

Sir Ron's remarks on EU labelling Commonwealth Small States as "Tax Havens"

(Sir Ronald Sanders was Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador in negotiations with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on its "Harmful Tax Competition" scheme)

London, 19th June 2015... In naming 30 countries as the "top tax havens in the world", the European Union (EU) appears to "playing dice" with the reputations of countries, 12 of which are Commonwealth independent small states in the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Indian Ocean.

An examination of how Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines and St Kitts-Nevis were listed reveals that in all cases 10 European countries were mainly responsible for naming them.

But, very little business is done between these 7 Caribbean countries and the 10 European nations, namely Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal and Spain.

If the seven independent Caribbean countries named above were seriously deficient in the application of international standards of tax good governance (transparency, exchange of information, and fair tax competition), this would have been known to Britain with whom these countries conduct more business than any other European nation. Yet, neither Britain nor Germany are among the EU countries who identified them.

It may well be that the named countries in the Caribbean, Pacific and the Indian Ocean do not have Tax Information Exchange Agreements with the 10 European Union nations, but they do have such agreements in place with major EU nations. Why then was there not more information sharing between the EU countries before the list was issued in the name of the EU as a whole?

Small Commonwealth states should act together to object to their listing by the EU and to question the criteria by which the 10 European nations with which they least do business identified them as tax havens.