

**Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council
London, 26 November 2013**

Communiqué

We, the political leaders and representatives of the UK and the Overseas Territories, met at Church House in London on 26 November.

We welcome new elected leaders and representatives of Ascension, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands and St Helena.

At our first meeting last year we re-affirmed our commitment to a shared vision for the Territories as vibrant and flourishing communities, proudly retaining aspects of British identity and generating wider opportunities for their people, as set out in the 2012 White Paper *The Overseas Territories: Success, Security and Sustainability*. We agreed an ambitious agenda encompassing eight priority issues and detailed action points. Progress has been made and we are continuing to work together to deliver results across the board.

We believe that the global economy is changing quickly, creating both uncertainty and opportunities for us all. At this, our second meeting, we focused on action to support economic diversification, jobs and economic growth.

Economic Diversification

The Territories are small, open and dynamic economies that offer exciting opportunities for investment and for trade. Most Territories rely heavily on one or two economic sectors. The Territories have vital interests in financial services, tourism, agriculture and fishing. We recognise the importance of continuing to develop these sectors and of reducing vulnerability through economic diversification. We recognise, and are determined to address, the risks that climate change can create, in particular to tourism, agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture.

The Territories have attractive offers to potential investors, including stable legal systems based on common law; the English language; educated workforces; links with growing and emerging markets; and the entrepreneurial spirit of island peoples. Territory Governments are committed to creating world class business environments; investing in human capital; attracting creative individuals and investors; and improving vital public infrastructure. Investment should benefit both the investor and the territory, providing sustainable employment and revenues. The UK Government is committed to providing necessary support and advice where it is requested. We are working in partnership to support and promote investment and trade, including improved market access worldwide. We look forward to the business event at Lancaster House in London on 28 November that will showcase opportunities in the Territories.

We resolve to work together as priorities on:

- promoting globally the investment and trade opportunities in the Territories, including through cooperation between Territory investment agencies, UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) teams and UK Embassies, High Commissions and other Posts;
- informing UK companies of investment opportunities in the Territories and encouraging them to explore the opportunities;
- promoting Territory exports and service industries, including in emerging markets and in countries where the Territories are not currently recognised;
- exploring further opportunities to boost inter-Territory trade and investment and the sharing of best practice;
- publishing Territory investment policies setting out clearly the offer to inward investors;

- commissioning independent advice on enhancing competitiveness, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability;
- promoting entrepreneurship and the development of small businesses, including through the Caribbean regional EU-funded Small and Medium-sized Enterprises project.

Employment and Education

Education and training is vital to help people realise their individual and collective potential. We recognise the importance of education and training in a well-functioning, modern economy. Territory Governments are pursuing a range of policies to support individuals, employers and communities, in partnership with local employers. Most Territories provide grants for tuition and living expenses to enable students to study at colleges and universities overseas. The UK Government encourages students to study in the UK. Higher education students from the Territories are eligible for the home fee rate providing they are studying at English universities and have been living in the EEA, Switzerland or the Overseas Territories for the three years prior to the first academic year of the course.

We believe that additional priority should be given to vocational education. The UK will continue to support the Territories in this area. Citizens of the Overseas Territories can access adult vocational education in England subject to the three year residency rule and meeting the criteria as set out in the Skills Funding Agency rules.

Efficient public employment services support a well functioning labour market and help to prevent long-term unemployment. They can also help signpost people to relevant training and education. We believe that employment services need to work closely with employers and their business associations as well as those seeking work, in particular the young unemployed. Territory Governments are, as appropriate, working to strengthen employment services.

Nationality and immigration are difficult and sensitive issues. Most of the people of the Territories have some form of British nationality which is regulated by the UK Government. Territory Governments are responsible for the formulation and implementation of immigration policies. We recognise that this creates mutual obligations and responsibilities. We believe that immigration enriches our cultures and strengthens our economies. International talent can help grow economies and create local employment. But at the same time, we must control immigration to protect our interests. Territory Governments therefore aim to simplify and improve immigration law and policy, and to enforce this efficiently and effectively. An important priority is to enable the recruitment from overseas of highly skilled professionals and other workers who cannot be recruited locally, in a way that balances the interests of local people and businesses and minimises risks for the UK.

We resolve to work together as priorities on:

- exploring further how the people of the Territories can access vocational training in all parts of the UK and in other Territories;
- sharing good practice on workforce planning, skills training and addressing the specific needs of young people, older people and the disabled;
- developing efficient and professional public employment services;
- developing immigration policies that take into account the interests of local people and businesses, and minimise risks for the UK.

Our links with the wider world

The UK Government is responsible for the external relations of the Overseas Territories but encourages Territory Governments to play an active role in building productive links with the wider world. The UK Government supports Territory Governments to engage with international partners and to strengthen Territory business around the world.

We welcome the enhanced trade opportunities offered by the **European Union** in the new Overseas Association Decision and the continued financial support from the European Development Fund. The Overseas Association Decision provides for quota and tariff free access to the European single market for Territory goods and services. The Territories and their citizens can also take advantage of other EU funding streams including those for environment and education mobility. There is a strong partnership based on the three key pillars of enhancing competitiveness; strengthening resilience; and promoting cooperation and integration between the Territories, other partners and neighbours. We welcome the fact that Bermuda has now joined the Overseas Association Decision.

We greatly value the opportunities that the Territories have to participate in the work of the **Commonwealth**. We welcome enhanced contacts with the Commonwealth Secretariat as a first step to strengthen the Territories' engagement with the Commonwealth. The UK Government will work with the Commonwealth Secretariat to inform the Territories about forthcoming meetings and further Commonwealth programmes from which they might benefit. Territory Governments are ready and willing to contribute their expertise and ideas to the Commonwealth family. We remain interested in some form of associate or observer membership status for the Overseas Territories in the Commonwealth but acknowledge that this is a longer-term ambition.

We resolve to work together as priorities on:

- strengthening Territory engagement with international partners with support from the UK's network of diplomatic posts;
- making full and effective use of new trade opportunities with the EU and increased EU funding streams including the European Development Fund and its regional programmes;
- encouraging the Commonwealth Secretariat and the chairs of Commonwealth fora to invite the Territories directly to participate in relevant meetings and programmes, particularly the Commonwealth small states meetings.

Green energy and Environment

We wish to ensure that the rich environmental assets of the Territories, which include an estimated 90% of the biodiversity found within the UK and the Territories combined, are cherished. We recognise that the people of the Territories have a strong commitment to protecting their natural environments on which many livelihoods depend.

The Territories are blessed with an abundance of natural energy sources that, with the application of new technology and targeted investment, could reduce reliance on fossil fuel imports to meet their energy needs. We believe that green energy should be a greater priority. Territory Governments recognise the challenges of regulating monopoly energy providers and that fuel imports leave them vulnerable to price fluctuations.

We are making significant progress on the ambitious environmental agenda we set ourselves last year. Territory Governments are determined to advance this work actively to ensure that progress is maintained.

We resolve to work together as priorities on:

- increasing the use of renewable energy sources, including enabling production and removing barriers to use;
- establishing workshops in order to assist Territory Governments in capacity-building, technical assistance and renewable energy financing;
- promoting the development of, and investment in, sustainable fishing industries, particularly in Territories where potential resources are underutilised or illegally exploited;
- publishing road maps by end of May 2014 setting out plans to implement our environmental commitments and demonstrating our contribution to the UKOT Biodiversity Strategy;

- ensuring the continuation of relevant funding programmes for Overseas Territories environment, conservation, biodiversity and climate-related projects.

International Financial Services Regulation

The Territories include some of the world's leading financial centres and play a significant role in the global economy and driving global economic growth. We reiterate our commitment to creating a fair, responsible and effectively-regulated global business environment. As the world economy recovers, we must make sure openness delivers benefits for advanced, emerging and developing economies alike. Tackling tax evasion and fraud is a global responsibility in which the UK and the Territories will continue to play a full part.

Those Territories which host international financial centres have delivered on the commitments made in advance of the G8 Summit at Lough Erne:

- each of these Territories has published an action plan setting out the steps that they will take to ensure the collection and availability of complete company ownership information and are launching or have launched consultations on the question of establishing a central registry of beneficial ownership and whether this information should be publicly available;
- the extension of the Multilateral Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance on Tax Matters to each of these Territories has been notified to the Council of Europe, which will allow more countries to benefit quickly from greater levels of tax information exchange and will be particularly beneficial for developing countries; and
- each of these Territories has agreed to play an active part in the pilot initiative on automatic tax information exchange launched by the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

The UK and the Territories are committed to continuing to work together to promote the application of high international standards. Financial business is global and we call on all jurisdictions to play their full part in developing and applying international standards. We therefore welcome the G20's agreement at the St Petersburg Summit to take forward international standards on transparency of company ownership and the agreement to move to automatic tax information exchange.

We resolve to work together as priorities on:

- explaining the contribution of well-regulated international financial centres to the global economy;
- promoting the application of high regulatory standards to deliver conditions in which legitimate financial services business can flourish;
- discussing evolving standards in the provision of financial services and actively engaging with international standard setting bodies;
- challenging other jurisdictions to match our commitments to transparency and tax information exchange.

Governance

We have high ambitions to be among the best places to do business in the world. We recognise that in an increasingly competitive global market it is important for governments to provide high quality services to businesses and individuals while meeting high standards of integrity, accountability and transparency. Economic growth depends on maintaining sustainable public finances and efficient regulatory regimes. We recognise the need for public services to adapt to changing demands and to harness the potential of new technology.

We welcome and support the work of the Heads of Public Service of the Territories, who met in London on 7-8 October. We encourage the full engagement of the Crown Dependencies in this network. We support the objective of increasing secondments between our administrations and the proposed

initiatives to share experience, including on e-government, public sector reform and restructuring, recruitment and personnel management.

The rule of law and an independent judiciary are vital to economic success. We are committed to continuing to modernise our legal systems and to adopting appropriate international standards. We welcome and support the work of the network of Attorneys General, who met in the Falkland Islands from 12-14 November. We welcome the full engagement of the Crown Dependencies in this group. We support the work of Attorneys General to initiate effective measures, including legislation where necessary, in areas of disparity to ensure full compliance with existing international obligations.

We resolve to work together as priorities on:

- engaging in peer review processes to improve regulation and get rid of red-tape, and further strengthen procurement, public financial management frameworks and codes of conduct and integrity;
- increasing secondments between the Territories and the UK where appropriate including through reviewing the effectiveness of the UK Government's Jubilee Programme;
- strengthening the work of audit bodies and public accounts committees or their equivalents, with the support of the UK National Audit Office;
- extending to the Territories international treaties on tackling corruption, bribery and the financing of terrorism and of organised crime (the UN Convention Against Corruption; the OECD Anti Bribery Convention; the UN Convention on Suppression of Financing of Terrorism; and the UN Convention on Transnational Organised Crime);
- fulfilling our commitment to extension of the core human rights conventions¹ where these have not been extended already.

Security

The Territories offer visitors and investors some of the world's safest and most secure environments for holidays and business. Territory police services are proactive in tackling any serious and violent crime, especially, in some Territories, gang crimes. But the police alone cannot tackle issues which drive some people to commit crime. We therefore welcome and support initiatives to strengthen the coordination of action across government, with a view to working together to promote safer communities across all the Territories. We support strengthening of cooperation between Territories including the working groups set up by Caribbean Chiefs of Police. We remain committed to supporting joint initiatives between UK and Territory governments in improving competency and capacity in relation to crime investigation and prevention, the rule of law, court systems, alternatives to custody, prison reform, restorative justice and protecting vulnerable witnesses.

The leaders of the Territories in the Caribbean and Bermuda are delighted to have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding on reciprocal law enforcement assistance. It provides a framework for Territories to seek temporary support from each other at times of heightened need.

We acknowledge that Territories will always be vulnerable to natural disasters, principally hurricanes, volcanoes, earthquakes and tsunamis and to the risk of man-made disasters, in particular air and sea accidents and environmental disasters such as oil spills. We remain committed to working together to reduce the risk of disasters and build disaster management capacity.

¹ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women

We resolve to work together as priorities on:

- enhancing support provided by the UK Association of Chief Police Officers, UK College of Policing and the newly formed National Crime Agency;
- enhancing support for judicial and prosecution services, building upon the relationships already established with the Ministry of Justice and UK Crown Prosecution Service;
- putting in place robust and reliable extradition arrangements, including through extension of the 2003 Extradition Act;
- taking advantage of the expertise of the UK Ministry of Justice, National Offender Management Service and HM Prison Service to progress alternatives to custody, prison reform, restorative justice and protection of vulnerable witnesses;
- disaster risk reduction initiatives; robust and effective disaster preparation and response planning, including exercising and engagement with regional and international disaster response agencies.

Self-determination

We reiterate our commitment to continuing to build a modern relationship based on partnership, shared values and the principle of self-determination. The people of each Territory have the right to choose whether or not their Territory should remain a British Overseas Territory or to seek an alternative future.

We welcome the result of the March 2013 referendum in the Falkland Islands, which overwhelmingly demonstrated the Falkland Islanders' wish to remain a UK Overseas Territory. We call on all countries to accept the result of this referendum and support the Falkland Islanders as they continue to develop their home and their economy. The UK government stands ready to support any Territory that wishes to have a referendum on its future.

We will continue to support the people of Gibraltar. We urge the Spanish Government to de-escalate tensions with Gibraltar, including at the border and within British Gibraltar Territorial Waters.

The right of self-determination is enshrined in the UN Charter. We believe that the people of all Overseas Territories have a right to determine their own futures, to decide on the path they wish to take and to maintain freely their constitutional link with the UK if that is their choice. Being a British Territory entails a balance of benefits and responsibilities. We affirm a commitment to shared values, high standards of governance and building a stronger partnership. Any decision to break the constitutional link should be on the basis of the clear and constitutionally expressed wish of the people of the Territory. We believe that the UN Decolonisation Committee should delist Territories where this is their wish.

Each Territory is unique and has its own Constitution. We will continue work to complete the process of constitutional modernisations so that Territories have the greatest self-government possible.

We welcome the increasing engagement of the UK Parliament and their support for the Territories.

Next Steps

We welcome the progress reports on action points from the 2012 Council communiqué published on the Joint Ministerial Council website and express our determination to continue to work in partnership on these issues. We agree to meet in autumn 2014 to take stock of further progress and to report on that to our peoples, assemblies and parliaments.