



THE AGENCY FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION

P.O Box 608, Kingstown, St Vincent and The Grenadines

Tel: (784) 456-1600, Fax (784) 456-2430

Email: apisvg2023@gmail.com

21/05/2026

OECS 10TH TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CONVENES IN SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) held its 10th Technical Advisory Committee Meeting on Human and Social Development on May 20, 2026, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines under the theme: “*Advancing Social Protection in the OECS: Policy, Practice and Learning.*”

The two-day meeting convened with regional policymakers, technical experts, development partners, and stakeholders to strengthen collaboration and advance reforms in social protection systems across the OECS.

Outgoing Chair, Permanent Secretary, and St. Kitts and Nevis resident, Azilla Clarke, highlighted the increasing geopolitical tensions affecting Small Island Developing States and the heightened vulnerability of the region ahead of the Atlantic hurricane season. She underscored the resilience of Caribbean people and reaffirmed the importance of regional cooperation in strengthening responsive social protection systems.

Incoming Chair and Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Merissa Finch-Burke, outlined priority areas for the Committee’s work, including strengthening efficiency and sustainability, advancing community practices, improving

social protection adaptation, reviewing safety net systems, and promoting human-centred and resilient approaches.

Senior Social Protection Economist at the World Bank, Clemente Avila Parra, reaffirmed the Bank's continued support for regional reforms. He noted progress in some member states, particularly in Integrated Information Systems (IIS), while emphasizing that development across the region remains uneven.

Programme Director of the OECS Health, Social Inclusion and Social Protection Unit, Dr. Roxanne Brizan, and Co-Chair of the committee, emphasized that the Technical Advisory Committee serves as the technical backbone of the Council of Ministers for Human and Social Development. She underscored the importance of adaptive social protection and improved targeting to ensure no one is left behind.

Minister of Social Welfare and Community Empowerment, Ecclesiastical Affairs and National Heritage, Hon. Shevern John, welcomed delegates and noted the significance of St. Vincent and the Grenadines assuming the chairmanship of the OECS Social Protection Technical Advisory Committee. The Minister also highlighted the country's upcoming role as Chair of the OECS Council of Ministers for Human and Social Development.

The Minister reaffirmed that the Committee functions as a key advisory body mandated to provide technical guidance and policy recommendations to strengthen social protection systems across the OECS, with a focus on reform, innovation, and improved outcomes for citizens.

During the meeting, delegates discussed regional best practices and explored ways to expand and strengthen social protection frameworks across member states.

-End-