



**OFFICE OF THE  
PREMIER**  
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

**Statement on Meetings in London**

**By Premier Hon. Alden McLaughlin, MBE, JP, MLA**

**Monday, 17 December, 2018**

**Legislative Assembly**

With permission Mr. Speaker I will make a statement concerning the United Kingdom Overseas Territories Association Joint Ministerial Council meetings I recently attended in London.

Before I do so, I would like to put on record my thanks to the United Kingdom team led by Lord Tariq Ahmad, Minister for the Overseas Territories; Mister Ben Merrick, Director of the Overseas Territories; and Mister Will Gelling of the FCO for organizing the series of successful meetings and events. I would also like to thank the Hon. Minister for Financial Services and Home Affairs; the Attorney General; the Cabinet Secretary; and the Cayman Islands London Office led by Mr. Eric Bush.

Mr. Speaker, the London Office did a splendid job organising several very successful events during the week, in particular the largest London Friends of Cayman dinner that I have ever hosted, which was very well received by all who attended.

Mr. Speaker the week of meetings began with an Environment Workshop, which I led as President of the Political Council of the United Kingdom Overseas Territories Association (UKOTA). This was the first UKOTA Environment Workshop and participants included leaders of Overseas Territories, Departments of Her Majesty's Government as well as Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and Organisations and Charities in the environment sector. I was very pleased to see Nadia Harding in attendance, Chairperson of the Cayman Islands National Trust.

The topics discussed included environment funding, ocean conservation strategy and the inclusion of Overseas Territories in the UK Government's "The Green Future – 25 year plans to improve the Environment".

Mr. Speaker I was very happy to share with the attendees at the workshop the good news of the procurement of six hundred and thirty four acres of protected land in the Cayman Islands; this has now increased the protected land in Cayman to four thousand one hundred and eleven acres, equivalent to six point three per cent of Cayman's total landmass.

The Overseas Territories are custodians of environmental assets of global importance. Over ninety per cent of the United Kingdom's biodiversity is in the territories including many endangered species. The Overseas Territories need to ensure that we receive the support and assistance by way of specialist technical advice as well as funding for environmental research and protection remains available post Brexit when access to European Union funds will no longer be available.

Mr. Speaker as Overseas Territories we fall between the cracks, unable to access some international funds but also unable to access UK domestic funding. Working with NGOs, universities and charities may mean we will be able to unblock this.

Mr. Speaker following the workshop, the Cayman Islands chaired the UKOTA Political Council meeting. This was our opportunity to discuss matters relating to UKOTA as an organisation, as well as discuss and agree positions to be taken at the upcoming Joint Ministerial Council meetings. It was agreed at this meeting that the Cayman Islands will host the 2019 pre-JMC meetings at the beginning of July.

Mr. Speaker I look forward to hosting the Leaders of the Overseas Territories Governments on our beautiful Islands, not just to progress discussions but to share with them our culture and the Celebrate Cayman festivities that are planned to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Constitution. Following this meeting our delegation met with the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Cayman Islands.

Mr. Speaker this gave me an opportunity to update the group on how well the Cayman economy is doing and to discuss concerns around the EU Blacklisting process and the upcoming Constitutional talks with the UK Government.

On Tuesday, the two-day Joint Ministerial Council Meeting between the British Overseas Territories and Her Majesty's Government began.

Mr. Speaker I want to go on record and thank the UK Ministers who attended the meetings, despite important debates taking place on Brexit in the House of Commons at the same time. The meeting focused on discussions about Brexit, contingency planning, updates on domestic parliamentary process, trade policies and development funding. Discussions included an overview of planning for a "no deal" scenario in Brexit, trade policies post Brexit and potential changes to funding through the Overseas Development Fund.

Mr. Speaker the Overseas Territories were advised that EU funding that supports environment and other projects in the Territories will be guaranteed by the UK until 2020. However, some Overseas Territories leaders noted that may create challenges for projects that need longer term funding. There followed a lively debate on British Overseas Territories citizens' passports. Concerns were raised that British Overseas Territory passports are now electronically coded with the same electronic code as British passports. For some Territories' nationals this created occasional problems when travelling. It was requested that British Overseas Territories citizens' passports be encoded with a code for each Territory to avoid this issue.

Mr. Speaker a key session of the meeting focused on Child Safeguarding. Territory leaders updated the Joint Ministerial Council on work that had been done in their countries.

I was very happy Mr. Speaker, to give an update on the work that has been done over the past year in the Cayman Islands, the advancements of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), training and capacity building, raising community awareness on safeguarding children and older persons, and the restructuring of the services of the Department of Children and Family Services.



On Wednesday Mr. Speaker, the meeting began with Overseas Territories leaders providing updates on their disaster preparedness. Those territories that were affected by hurricanes last year gave an update on their recovery progress. They thanked the UK government for its help and once again thanked the Cayman Islands for the assistance we provided.

The Hon. Minister for Financial Services and Home Affairs gave an update on work that has been taking place in our Islands to enhance our resilience to natural disasters as well as to strengthen the regional cooperation frameworks. This includes working with the Governor's Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to pilot the FCO's Crisis Hub. This is a tool that will aid in evacuations and in tracking missing persons during disasters.

Mr. Speaker, the Cayman Islands has also agreed to participate in a formal regional Overseas Territory Rapid Deployment Team that can swiftly provide support for impacted territories. A second new specialist helicopter will be purchased with the assistance of the UK for use in the Cayman Islands as well as to participate with disaster relief in the British Overseas Territories. The Cayman Islands has already begun implementing a National Emergency Notification System as well as upgrading the National Public Safety Radio Systems.

The Financial Services session centred on the European Union blacklisting process with Mr. Stride, the Financial Secretary to the UK Treasury, noting that the UK Government is committed to assisting Overseas Territories during the process.

Mr. Speaker I explained that the Cayman Islands has been actively engaging with the EU throughout the process, and is on track to meet our commitment by the end of this year. Discussions moved to the UK's goal to make public registers of beneficial ownership the global standard by 2023. It was noted that although the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act passed by the UK Parliament in May this year required that an Order-in-Council be issued by the end of 2020 requiring Overseas Territories (but not Crown Dependency's) to implement public registers, the UK expects that such registers would be fully implemented and operational by 2023.

I requested, once again, that the UK extend the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) to the Cayman Islands. Mr. Speaker, as you know this has been a request of the Cayman Islands for several years.

The afternoon session started with a discussion on Trade and Investment. A background was provided about the work done by the Caribbean Investment and Trade Advisory Group and the GREAT Campaign. Overseas Territories leaders were encouraged to determine how these organisations could work with the Overseas Territories on trade matters.

Mr. Speaker, as you are aware the Cayman Islands participated in the UK's GREAT Festival of Innovation in Hong Kong earlier this year and I could attest to the benefit of attending.

The day closed with a session on the Constitutional Relationship with the UK. It was noted that the UK wants to have positive constitutional relationships with the Overseas Territories.

Mr. Speaker the challenge to the Overseas Territories and the relationship with the UK that the passage of the Sanctions and Anti Money Laundering Act in the UK Parliament caused earlier this year was acknowledged. It was also noted that the UK wants the best constitutional options available for the people of the British Overseas Territories.

The aim is to recognise that the OTs are self-governing and subject only to the UK retaining power to carry out its obligations under international law.

Various territories provided their thoughts and several have started conversations to revise certain aspects of their constitutions with the UK.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I commend this statement to the House.

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