

PRESS RELEASE

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Premier Wheatley Attends Series of Meetings in the United Kingdom

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Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley, left the Territory on Saturday 22 November 2025 to attend a series of meetings in the United Kingdom.

As President, he will co-chair the Joint Ministerial Council, which is the highest-level annual forum for dialogue between elected leaders of the United Kingdom's Overseas Territories and ministers of His Majesty's Government. This year's meeting will be hosted by the Minister for the Overseas Territories, Stephen Doughty, MP, at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office in London.

“The 2025 JMC carries particular significance, forming part of a broader reset in the relationship between the UK and the Overseas Territories,” Premier Wheatley said at his press conference on Friday 21 November. “Central to this reset is the development of bilateral Compacts—tailored frameworks between the UK and participating Territories designed to clarify shared priorities, strengthen commitments, and improve long-term planning. The UK Government will also introduce a proposed Charter on Engagement with the Overseas Territories, establishing principles for transparency, communication, and collaboration.”

Throughout the week, Overseas Territory leaders will participate in plenary sessions, technical workshops, bilateral meetings, and political engagements covering some of the most pressing issues of our time. As Chair of the UK Overseas Territories Association (UKOTA), the Virgin Islands will play a leading role. Premier Wheatley will guide collective OT engagement with the UK, set the tone for the discussions, and open several major sessions.

The agenda includes artificial intelligence in healthcare and cybersecurity, the outcomes of COP30, the launch of the new Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy, and efforts to improve access to climate finance. Security will remain central, with discussions involving the Home Office, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of Justice on internal security, irregular migration, border management, and criminal justice. Other sessions will address illicit finance, beneficial ownership transparency, FATF preparedness, Overseas Development Assistance, and planning for the 2026 Commonwealth Games.

The Virgin Islands delegation comprises: Honourable Kye Rymer – Minister of Communications and Works; Honourable Lorna Smith – Junior Minister of Financial Services, Economic Development and Digital Transformation; Mr. Jeremiah Frett, Financial Secretary; Mr. Benito Wheatley, Special Envoy; Ms. Dwynel Davis, Ag. Director of International Affairs; Ms. Karia Christopher, Director of Communications; Mr. Kedrick Malone, Governance Reform Delivery Manager/Chief of Staff; and Mr. Dorian Hodge – Production Technician, and Mr. Kamaal Lettsome, Communications Specialist.

While Premier Wheatley is away, Honourable Julian Fraser, RA, Deputy Premier and Minister responsible for Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change, has been appointed to carry out the duties of Premier, Minister of Finance, Minister for Tourism Culture and Sustainable Development, and Minister for Financial Services, Economic Development and Digital Transformation from 21-28 November 2025.

Honourable Fraser's acting appointment is in accordance with Section 55(1) of the Virgin Islands Constitution Order, 2007, which states: "If the Premier is expected to be absent from the Virgin Islands for more than forty-eight hours, the Governor shall authorise the Deputy Premier to perform the functions of the office of Premier; and the Governor shall revoke this authority on the return to the Virgin Islands of the Premier."

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About:

The Government of the Virgin Islands is committed to promoting good governance and the sustainable development of the Territory with a view to ensuring a well-informed, prosperous, cohesive and stable society. The Premier's Office serves as the focal point for coordinating cross-sectoral policies and programmes and promoting the sustainable development of the Virgin Islands to ensure a well-informed, prosperous, cohesive and stable society.

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