GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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102 Persons Formally Welcomed as Belongers of The Virgin Islands

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The Department of Immigration has formally welcomed 102 persons as Belongers of the Virgin Islands following the Belonger Status Award Ceremony held on Thursday, 16th July at the Eileene L. Parsons Auditorium, H. Lavity Stoutt Community College.

The recipients included 80 persons granted Belonger status under Section 16(3) and 22 persons under Section 16(6) of the Immigration and Passport Act. During the ceremony, the recipients recited the Territorial Pledge and received their certificates from Premier of the Virgin Islands, Dr. the Honourable Natalio D. Wheatley.

Premier Wheatley addressed the awardees and spoke of the Territory's continued journey towards self-determination. He encouraged the new Belongers to see themselves as nation builders and to regard their new status as a commitment to the Virgin Islands, rather than only a means of accessing the privileges associated with becoming a Belonger.

The Premier emphasised that becoming a Belonger did not require them to abandon where they came from, but instead gave them another flag and home to celebrate and love. He said, "So let me again congratulate you. I have a deep sense of pride in the presence of all of you. And the Virgin Islands is a better place because you are in it."

Chairperson of the Board of Immigration, Ms. Kamika Aisha Forbes, welcomed and congratulated the recipients on reaching the important milestone. She also encouraged the new Belongers to deepen their connection to the Territory and contribute to its continued development.

Ms. Forbes said, "I hope that already invoked within each of you is an inextinguishable fire, passion and genuine love for the BVI, its people, our food, our culture and our islands. May you continue to view our BVI– not just as a tropical home, or safe space to rest your head, but as a territory with unmeasurable potential, in which you are willing to invest your resources, talents and time, whose pledge you will recite, Territorial song you will sing and Flag you will fly wherever you go."

Following the ceremony, Head of the Department of Immigration and Deputy Chief Immigration Officer Nadia Demming-Hodge acknowledged the work undertaken by the Department and the Board of Immigration to support the Belonger status process.

Mrs. Demming-Hodge said, “The Belonger status process requires careful review and coordination to ensure that applications are considered in line with the Territory’s laws and national interests. The Department of Immigration extends its appreciation to the Board of Immigration and the public officers whose diligence and professionalism supported this process. The Department also extends congratulations to each of our new Belongers.”

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Financial Services, Economic Development and Digital Transformation, Mrs. Natalie Fahie-Smith, delivered closing remarks and encouraged the new Belongers to use the opportunities that accompany their status to participate more fully in the life and development of the Territory. She highlighted voter registration, public service, business ownership, volunteering and positive community involvement as some of the ways they could help shape the future of the Virgin Islands.

The Department of Immigration congratulates the 102 newly granted Belongers and their families on this significant occasion. The Department remains committed to administering the Territory’s immigration processes with professionalism and care while supporting the national interest and recognising the meaningful contributions of those who have made the Virgin Islands their home.

Full Image Gallery from the Belonger Status Award Ceremony **HERE.**

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Additional Documents or Media

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