

STATEMENT

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Remarks by the Junior Minister for Culture and Tourism

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Good afternoon everyone,

As Junior Minister with responsibility for Culture and Tourism, I am honoured to stand before you today as we celebrate and encourage the Virgin Islands' delegation to CARIFESTA XV.

Culture is at the heart of who we are. It defines us, tells our story, and connects us to both our ancestors and our future. In supporting this delegation, the Ministry is fulfilling a very important mandate, to preserve, promote, and showcase the unique culture of the Virgin Islands, while also positioning it as a source of national pride and an avenue for economic opportunity. Culture and tourism often walk hand in hand, and we recognize that cultural expression is not only a cornerstone of our identity, but also an asset that can attract visitors, build industries, and expand opportunities for our people.

This year's delegation is special. It brings together seasoned cultural practitioners who have been honing their craft for years, alongside new, emerging artists bringing fresh energy and perspectives. This balance between tradition and innovation ensures that our culture remains alive, dynamic, and relevant. The preparation has required immense dedication: musicians rehearsing tirelessly, dancers perfecting their performances, designers and visual artists creating works that reflect our identity, and writers and filmmakers preparing to share our stories with the world. Their commitment is not easy, but it is necessary, and deeply appreciated.

I especially want to highlight the youth delegation. Thirteen of our students, accompanied by three chaperones, will have the opportunity to participate. For them, this is more than just a trip; it is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to learn, connect with peers across the region, and witness firsthand how culture shapes their identity. We are proud of them and grateful to the parents, teachers, and supporters who made this possible.

The Ministry's role in this process has been one of coordination, empowerment, and support, ensuring that our delegation has the logistical, financial, and organizational resources needed to succeed. Beyond simply facilitating travel and participation, our goal is to empower artists by creating spaces for them to develop their craft, gain exposure, and build networks that will benefit the Territory long

after CARIFESTA ends.

But CARIFESTA is not just about showcasing who we are; it is about building bridges. Our delegation will learn from their peers, forge new partnerships, and bring back knowledge and experiences that will strengthen our cultural ecosystem here at home.

To every delegate, I commend your discipline, your creativity, and your resilience. You are not just participants, you are ambassadors of Virgin Islands culture. When you perform, when you speak, when you engage, you carry the Virgin Islands with you. I have no doubt that you will represent us with pride and dignity.

We stand firmly behind you, and we thank you for carrying our story to the Caribbean stage.

Thank you.