



**St. Lucia
Co-operative League**
Strength in Unity.

Registered – Twenty –Six of January, Nineteen Hundred and Seventy -Seven

8TH ANNUAL OECS CREDIT UNION SUMMIT

AUGUST 18 – 22, 2010

“Co-operating to withstand our present day Challenges”

Communiqué

Two hundred and forty (240) delegates from across the OECS States met in St. Lucia from August 18 – 22, 2010 for the 8th Annual OECS Credit Union Summit. The theme for this year’s Summit was ‘Co-operating to withstand our present day challenges’.

The many challenges and opportunities for further development of the Movement were thoroughly dealt with during the three day event. The Summit started with an elaborate Opening Ceremony which was attended by Saint Lucia’s Governor General Dame Pearlette Louisy, the Prime Minister, Honourable Stephenson King, representatives from the Caribbean Confederation of Credit Unions(CCCU) and delegates from forty five Credit Unions, Leagues and Co-operative Departments from St. Lucia and the sub region.

Brother Aaron Moses the keynote speaker set the tone for the Summit in his address. He described the economic environment and some of the major challenges currently facing the Movement. He noted that there are pertinent questions to be pondered such as whether in fact our Credit Union Movement is a great organization and whether our Movement has successfully confronted the complex challenges and intractable adversities. He asked whether we can triumph like brave soldiers in this difficult environment and how do we contend with such complexities.

In his address some survival strategies were offered. These included the need to focus on serving members’ needs, to identify and pursue key strategic priorities such as open membership, and to recognize the need to be financially sound and well managed. Brother Moses concluded that cooperatives are strategic in the world and play a major role in improving the socio-economic conditions of their members. He said he was confident that the Movement’s relevance has been confirmed and that it will be triumphant despite the challenging times.

Honourable Stephenson King declared the Summit open after making some brief remarks highlighting the importance of the Credit Union Movement. He explained the need for Financial Sector Regulation and the rationale for setting up the Financial Sector Regulatory Authority. He assured delegates that the Movement will be consulted before the Financial Sector Regulatory Authority and Harmonized Co-operative Societies Bill become law.

During the proceedings that followed the Opening Ceremony for the next two days there were a total of six (6) plenary presentations, four (4) workshops, and one panel discussion. All the sessions were well attended, and were very interesting. Participation was high.

The topics discussed at this year's summit were as follows:

- OECS ECONOMIC UNION – ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT.”
- CREDIT UNIONS IN THE NEW FINANCIAL LANDSCAPE, A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE OF THE CREDIT UNION MOVEMENT IN THE NEW FINANCIAL REALITY.
- STRATEGIC PLANNING.
- PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CO-OPERATORS –STRATEGIES TO INCREASE YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE CREDIT UNION MOVEMENT
- ATTRACTING AND MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF THE CREDIT UNIONS' HUMAN RESOURCES
- REINVESTING IN THE CREDIT UNION MOVEMENT-A CASE FOR THE CENTRAL FINANCE FACILITY (CFF)
- MONEY LAUNDERING
- CO-OPERATING TO REDUCE THE COST OF OPERATIONS; TIGHTENING OPERATIONAL DEFICIENCIES, AND PREPARATION FOR THE NEW REGULATORY REGIME
- THE HARMONIZED OECS COOPERATIVES COUNTRY BILL

On day three of the Summit delegates met to review the issues which had been canvassed during the summit and offer concrete actions and policy directions which they and the various levels of leadership within the OECS movement should pursue in the short to medium term to address them.

This Communiqué presents the reactions, responses and recommendations of delegates of the Summit, which they have requested to be used as a roadmap by leaders of the movement to guide their programs and advocacy on behalf of the movement.

Legislation

Delegates of the Summit expressed the concern that governments of the movement with the exception of Antigua and Barbuda had in general failed to meaningfully and constructively engage the movement in relation to the Single Regulatory Unit. They requested that the leaders of the movement convey the sentiments to each of the respective governments in the other states that the Cooperators of the OECS celebrate and commend the efforts and lead of the Government of Antigua, in their engagement of the leaders of the country's cooperative movement prior to the passage of the SRU and the Harmonised OECS Cooperative Acts. They urged the Leagues of the sub region to provide the leadership but urged the credit union leaders and membership to come on board by establishing committees, and mobilizing their members to advocate for the revision of both of these Acts in consultation with the movement.

They affirmed their support to the cooperative movement and expressed the view that they would not allow any impending legislation to so affect. They expressed that they will remain true to our movement by ensuring that the legislation provides for our children. They asked that the movement set themselves a timeframe of two weeks to mobilize members to action.

Central Finance Facility (CFF):

The delegates lamented the fact that the leaders of the movement had not done enough to ensure that strong Central Finance Facilities were operational in all of the island states. They also identified that the lack of participation by the larger credit unions as one of the key contributors to this failure. The delegates expressed the view that this should be given immediate attention and urged leaders of credit unions to establish a CFF and or support their National CFF. They also requested that by the next summit a framework for the establishment of the CFF which reflects the needs of the regions' CU be developed and presented.

Youth

The delegates reinforced the view that that the young people are the potential managers, workers and members of the movement. Therefore if the success of the movement is to be sustained there must be concrete and deliberate measures and programs instituted to engage them. To do so the credit union movement must have three characteristics: accessibility, affordability and availability, otherwise, the movement would lose a generation of young people and by extension the credit union sector. The prevailing view was that the young person's cannot be attracted in isolation to their parents as they were the bread winners. In pursuit of the objective to fully engage and attract youth into the movement delegates offered the following recommendations and plan of action:

- Each member commits to the enrolment of at least five persons, especially youth;
- "Co-operators" who are parents will encourage their children/ family members to join the movement (jointly where feasible), and to be volunteers;
- All Credit Unions will embrace the use of Information Technology (IT), and "chat rooms" where youth are found, in their operations and youth outreach efforts;
- The Credit Unions commit to fine-tuning the nomination process and system, to encourage the participation and development of young people.

Human Resources:

The delegates opined that the human resources are the greatest contributors to the success of the movement and therefore it is important that the movement attract and retain persons who can make a contribution. They beseeched all credit unions to undertake organizational audits and strategize to get maximum results from available human resources including its volunteers and to attract critical skills that were in short supply. They also requested that the leaders and managers of the human resources in the movement take a serious look at the Human Resources policies, the Governance process, the training provided, and the succession planning. In support of these objectives Leagues were asked to act as a vehicle source, create, store and disseminate policy and procedure documents for reference purposes, as 'model documents' and templates with strong transferability across the region. The leaders and managers were also asked to institute systems and procedures to a strong level of

transparency and trust in the recruitment process, for recruitment should not be based on “who you know.” but rather on who is best placed to do the job.

Money Laundering:

The delegates recognised the vulnerabilities of the OECS including the cooperative movement to issues of money laundering and terrorist financing which include; lack of natural resources, lack of investment, geographic location, porous borders, and unmanned beaches. They reaffirmed their commitment to tackling this scourge and to shield the movements from its impacts. To this end they indicated that they would all take the issue of money laundering seriously, by being more vigilant, and observing the provisions of the regulations. They also asked that all credit unions across the sub region commit to the following:

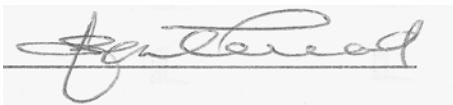
- Credit Unions will recruit a Compliance Officer , small credit unions who lack the resources and work volumes should cooperate to one compliance officer who can jointly serve them;
- Provide training and capacity development in anti money laundering procedures for those CUs that lack the capacity to handle it.

Cooperation to Reduce Cost of Operations:

Delegates recognised that cooperating to reduce cost was an effective strategy to improve credit unions ability to deliver services and value to their members. They deliberated on a number of possible initiatives which could be pursued in fulfillment of this objective. They urged the leaders of the movement to look at areas where cost cutting and sharing could take place in order to maintain and improve profit margins. They therefore asked the credit unions of the pursue the forms of mergers and strategic alliances that have been discussed by the presenters , including taking a look at ‘alternative investment’ forms e.g. shipping as areas of opportunity for cooperation;

Eastern Caribbean Cooperative Central

Delegates expressed disappointment with the fact that the summit as in its eighth year and that they were not aware of the achievements to date. In this regard delegates indicated that they require that a status report on the Eastern Caribbean Cooperative Central be presented at all summits. Importantly they also expressed the need for the leaders to reports so as to ensure that accountability is established.



Mr. Silvanus Fontenard
President, Saint Lucia Co-operative League

August 23, 2010