

# *OECS Countries Pursue Joint Approach to Foreign Policy*

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Castries, May 22 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Foreign affairs ministers from the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) are meeting in Saint Lucia to develop joint approaches to a number of issues of mutual concern.

Officials say the meeting is taking place at a time when more OECS countries acknowledge that longstanding friends and partners have scaled back crucial assistance to this region. They say it is imperative that small island states build new bridges with friendly countries and seek new resources to tackle their own pressing needs.

"In our search for possible alternative alignments with other nations, they must be strategically planned and they must be coherent. Today is an opportunity for us to come together, to organize ourselves into that integrated mold so that we can determine appropriate policy options for the OECS in the context of the end of the Cold War, an era of globalization and emergence of new powers," said Saint Lucia's Foreign Affairs Minister Alva Baptiste.

The director general of the OECS says Dr. Didacus Jules says the meeting serves to ensure ongoing collaboration among member states on issues that require a collective voice. “In practical terms, this means that we champion the cause of Antigua and Barbuda Internet gaming industry as vigorously as we argue the inadequacy of the per capita income indicators as a graduated formula. It means that we all embrace, protect and the financial services industry of the British Virgin Islands from the onslaught of the uncompetitive imposition by bigger, powerful financial interests. Today, we start the conversation in earnest,” he said.

The ministers are also expected to address issues such as climate change, financing for development, and transnational security. The ministers will also seek to identify areas of the world where CARICOM can possibly share joint diplomatic representation. Another area to be examined by the foreign ministers is the establishment of mechanisms for consultation on migration issues, including the recent upsurge in human trafficking in, and affecting various CARICOM member-states.

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