



Senate Statement

Presented by

Senator Lindsay Simmons

Junior Minister for Home Affairs

Wednesday, December 1st, 2021

“Bermuda’s participation in COP26”

Madame President, I rise to provide an update of Bermuda’s participation in COP 26. Honourable members will be aware that Minister Roban had the opportunity to represent Bermuda at this year’s UN Climate Change Conference COP 26 in Glasgow between 31st October – 12th November.

Through our London Office and UK Representative, Bermuda holds Chairmanship of the United Kingdom Overseas Territories Association (UKOTA). UKOTA is recognised in the United Kingdom as the official Association which exists to advance the interests of the United Kingdom

Overseas Territories, facilitate co-operation between them and promote solidarity. The Association demonstrates the collective partnership between the Territories and Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom. As such the UK Government facilitated our presence at COP 26 as part of the UK Delegation Overflow of which Bermuda led a delegation of 7 from across the Territories.

Madame President, governments of the UK's Overseas Territories are custodians of internationally important habitats which span the globe from the Antarctic to the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean to the Pacific. All fourteen Territories are on the front line of the impact of climate change as vulnerable small island states. We are also at the forefront of renewable energy, nature-based solutions; adaptation and resilience, ocean protection, and, with global leadership in catastrophic risk reinsurance, climate finance.

Together with the UK the Territories represent the world's fifth largest marine estate of which 75% is protected; containing over 90% of the UK's biodiversity. We recognised that we are vital to the UK meeting its pledge by 2030 to protect 30% of the world's oceans.

Bermuda is not immune or isolated from the impacts of climate change. Our island is exposed to rising sea levels, increasingly severe and frequent storms, and to changes in ocean currents and weather patterns. Isolated, beautiful, and unique, Bermuda is home to the most northerly coral reef

system in the Atlantic Ocean which is a critical habitat for marine biodiversity as Bermuda is the only landmass in the Sargasso Sea, a floating rainforest of Sargassum seaweed that is a home and spawning site for several species of threatened and endangered marine wildlife. We are a treasure trove of environmental wealth, a capital of ocean conservation, and a key player on the global stage of financial risk management.

As an island community vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and as a global capital of climate related financial risk management, we are determined that Bermuda will participate in the international response to ensure our collective safety and prosperity.

To that end, we continue to declare that Bermuda is committed to increasing our protection of our fragile ecosystem, reducing our carbon footprint, and mitigating the impact of climate change.

Madame President, we are particularly proud of the work being done under the auspices of the 'Bermuda Ocean Prosperity Programme', which will manage the 'Marine Spatial Plan'. The Marine Spatial Planning will develop and legally adopt an enforceable, comprehensive, EEZ-wide plan designed to sustainably manage resources and protect 20% of Bermuda's waters as a no-take fisheries replenishment zone. Our ambition looking forward is to be a thriving 'Blue Economy' with the diversification of our national revenue and strengthen our sustainable use of our ocean

resources and economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, and continued ecosystem health.

Madame President, all of Bermuda's success and ambition in fighting climate change was featured at COP 26. Minister Roban had the pleasure in chairing an Overseas Territory event in the UK Pavilion on Nature Day entitled "*Our Vision for Healthy Oceans*". The event organised through UKOTA together with the UK Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) was thematically focused on raising awareness, protecting our oceans and how the Overseas Territories are taking action against climate change. The event importantly featured a powerful video collaboration of all the Overseas Territories highlighting how climate change impacts our marine life and sustainability. If any Honourable Member has not had the opportunity to see this video, I strongly encourage viewing this video which can be found on the UK Government YouTube channel.

Madame President, the UK Minister for the Pacific and the International Environment, the RT Hon. Lord Zac Goldsmith, acknowledged, "What these leaders are doing is simply heroic. Our overseas territories are protecting an area of water bigger than India. It's one of the best Conservation wins of my generation." Lord Zac Goldsmith's acknowledgement went further with commitments in the Joint Ministerial Council (JMC) in which the Premier presided as President of the UKOTA

Political Council. The UK Government committed to work closely with Overseas Territory Governments where technical expertise was requested and to prioritise climate change and environmental issues in future funding for the Territories. The Overseas Territories committed to continuing to formulate ambitious climate targets and policies.

Madame President, we should be proud of the work achieved at COP 26 in terms of heightened recognition within the UK and international community on Bermuda's efforts and success in this space. We agreed that a greater level of engagement will continue for all Overseas Territories including at future conventions of Biological Diversity and Climate Change summits.

Madame President, the work continues and our partnership with the UK and our fellow Overseas Territories in tackling climate change and accessing international funding is at the forefront of this Government's work.

Thank you, **Madame President**