

Progress made on the commitments in the 2012 Joint Ministerial Council communiqué

Montserrat

Jobs and Growth

Increasing investment and trade

Montserrat has worked closely with Her Majesty's Government and in particular, the Department of International Development, over the last fifteen years to rebuild its economy after the onset of volcanic activity in 1995. A recent review of the implementation of the Medium Term Strategy (2008-2012) of the Sustainable Development Plan (2008-2020) showed that Montserrat has continued to make progress in re-establishing a stable and diversified economy. Access to the island continues to be improved; inroads have been made in establishing a new town at Little Bay; and geothermal drilling has been completed. The agriculture sector has been strengthened through a food production strategy which has seen a 66 percent reduction in the importation of some agricultural crops. This has contributed to Government's effort towards safe-guarding the island from food insecurity and also to protect the residents from the sky rocketing food prices of imported food products.

The tourism sector, which is seen as the key sector to facilitate sustainable development in Montserrat, has a forward looking strategy designed to increase visitor numbers and enhance visitor satisfaction. The plan seeks to increase visitor numbers to a minimum of 15,000 per year by 2020 from an annual total of just over 7,000 currently.

Montserrat is also continuing to put in place an enabling business environment that will support economic growth and diversity through private sector development. In consultation with Government of Montserrat (GoM), the Montserrat Development Corporation (MDC) has undertaken work to encourage investment in the island. A One-Stop-Shop has been set up in the MDC to facilitate and coordinate investments. Additionally many studies have been undertaken to ensure that Montserrat is competitive and able to attract suitable foreign investment. The Memorandum of Understanding on the Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) signed with DFID sets out a number of reforms that are designed to assist Montserrat in developing the right investment climate.

UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) has agreed to promote business opportunities in Montserrat both on their website and at trade missions where appropriate. Both UKTI and GOM will continue to explore areas to highlight investment prospects in Montserrat including opportunities for public private partnerships. The Joint Ministerial Council Business Event will be the first opportunity in the UK to showcase the opportunities that are available from new economic activities.

Developing entrepreneurship and small businesses

The MDC has established an EC\$1 million fund to provide small start up loans for small businesses. Separately, they are administering a Youth Enterprise Scheme that encourages secondary school pupils to "own" a business for a year to give them experience of running a company. This is part of a wider drive to encourage school leavers to look at the private sector, rather than the public sector.

Infrastructure investment

GoM has identified specific catalytic infrastructure investments which are required for sustained development in Montserrat. The main investments are port infrastructure, Little Bay town centre development, geothermal development and ICT infrastructure. DFID has recognised the importance of these investments to Montserrat and discussions between the Government of Montserrat and DFID on financing for the SGP are on-going. GoM are also liaising with IFUSE on possible areas where they can provide support.

Meeting international standards on tax co-operation and financial sector regulation and combating financial crime, bribery and corruption

Montserrat continues to meet international standards on tax co-operation, financial sector regulation and combating financial crime, bribery and corruption. Montserrat made a public statement on 26 April in support of the G8 agenda on financial transparency. However, in order to honour its commitments in a timely manner, GoM will require technical assistance to prepare and draft the appropriate legislation. GoM has now agreed an action plan on beneficial ownership, which has been published. The extension by the UK of the Multilateral Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance on Tax Matters is now in force and GoM has also asked the UK to extend the UN Convention Against Corruption and the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention and the EU Convention for the Suppression of Territories and the Palermo Convention. The Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) between the UK and Montserrat is due to be signed during JMC week.

GoM is also forging ahead with the preparation for the introduction of the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act and its UK equivalent. Earlier in the year, GoM, the Governor's Office and Overseas Territories Department at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office approached Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) to see whether they would host a secondment for our interim Customs director, Peter White. HMRC were receptive, and hosted a 6 week secondment for Peter during March and April this year. The secondment covered a broad range of issues, including law enforcement, tax collection, and tax evasion. Peter has also said that HMRC have offered to provide bespoke support and advice to GoM on individual cases, though most of this is predicated on GoM digitising its customs and revenue service. He has also gained some knowledge of useful techniques that he says will improve local investigative techniques on the tax evasion side.

The Environment and Green Growth

Management and protection of the natural environment

GoM recognizes the importance of the use of environmental impact assessments, evidence-based management plans, and the protection of important areas in planned development, but here again full implementation is hampered by the lack of skilled human resources. A lack of capacity has hampered progress in the area of management, protection and conservation of the natural environment, and recent efforts to recruit a special technical adviser on environmental management were not successful. However, progress has been made with legislation and a draft Conservation and Environmental Management Act has been submitted to Cabinet and draft regulations sent to the legal draftsman.

Sustainable fisheries

Montserrat participated in the Lionfish Response Strategy Workshop II in Cayman Islands funded by HMG and will continue to seek opportunities to develop capacity in this sector through working with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Joint Nature Conservation Council.

Renewable energy

Renewable energy in the form of geothermal energy is likely to be a catalyst for other private small and medium economic activity within the next two to three years. Test drilling for geothermal energy commenced in February and initial results are positive. Successive phases will look at development and exploitation of this resource.

Support from International Organisations

Strengthening relationships with the EU, Commonwealth and other international organisations

Montserrat is regularly represented at EU meetings relevant to the OTs, and is benefitting from EDFs 9 and 10. It is a member of CARICOM (the Caribbean Community), and is the only Overseas Territory to be a full member of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). Montserrat is a part of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union, where the Premier is a member of the Monetary Authority. Montserrat has been invited to join the Regional Security System.

Better Government

Developing democratic institutions

Montserrat is progressively improving good governance in many areas with support from DFID. A Commissions Secretariat has been established and is now staffed. A Complaints Commission was set up under the 2010 Constitution and the Integrity Commission is currently being set up.

Integrity in public life

Legislation is in place to cover Integrity in public life. Two members of the Integrity Commission have been agreed and progress has been made to identify a third member.

Codes of practice

Montserrat has Codes of Conduct for Ministers and Parliamentarians, whilst a code for public servants is included in the draft Public Administration Bill, which is likely to be passed into law in November.

Strengthening the public service

Through the Jubilee Programme various training programmes have been organized for the National Audit Office and public sector managers through the Institute of Parliamentary Studies. We have agreed a secondment for the Comptroller of Customs and are looking at opportunities for the Ministry of Agriculture, Housing and Environment; and the Department of Education. Public service employees have taken advantage of the online training sponsored by the FCO. GoM has also initiated contact with Hertfordshire County Council to explore opportunities to develop capacity in the civil service through secondment, mentoring and training.

A new integrated border security unit was approved by Cabinet on 07 November, amalgamating immigration and customs duties under one command, instead of being separately administered by the police and the customs service. This should lead to welcome savings in administration and an improvement in the efficiency of processing visitors, including yachtsmen where Montserrat will now add internet processing of yacht applications to minimise the problem of arrival outside of normal working hours. The unit will start on 18 November, and its performance will be regularly monitored. Serving police officers will be seconded into the unit which will come under the overall control of the head of customs.

Improving service delivery, including through e-government

GoM is a proponent of e-government and has started to roll out its e-government programmes. The online visa application programme is active and Montserrat is willing to share this technology with other OTs. Other new online programmes include an electronic Cabinet Administration Programme and Property Tax billing. Other e-government services are scheduled to be rolled out in 2013/14.

Strengthening public financial management and procurement

The Finance (Management and Accountability Act) 2008 with its associated Regulations provides the governance framework within which Government operates. A new Public Procurement Board has been established; all invitations to Tender are listed on GoM's website and all approved tenders are also publicized. Additionally, DFID provides significant budgetary and capital aid which also provides

Overseas Territories

Joint Ministerial Council

direct fiduciary assurance. It has also provided funds to recruit a Public Financial Adviser and an Internal Auditor.

Stronger and Healthier communities

Sport and healthy lifestyles

Montserrat has a comprehensive Sports Programme starting with the very young. Programmes are run in the schools for athletics, football, cricket, basketball, and netball. Additionally there are local leagues for more senior players, in cricket, basketball, netball and volleyball. Cricket is played both at the local and regional level. There is also a comprehensive football programme. Tennis and volleyball are also played extensively. There is a significant thrust towards encouraging healthy lifestyles because there is a high incidence of non communicable diseases (NCD's). The Ministry of Health spearheads national programmes to encourage exercise and healthy eating.

Older people and disability

Strategies are being implemented by GoM and local NGOs to ensure that other vulnerable members of society receive the attention they require. There has been an increase in the level of dependent persons, and in recognition of this the GoM has paid specific attention to welfare issues. DFID is providing funding for a Senior Social Worker to support the development of a strategic framework for integrated social services. The SSW will work in collaboration with CSOs such as the Montserrat Association or Disabled Persons and the Old People's Welfare Association.

GoM recognized the need for a sustainable pension programme and has initiated an actuarial review of its pension scheme to obtain a better feel of obligations. A New Pensions Act has been put in place, modernizing the provisions. One key change has been the adjustment to the age of retirement which gradually takes the retiring age to 65 years which is consistent with Social Security provisions.

Children

Montserrat Children's Society has recently been established as a Not for Profit organization to offer support to vulnerable children and their families. DFID is providing funding for a Child Safeguarding Specialist to lead the development and implementation of a new multi-agency Child Safeguarding framework for Montserrat.

At the Cabinet meeting on 07 November it was raised that the maximum sentence available for sex with children is only 2 years, which sends a lamentable signal about Montserrat's commitment to child protection. Judges have previously complained about this and a suggestion had been made earlier in the year to increase the sentence to 15 years. The expectation is that the Penal Code will be amended in the next few months to highlight this change.

Tackling Discrimination

The Labour Code 2012 Act came into force on 27th December 2012. Part 8 of the Act addresses issues of equality of treatment in the employment field by providing for equality of treatment irrespective of an employee's race, colour, sex, religious belief, ethnic origin, nationality, political opinion or affiliation, disability, family responsibility, pregnancy, marital status or age. The Status of Children Act 2012 came into force on January 1st 2013. It abolishes the legal distinction in the status of children born within and outside of marriage. Consequently from the date of the commencement of the Act, all children in Montserrat are of equal status.

Safer Communities

As mandated in the 2010 Constitution, a National Advisory Council has been established. The NAC has met once to monitor progress on the implementation of recommendations of a comprehensive review of the Royal Montserrat Police Service. In the period under review, there has been no further need for the NAC to meet.

Strengthening coordination on tackling crime

Gang crime is not an issue in Montserrat but we are mindful to put in place the appropriate measures to ensure that the status quo remains. The review of the Royal Montserrat Police Service has caused a change of policing tactic, and community policing is now far more in evidence. The hitherto redundant police station in Salem has reopened, increasing the sense of community policing.

Prisons and probation

Her Majesty's Prison has continued to benefit from assistance from the OTD Prison Reform Advisor, and has been taking prisoners on transfer from other Overseas Territories, who have agreed to give evidence on behalf of the prosecution, and who therefore need witness protection. This has been a significant help to developing the witness cooperation programmes in other Caribbean Territories. The Montserrat Parole Board recently recommended the release on licence of two lifers, which was agreed by the Governor. Such releases have only happened occasionally in the OTs, so this is something of a landmark.

Disaster preparation and resilience

Not surprisingly, of paramount importance is our response to and management of disaster. Montserrat has a clearly defined institutional framework for disaster response. This was recently tested in an exercise, Operation Greenflash, which was carried out in February. Recommendations in terms of overall improvement to Montserrat's disaster response mechanisms are being reviewed to facilitate improvements.

Health

Strengthening public health systems

Infrastructure improvements will assist in the quality of care. In this regard, DFID has agreed £8 million for the redevelopment of Glendon hospital. Implementation will take 3 – 4 years. In the area of mental health, following a visit from a forensic psychiatrist from Oxleas NHS Trust in November 2012, an action plan is being taken forward. The new hospital supported by DFID will include a secure psychiatric room.

Montserrat works closely with regional and international bodies in areas of health provision including with Pan-American Health Organisation and the OECS. The latter provides the facility to enable Montserrat to purchase certain medicines with other countries in the region thereby benefitting from economies of scale. At last year's JMC it was agreed to look at whether a similar arrangement could be explored with the UK.

Montserrat has a small cadre of medical officers with varying degrees of specialist skills. The island is therefore dependent on visiting specialist to provide some of the specialist care that is not available on island. On island Medical Officers need to have access to attachments and training opportunities in the UK, to increase their exposure to areas of specialization. To facilitate this, the UK registration process for Medical Officers from the OT's needs to be reviewed to enable them to have access to attachments and long term training programmes.

Tackling chronic non communicable diseases (NCDs)

The incidence of NCDs is high on Montserrat. Statistical records show that nearly half of all admissions at the hospital are as a result of diabetes mellitus, hypertension and chronic respiratory disease. A National NCD Forum was held in September 2012 resulting in an Action Plan to determine how best to deal with this issue. In the short term there has been increased public awareness of NCDs and education programmes mounted to stimulate lifestyles changes. This has also been supported by an improvement in the quality of clinical services provided by having increased training programmes for community health staff to improve their skills in reaching out to "non-compliant" NCD clients.

International Health Regulation (IHR) compliance

The IHR is critical to the advancement and growth of Montserrat hence the need to have at least the minimum requirements so that the lives of its people and visitors can be safeguarded. GoM welcomes the analysis of the core capacity gaps and has developed an Action Plan to try and meet the 2014 deadline. However, limited resources will have an impact on progress. GoM would welcome support from HMG to enable Montserrat to meet the 2014 deadline. An assessment of the requirements will be a priority task for the new Chief Medical Officer who arrived on the island at the beginning of November.

Education

Strengthening participation and attainment

The recent attachment of the Principal of the Montserrat Secondary School (MSS) to improving schools in the London area was a new and novel approach and it could be replicated at the middle management level and also at the primary school level. New heads of department should be given similar opportunities to observe best practices by persons with similar responsibilities. A recent proposal was made to the DFID education advisor for the identification of an advisor to spend a period of 6-8 months at MSS to “hold the hands” of senior and middle managers.

With support from the Caribbean Development Bank and the GoM, the Ministry of Education was able to conduct a Teacher Enhancement Project. The project was meant to improve the teaching and management skills of teachers.

The Ministry has decided to enter Grade 6 students into the Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment in 2014. Consequent changes will have to be made in the teaching of grade 6 in terms of parental involvement, teacher feedback, peer and self-assessment, and data collection. An implementation team has been established teachers of grades 5 and 6 have been trained in the requirements of the assessments.

During the year, the school lunch and transport services were outsourced to the private sector. Both services are still subsidised by the GOM, but the overall cost of the services to GOM has reduced and efficiency increase.

In order to improve student skills and the teaching of information technology, a project was implemented by GoM by which a laptop was made available to every teacher and student at MSS. This was subsidised by the GoM. LIME, a local communication company, partnered with the Ministry of Education in this initiative. LIME installed a wi-fi network at MSS through which students can access the internet and manages child safety over the internet by filtering out undesirable websites.

GoM and its development partners continue to ensure that student classroom space and safety in terms of infrastructure are sufficient and in good condition. With support from the Caribbean Development Bank through the Basic Needs Trust Fund, Brades primary school underwent repairs which also included fencing of the school site. The Look Out Primary School Expansion project, financed by DFID, is progressing as planned.

The Montserrat Community College continues its relationship with Colombia’s Vocational Training Sector and Montserrat continues to benefit from Colombia’s South-South Cooperation Strategy with the Caribbean Basin.

Due to continued below pass mark performance in maths and English, an association to oversee the teaching of these subjects was set up during the year. At the Caribbean Examinations level, there continues to be an increase in entries. 167 entries were registered during the year, an increase of 56%. Attainment at the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate has also been improving. During the year, 26% of year five cohort obtained 5 or more passes including maths and English which represents a 3.5% point increase over last year.

The quality of primary education delivered on the island by teachers continues to be closely monitored by the Ministry of Education. During the year, officers from the Ministry joined the Principals of the two public primary schools to formally observe teachers in classrooms. Every

Overseas Territories

Joint Ministerial Council

teacher was observed twice during the year and each observation was followed by a feedback conference.

Montserrat could benefit greatly if more of our students study in the UK. However, lack of access to financing in the UK for tuition and accommodation will continue to affect the number of students that opt to pursue studies in the UK.

Early childhood education

The Education Department and the Montserrat Children's Society would like support, which may require legislation, to improve inclusion of children with disabilities to access all levels of early childhood, primary and secondary education. The exact nature of the support, and where it might come from, needs to be clearly defined.

Tertiary education

The only tertiary education on Montserrat is through the campus of the University of the West Indies, which offers distance learning.