



**Remarks by Chief Minister Hon. Dr. DORLANDO SMITH, OBE  
UNDP ACTION PLAN CONSULTATION  
Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> November, 2005  
Treasure Isle Hotel Conference Room  
8:30 a.m.**

UNDP Resident Representative for Barbados and the OECS – Ms. Rosina Wiltshire, visiting delegates from the OECS, members of the local delegation, media, other invited guests and friends – good morning.

The British Virgin Islands are happy to host this UNDP in-country consultation. We are proud we were selected as the venue for it is a demonstration of our ongoing emergence as a significant jurisdiction within the sub-regional grouping. Through hosting high-profile events like this one, our Territory is taking its rightful place among the OECS family of member-states.

In our Legislative Agenda (2003 – 2007) my Government pledged to continue relations with other territories in the region and strive to harmonise approaches to common problems and engage in technical cooperation.

By hosting this important consultation we continue on-course toward achieving that objective. The British Virgin Islands will continue to strengthen cooperation in functional areas and play our full part in regional activities as a mature Caribbean Territory.

Our Territory has benefited profoundly from different programmes spearheaded by the UNDP area office.

UNDP assisted us in formulating our National Integrated Development Plan and Strategy, which serves as an umbrella policy for guiding overall development of the British Virgin Islands.

The sustainability of growth and development is of critical concern to us.

Given our rapidly growing economy and population, and the associated demands on our infrastructure and physical environment, it became important for us to develop a process which could ensure all facets of national policy are coordinated with a view to maximizing the development and welfare of all citizens. In that quest, we got technical assistance from UNDP in developing a project of an Integrated Development Plan in support of sustainable development.

Also, we have benefited from our participation in a range of conferences coordinated by UNDP. In fact, a BVI delegation will travel to Barbados next week for a conference on the UN Millennium Development Goals.

As we open this consultation I hasten to reiterate that we are gathered together at an important moment – for the OECS region, and indeed for the entire world.

It is often noted that history is punctuated by so-called “hinge moments” – small windows in time where the fundamental rules governing international order and relationships between states undergoes a profound realignment.

It is clear that we are living in such a moment.

The forces of globalization are everywhere driving a relentless process of change. Borders are opening up; trade between nations is growing at rapid rates; new technologies are connecting individuals, businesses and institutions more quickly and more easily than ever before; and, throughout the world a new generation of leaders in the realm of commerce, science, culture and statecraft are emerging - who are deeply committed to the establishment of a new order where competition among nations is not based on weapons and bloodshed – but upon innovation and creativity.

This moment presents both challenges and opportunities for every nation on earth.

For us in the OECS, the stakes are even higher.

As small countries and territories, we are faced with a unique set of obstacles. But at the same time we must also realize that this moment offers the greatest chance we may ever know to break out of obsolete patterns and emerge onto the world stage as a new economic, political, and social force.

We have tremendous advantages in the emerging connected world.

We have the advantage of our relatively small size, which allows us to be flexible and agile. For nations like Germany, France, Russia, or even the United States – to forge a new consensus behind new policy directions can take years. Here in our region we can recognize an opportunity, engage in a public dialogue with our people and plot a new course in a matter of months.

We also have the advantage of our diversity. Here in our region we have always mixed together peoples from every corner of the globe – from Africa, to Europe, to the Near East, to the Pacific Rim.

This amazing mix of people has produced a culture that is vibrant and rich. More importantly, it has led to a mind-set that is open and tolerant to other voices. In a world in which your best trading partner might be a nation half a world away, being comfortable with the process of bridging the gulf of language and custom can be the key to success.

Finally, we have the advantage of our location. In a world where security threats are becoming an ever more pressing concern, here in our region we can offer a safe haven for those seeking to do business removed from the pressures and conflicts of the larger nations.

And so these advantages can mean that the age of globalization can also be the Golden Age for the OECS.

But in order to realize that vision, we must seize the day by preparing our people, our institutions and our economies to meet the demands of the future.

And I submit to you that this starts by working toward greater integration and cooperation among all the states of the region.

Around the world, nations are becoming increasingly aware of the power that comes from regional unity.

From NAFTA to our West, to the European Union to our East, to the regional groupings of the Far East – regional alignments are enabling nations throughout the world to better meet the challenges of globalization.

And under the auspices of the United Nations and other supra-national institutions, developing regions throughout the world are learning to work together to create models that maximize the benefits of cooperation, while taking into account the unique circumstances and needs of each member state.

This is a model that must guide us here in our region and I am pleased to see that the UN Reform initiative, within the sub-regional office, is designed to address those important issues.

When we stand alone we are but small, geographically isolated island states. When we stand together, we are much more; quite simply, when we stand together we can and will be a force to be reckoned with.

And so it is in that spirit of unity and common cause that we, in the BVI, are so pleased and honoured to host this consultation.

I have noted with interest the UNDP mandate for Barbados and the OECS members, which is “to support their individual and collective development goals as well as achieve results and outcomes that support sustainable people-centered development.” Your stated mandate is clearly in keeping with the imperative of establishing a cooperative framework that takes advantage of our shared resources while also focusing on the individual needs of each state.

I am particularly pleased to see that the UNDP has taken the unique needs of each member country into account and has streamlined its programming strategy and processes with the introduction of the “Country Programme Action Plans”, to facilitate implementation of development assistance.

I would like to commend the United Nations Agencies, accredited to Barbados and the OECS, for working towards introducing a harmonised approach to management and the role of the UN system in the region as part of your reform initiative. I agree that this reform will bring about benefits for all concerned and also make your work more relevant and effective within the OECS and Barbados.

I make special mention of your newly introduced **Common Country Assessment (CCA)** and the **United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)**. We, in the British Virgin Islands, are keen to learn more about those new programmes and how they may benefit our Territory along with the wider sub-region.

I am certain that some of those issues will emerge in the course of your consultation.

Your agenda contains many important issues, which are of concern to us. Among others, I cite your deliberations on Poverty Reduction, Environmental Management, and Disaster Risk Reduction.

Those issues, along with the others that would be tackled, are of real concern to us in the OECS and Barbados therefore I anticipate the outcome of your consultation.

I wish all the delegates a fruitful meeting and hope you will make real progress towards formulating Country Programme Action Plans for each of the countries covered by the UNDP office for Barbados and the OECS.

In closing let me once again welcome all of you to our beautiful shores and wish you a productive meeting. If time permits I encourage you to participate in a little sightseeing. Our Territory has a lot to offer and I invite you, our colleagues and friends of the OECS and Barbados, to enjoy our hospitality.

Thank you.