GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

STATEMENT

Tel: (284)468-2730
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Statement By Premier And Minister Of Finance Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley on Second Round of Constitutional Negotiations

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Madam Speaker, I rise to update this Honourable House on the Second Round of constitutional negotiations I led between the Virgin Islands and United Kingdom (UK) that took place from 23rd to 25th September in London, United Kingdom (UK).

Before I provide my update Madam Speaker, I want to remind Members and the public that negotiations are ongoing and that at this stage it would be inappropriate for me to get into granular detail about the negotiations.

Madam Speaker, the second round of constitutional negotiations were constructive and conducted with a high degree of professionalism on both sides. The negotiations built on the first round of talks were comprehensive in nature.

We engaged in detailed technical discussions on how the proposals by The Virgin Islands would work in practice. We also discussed several proposals put forward by the UK. Further technical or political discussion on various proposals and provisions on both sides is necessary to progress the negotiations, which I hope will continue before the end of the year.

On balance, I believe we are making steady progress. While there is no official agreement at this stage between the UK and the BVI on the proposals that have been discussed, a number of the proposals are non-contentious and there should be no sticking points. We will continue to constructively engage the UK and to seek as much meaningful constitutional advancement as possible.

On Wednesday, the 28th of October, I have a meeting with OT Minister Kumaran that should provide much more clarity on what the UK is willing to agree to. I will report back to the people of the Virgin Islands upon my return. I would like to commend the Virgin Islands Constitution Negotiating Team for their exceptional presentation and representation at the negotiations in London which were done at the highest level.

The members of the team who joined me in person were Deputy Premier Hon. Julian Fraser, Minister of Communications and Works Hon. Kye Rymer, Minister of Education, Youth and Sports Hon. Sharie DeCastro, Attorney General Hon. Dawn Smith, Leader of the Opposition Hon. Marlon Penn, At Large Representative Hon.

Ronnie Skelton, His Lordship Hon. Justice Gerard Farah, KC, Principal Crown Counsel Mrs. Maya Barry, Chair of the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) Mrs. Lisa Penn-Lettsome, Kings Counsel Sir Jeffrey Jowell KCMG KC, and Special Envoy Mr. Benito Wheatley.

I also want to thank UK Lead Negotiator Mr. Nicholas Wareham and his negotiating team for their constructive engagement, professionalism and hospitality. It was also a pleasure to engage with Overseas Territories Minister Uma Kumaran in the margins of the negotiations.

Madam Speaker, I will update this Honourable House again at the next possible juncture on this most important exercise.

Additional Documents or Media

- the_second_round_of_constitutional_negotiations_updated.pdf