU on the partnership established between the OCTs and the EU, and especially between the OCTs and within OCTA, particularly in financial terms;
10. Emphasizing the impact of the new Belgian regulations relating to non-profit associations (ASBL) which have had consequences for the governance, functioning and capacity of the Association to continue its activities of the period 2021-2022 with stability;
11. Noting the adoption of the new strategy of the OCTA by the members, for the period 2021-2027, which revolves around political and strategic dialogue, communication and learning, and lastly, cooperation in strategic areas;
12. Noting the redefinition of new regional alliances with the European Union and its Member States, and in particular an intensified commitment of Europe in the Indo-Pacific region with the launch of the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, on 16 September 2021, and the strategy "Global gateway" on 1 December 2021, aimed at stability, security and sustainable development of the region.



Through this political declaration, the OCTs:

Regarding the governance of OCTA

13. **Welcome** the adoption of the revised Articles of Association.
14. **Emphasize** the restructuring undertaken for more transparent management.
15. **Thank** the strong mobilization of the executive team in 2021 and 2022, and welcome the new appointments within the Executive Committee.
16. **Value** the importance of securing a qualified technical Secretariat in the contribution and implementation of the multiple programmes financed by the European Union.
17. **Recall** the primary political will of the Association to promote the mutual interests of the OCTs vis-à-vis the European institutions.

Regarding the 2021-2027 partnership

18. **Invite** all relevant stakeholders to successfully implement the revised EU-OCT partnership, under the Overseas Association Decision including Greenland, and other regulations of interest to the OCTs, such as the Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)
19. **Regret** the difficulties encountered with the ING bank and, subsequently, the consequences on the institutional dialogue with the European Commission. Nevertheless, **welcome** very favorably the benevolence of the Commission in not recovering the Operational Grant for 2022, essential for the implementation of activities and events, including the capacity building of the Association.
20. **Call** for a combined effort by all stakeholders to continue to promote the participation of OCTs in all EU financial assistance tools and programs for which they are eligible.
21. **Reiterate** the importance of the following 4 main issues in the context of the implementation of the Overseas Association Decision, including Greenland, by:
 - **Guaranteeing** the same or a higher level of flexibility as for the European Development Fund (EDF) and appropriate measures for the programming and implementation of the financial assistance of the OCTs;
 - **Ensuring** effective intra-regional cooperation through clear and tailored modalities for OCTs and their partners;
 - **Providing** more suitable modalities for accessing EU programmes;
 - **Maintaining** the same level of support as currently offered by the European Investment Bank (EIB) in the OCTs through specific tools - including through repayments from the current OCT Investment Facility, taking into account the fact that the future terms must not be less favorable than the current terms.



With regard to the EU-OCT dialogue

22. **Call** for greater coordination by the OCT unit of the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) of all the Directorates-General of the Commission on matters relating to the OCTs, in order to ensure the coherence of the actions and initiatives of the Commission which may be of interest to the OCTs or have an impact on the EU-OCT partnership, in particular with regard to trade (re)negotiations, regional cooperation and integration, the European Green Deal (i.e. biodiversity, climate change), resilience, research and innovation, oceans, fisheries, connectivity and investments, as well as strengthening the exchange of expertise.
23. **Reaffirm** that the specificities of the relations of the OCTs with the EU require a differentiated and transversal treatment, according to their geographical location in all parts of the world and their common characteristics.
24. **Call** for a coherent approach in the transversal position and functions of the OCT unit within DG INTPA, enhancing the political visibility of the OCTs with the support of all relevant geographical units from the different EU directorates and delegations, from the Pacific to the Caribbean, to the Arctic, to the Indian Ocean and isolated OCTs.
25. **Request** the urgent support of the European Commission to improve the visibility of the EU-OCT partnership, and its added value, by promoting complementary joint participation in regional and international events presenting common interests (e.g. regional partnerships, blue economy, Outermost Regions).
26. **Emphasize** the need to consolidate the instances for dialogue, political and technical (Tripartite meetings and Partnership Working Groups) between the different partners.
27. **Recall** the desire to be able to express themselves in both French and English, which are both official working languages of the European institutions.
28. **Warmly** welcome the holding of the 19th edition of the EU-OCT forum, in New Caledonia on 22 November 2022, and express gratitude to the host country for their generosity.

With regard to EU financial assistance to the OCTs

29. **Welcome** the approach of the European Commission to have closely associated OCTA with the implementation of the thematic program Green Overseas.
30. **Reiterate** the need to be regularly informed by the European Commission on the guidelines for the financial programming for 2021-2027.
31. **Reiterate** the need to maintain the same level of support in the grant contract to OCTA for the proposed activities in 2023.
32. **Highlight** the expectations regarding the call for proposals of the BEST 2.0+ program and the necessary close involvement of OCTA in the governance of the program.



33. **Welcome** the recent initiatives of the Commission dedicated to the Overseas Territories, such as the pilot project on culture and the OCT component of the preparatory project.

Regarding regional cooperation and integration

34. **Reaffirm** the need to closely involve the OCTs in the post-Cotonou agreement, with due regard to their observer status (as defined in the agreement), and in the EU's regional partnerships with the OCTs' neighbors, whether or not they are ACP States. **Acknowledge** the European Commission's efforts to build on the OCTs in their respective regions, and **reiterate** the need for enhanced, long-term technical assistance to strengthen the regional integration and/or cooperation of each OCT.
35. **Stress** the importance of the regional programming process, which contributes to the OCTs' regional cooperation with the ACP, the Outermost Regions, regional organizations and other territories, and facilitates intra-regional cooperation for greater emancipation and complementarity of action between countries within the same group.
36. **Welcome** the implementation of the KIWA Pacific Initiative for Biodiversity Protection, Climate Change and Resilience launched in September 2018, co-funded by the EU, France, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, and invite the EU and its partners to continue and expand their financial support in favour of the OCTs.

With regard to the main areas of cooperation

37. **Underline** the important role that the OCTs have to play in the context of the Green Deal for Europe, for instance regarding biodiversity protection or clean energy transitions, and **strongly encourage** the Commission to develop flagship initiatives or projects dedicated to archipelagos, including for the OCTs, such as the "Clean Energy for EU Islands" initiative.
38. **Welcome** the reflections on the overhaul of the European tourism sector, and the proper consideration of the OCTs in their regional and international dimension.
39. **Stress** the need for the EU to take better account of the interests of the OCTs and their populations in the EU's commitments on Oceans, and to involve them more closely in discussions on climate change and biodiversity, as a priority through the Association, participation and enhancement of the OCTs in the work of the United Nations Conferences of the Parties (COPs) on these issues.
40. **Invite** the European Commission to keep the OCTs informed of trade negotiations that may affect their territories and populations, and to take their interests into account in order to limit the erosion of their preferential trade regime. **Ensure** their association with regional trade events to promote regional trade integration, and to develop the use of Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX).



OCTA Ministerial Conference - Nouméa, New Caledonia, 21 November 2022

Political Declaration

41. **Call** on the European Commission to further support research and innovation in the OCTs, through the appropriate European programmes and the available expertise developed for EU regions, and to develop support measures similar to those implemented in the Outermost Regions under Horizon Europe.

With regard to collaboration between the OCTs, and between the OCTs and the EU

42. **Stress** the importance of having better adapted and strengthened cooperation tools and mechanisms between the EU, the OCTs and ACP countries of the same region, aiming at more sustainable development objectives with genuine prospects for economic sustainability.
43. **Affirm** the importance for the OCTs to strengthen the relationship and dialogue with the UK Overseas Territories in the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between UKOTA and OCTA, on 24 June 2021, in particular in the field of regional cooperation.

REFERENCE

44. This Declaration shall be referred to as the “Political Declaration of the OCTA 2021/2022 – 2022 Ministerial Conference”.

Signed in Nouméa, New Caledonia, this 21 November 2022

For the Delegation of **Aruba**

Mr Juan Thijsen

Minister Plenipotentiary of Aruba / Representative of the Aruba Government to the EU



OCTA Ministerial Conference - Nouméa, New Caledonia, 21 November 2022

Political Declaration

A large, stylized blue ink signature of Mr Edison Rijna, the Governor of Bonaire, is written over the title 'Political Declaration'.

For the Delegation of **Bonaire**
Mr Edison Rijna
Governor of the island of Bonaire

A blue ink signature of Mr Carlson Manuel, the Minister Plenipotentiary of Curaçao, is written below the signature of Mr Edison Rijna.

For the Delegation of **Curaçao**
Mr Carlson Manuel
Minister Plenipotentiary of Curaçao

A blue ink signature of Honorable Jean-Christophe BOUISSOU, the Vice-President of French Polynesia, is written below the signature of Mr Carlson Manuel.

For the Delegation of **French Polynesia**
Honorable Jean-Christophe BOUISSOU
Vice-President of French Polynesia

A blue ink signature of Honourable Kalistat Lund, the Minister for Agriculture, Self-Sufficiency, Energy and Environment of Greenland, is written below the signature of Honorable Jean-Christophe BOUISSOU.

For the Delegation of **Greenland**
Honourable Kalistat Lund
Minister for Agriculture, Self-Sufficiency, Energy and Environment



OCTA Ministerial Conference - Nouméa, New Caledonia, 21 November 2022

Political Declaration

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For the Delegation of **New Caledonia**
Honourable Louis MAPOU
President of the Government of New Caledonia

A blue ink signature, likely of Rolando Wilson, is written above the text. The signature is stylized and appears to read "Wilson".

For the delegation of **Saba**
Mr Rolando Wilson
Commissioner

A blue ink signature, likely of Bernard BRIAND, is written above the text. The signature is stylized and appears to be a combination of letters.

For the Delegation of **Saint-Barthelemy**
The Honorable Bernard BRIAND, President of the Territorial Council of Saint-Pierre et Miquelon,
nominated as proxy by the Honorable Xavier LEDEE, President of the Territorial Council of Saint-
Barthélemy

A blue ink signature, likely of Bernard BRIAND, is written above the text. The signature is stylized and appears to be a combination of letters.

For the Delegation of **Saint-Pierre-and-Miquelon**
The Honourable Bernard BRIAND
President of the Territorial Council of Saint-Pierre et Miquelon



OCTA Ministerial Conference - Nouméa, New Caledonia, 21 November 2022

Political Declaration

A blue ink signature, appearing to read 'Claudia Toet', is written above the text for the delegation of Sint Eustatius.

For the Delegation of **Sint Eustatius**
Mrs Claudia Toet
Deputy Government Commissioner

A blue ink signature, appearing to read 'René Violenus', is written above the text for the delegation of Sint Maarten.

For the Delegation of **Sint Maarten**
Mr René Violenus
Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten

A black ink signature, appearing to read 'Guillaume Cottarel', is written above the text for the delegation of the French Southern and Antarctic Lands.

For the Delegation of the **French Southern and Antarctic Lands**
On behalf of Mrs Florence JEANBLANC-RISLER, Prefect, High Commissioner
Her representative, Mr Guillaume COTTAREL

A blue ink signature, appearing to read 'Hervé Jonathan', is written above the text for the delegation of Wallis and Futuna.

For the Delegation of **Wallis and Futuna**
Mr Hervé JONATHAN
Administrateur supérieur des îles Wallis et Futuna