GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

STATEMENT

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Remarks by Governor Daniel Pruce at a Press Conference on 7th May, 2026

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Good morning and thank you for joining me at Government House this morning.

Let me begin by providing updates on security-related matters including the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force and the prison, HMP Balsam Ghut, and after I'll say a few words about last week's visit to the Virgin Islands by Mr Robbie Bulloch, Director of the Overseas Territories at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office – his first visit to the British Virgin Islands.

On security matters, colleagues will recall that towards the end of the last year in November, following a lengthy recruitment process, the Police Service Commission submitted a recommendation for the next permanent Police Commissioner. After careful consideration of that recommendation, regrettably, I am unable to accept it.

I want to stress that this conclusion was not reached lightly and I have sought advice every step of the way. Of course, I recognise the public interest in this matter and while it would be inappropriate for me to comment in detail, I will say that my decision was based on the fact that I was not provided with a sufficient evidence base for me to reach a conclusion on such an important public appointment. On that basis, and in line with my constitutional responsibilities, I concluded that I would be failing in my duties were I to accept the recommendation.

Of course, I recognise the urgency of filling this crucial post. The effective leadership of the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force, and public confidence in that leadership, are of critical importance to the safety and security of these islands and everyone who lives and works on them. This will be the most important appointment I will make as Governor – it will be the most important appointment the Police Service Commission will ever advise me upon - so it is therefore my duty to ensure that the mechanism by which it is made, meets the highest possible standards. My sole concern is that the process by which this appointment is made must be fair, evidence based and capable of withstanding proper scrutiny, in accordance with the Constitution.

As a result, the option that lays before us is to move forward with a new recruitment process, engaging with stakeholders as we do so. I would like to acknowledge the time and effort of all those involved in the process to date – the Office of the Deputy Governor, the Police Service Commission and the National Security Council.

In the meantime, Interim Acting Commissioner Richard Ullger will remain in post to ensure continuity and stability.

Before I move on let me just stress that I remain personally fully committed to fulfilling my own constitutional responsibilities in the best interests of the Territory and consistent with my top priority as Governor – the top priority I set out when I was sworn in in January 2024 - which is ensuring the safety and security of the Virgin Islands.

Let me move on to another matter and that relates to vetting - you will have heard me speak previously about my vision for a highly professional, fully vetted and properly resourced Royal Virgin Islands Police Force. That remains my focus, and I am very pleased to confirm that we've made recent positive developments in relation to the vetting of the police force. The critical agreements which are a vital component of this process – the data sharing agreements - between relevant local government agencies and the vetting unit have now been finalised, signed and submitted and with those documents in place, the vetting process is underway. I'm extremely pleased that we've reached this significant milestone. As we've discussed previously in these briefings, vetting is a necessary measure to ensure the integrity of the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force, strengthen public confidence in it while also preserving the safety of officers and ensuring national security.

Let me talk a bit more widely about the prison and police force. The UK continues to provide practical support to strengthen the security of the Virgin Islands across

the board, particularly through assistance to those key agencies. This includes the placement of a UK-funded RVIPF project officer, and a RVIPF analyst, and of course the UK continues to fund the Interim Acting Commissioner. We've also recently deployed two experienced UK prison officers to support the prison Superintendent to continue to develop the security policies and procedures and rehabilitation facilities at HMP Balsam Ghut. This support reflects the UK's ongoing commitment to working in partnership with the British Virgin Islands to enhance public safety, build professionalism and strengthen resilience across the security sector.

Finally, I just wanted to touch on the recent visit by Mr Robbie Bulloch, Director of the Overseas Territories at the FCDO. I'm extremely grateful to all those who took the time to meet with Robbie – I know he found his visit to the BVI a valuable exercise to gain precious insight into the issues into the Territory and to the people who live and work here. He met with the Premier and with the Cabinet, the House of Assembly including the Opposition. He saw the Attorney General, a range of officials and law enforcement representatives across the board. He also had the opportunity to discuss matters relevant to the proposals to negotiate a revised Constitution and that was an interesting series of conversations. The UK is open to considering such proposals and the details of the process will be followed in due course.

During his visit, I also hosted a community reception at Government House, where Mr Bulloch met with a broad range of representatives from community organisations and non-profits, including WIN BVI, M.A.L.E, The Virgin Islands Alzheimer's Association, the Association of Reef Keepers, Lemonade, Chevening scholarship alumni, and the newly established BVI Young Women's Association. This engagement gave Robbie a strong sense of the depth, diversity, and strength of community life in the Virgin Islands – something which has particularly struck me during my time here - and he found it particularly valuable in understanding how national level policy discussions translate into everyday realities for people on the ground. As I've said before as Governor, I believe it is an important part of my role to foster meaningful engagement between community voices, the Governor's Office, and the UK Government, the full breadth of government and beyond, and to

ensure that those perspectives are heard and reflected in our ongoing work. They are of course the people that we all serve. Thank you very much I’m happy to take questions.

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Additional Documents or Media

- Governor Pruce 7 May Press Conference