

Statement by His Excellency Ambassador Anton Edmunds, Representative of Saint Lucia at the XXVI Special Session of the General Conference of OPANAL

15 November, 2018

Thank you, Mr. President and Mr. Secretary-General.

Saint Lucia is pleased to be part of this XXVI Special Session of the General Conference of OPANAL. Mr. Secretary-General, thank you very much for your report, as well as the report of the Council. I think that it gives Saint Lucia a roadmap of sorts; as we were not clear on the level of engagement and depth of work that you have undertaken on our collective behalf. I lament the fact that we/Saint Lucia have not been as engaged as we should have been for such a long time but you have my guarantee - in terms of the position that I hold - that we will be more active and more engaged going forward. My Minister's participation last year in the General Conference, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, is evidence of our re-engagement.

I want to extend our appreciation to OPANAL in terms of the Internship Programme that that is in place for Caribbean Member States. We have had two of our young foreign service officers, including one who is amongst us, in Ms. Alexandra Aurelien. In fact, the gentleman who participated prior - Mr. Carlton Henry - is now at the United Nations and is actually applying the knowledge that he gained from his experience in this institution within our Mission.

One of the things that I also note and lament is the fact that countries like mine, have been behind in terms of our financial obligations to this institution. Inasmuch as I appreciate the fact that Members had agreed to offer us an opportunity to become current, it took us too long to play our rightful role as being a paying member of an institution such as this. The work of this institution is critically important and it should not be impacted by the lack of support of member countries like mine. We are pleased to report that we are up to date in terms of our financial obligation as well as our obligations to the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

Mr. Secretary-General, you made a comment about engagement with the Caribbean and I want to proffer my Government's and my personal support for that engagement. I think one of the missing links is indeed a lack of knowledge as to the good work that this Organization had done on behalf of our regional interests. Obviously there is a logistics issue as it relates to many countries participating in OPANAL activities, but I commit to you my and Saint Lucia's support, that if you want to engage in the Caribbean - be it with you coming to Washington and meeting with the caucus of CARICOM Ambassadors or us working on a programmatic activity in the region.

Thank you.