



Premier of Bermuda

Ministerial Statement
To The House of Assembly

By

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Premier of Bermuda
And Minister of National Security

Joint Ministerial Council Meetings 2015

4th December, 2015

Thank you, Mr. Speaker

Mr. Speaker

I rise today to inform this Honourable House of the progress of the just concluded Joint Ministerial Council Meetings in London, and other meetings undertaken while there.

Mr. Speaker

You would be aware that for some years now the Leaders of the British Overseas Territories meet in London in early December each year with the UK Minister responsible for the Overseas Territories and a few of his Ministerial colleagues to address a number of issues of concern to us. I have just returned last evening from the latest round of meetings and am pleased to report to this Honourable House on the progress made.

As usual, we had a full agenda and full representation from the family of Overseas Territories. In particular, with the able support of our Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance, the Hon. E. T. Bob Richards, Bermuda was joined by Leaders from Anguilla, Ascension Island, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat, Pitcairn, St. Helena, Tristan Da Cunha and Turks and Caicos Islands. We began with the Annual Meeting of the United Kingdom Overseas Territories

Association, which presents an opportunity for the Territories to meet together to discuss not only the upcoming JMC meetings, but also other issues of mutual interest. Much of the work of the Association is conducted on behalf of the Leaders by the London representatives of each Territory, and Bermuda is competently represented by Ms. Kimberley Durrant. With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to publicly thank Ms. Durrant for her energetic and capable representation of Bermuda's interest in the UK and Europe.

Mr. Speaker

As usual, while there, we arranged additional meetings to further Bermuda's interests. This year was no exception. Prior to the start of the formal JMC, the Bermuda team had an opportunity to meet with a number of leaders of Insurance companies represented in London at Lloyd's and also represented in Bermuda. We continue to promote our message that Bermuda is open for business and responsive to industry needs, while retaining a first class regulatory environment. **Mr. Speaker**, Bermuda's representation is only enhanced by cultivating relationships with those with whom we wish to do business.

The visit to London also presented an opportunity to once again host the Premier's Reception for Students and Young Bermudians working in London. As this was my first JMC, it was also my first opportunity to host this most valuable Reception. We were overwhelmed by the turnout, and thoroughly enjoyed the engagement with a group of talented, knowledgeable young people who, although far away, remain connected and committed to their home. Bermuda has much to be proud of with its young people. We met Bermudians involved in a wide range of studies, and others working in a range of disciplines from the traditional law, accounting, insurance and medicine professions, to arts, crafts, music promotion, and agriculture.

Mr. Speaker

The visit also provides an opportunity to meet with key parliamentarians from both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. We attended a Parliamentary Breakfast, hosted on our behalf by a dear friend of Bermuda,

the Baroness Scotland in the House of Lords. In attendance was a group of MPs and Lords who were interested in learning more about Bermuda, and who consequently would be in a better position to assist Bermuda's interests when matters impacting us arise in the UK Parliament. At the breakfast we were pleased to be able to congratulate Baroness Scotland on her recent election to the post of Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, a most significant post, and to present her with a gift on behalf of the people of Bermuda.

While at Westminster, the Territories met with the Foreign Affairs and Environmental Audit Committees of the House of Commons. In their oversight role, the Territories were able to speak frankly with the committees, in the absence of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, about any issues under their remit of interest to us or of concern to the Committee. These topics included Governance, UK parliamentary representation for the Territories, the impact on the Territories of the upcoming UK Referendum on its relationship with the European Union, ocean conservation, and climate change.

Mr. Speaker

Some of these issues were further explored during our consultations with the UK Government during the formal JMC Meetings. These meetings provide an opportunity for Leaders of Territories to discuss directly with relevant UK Ministers and their political and policy advisors issues of greatest concern to us. The discussions included the impact of climate change, particularly on some of the more remote Territories, support that can be provided by the UK to enhance the development of technical skills for the people of the Territories, access to specialized health care not available within a Territory at a reasonable cost, support for the identification and development of elite athletes, protection of children from sexual abuse, and the economic development of the Territories.

The discussions are summarized in a Joint Communiqué, which sets out the agreements reached during the discussions. Given the individual interests involved, you might imagine the tremendous amount of dialogue we must engage in order to produce a statement on which all parties can

agree. Our teams were working late into the night, but agreement was reached.

Perhaps the most contentious issue was that of Beneficial Ownership. We have publicly stated our position on this on many occasions in this Honourable House. We believe that the UK understands that Bermuda is a world leader with regard to protections against money laundering and illicit financing. We have had a Central Register of Beneficial Owners for over 70 years and meet all international standards regarding the regulation of Financial Services. We are proud of our record and stand firmly on it.

The format of the JMC also provides an opportunity for more informal but no less important dialogue directly between each Territory and the Minister for the Overseas Territories. During our meeting with the UK we were able to further discuss means to better cooperate in the battle against money laundering and illicit financing, the appointment of our next Governor and enhanced maritime security.

Mr. Speaker

The Government takes every opportunity to tell Bermuda's story, and it is an exciting story to tell. Therefore, while in London we met with a number of international media, including the influential Financial Times; the Times Group, who are planning a special supplement on Bermuda for early next year; the leading Sunday Times; and just prior to boarding a flight back to Bermuda, we attended a breakfast with travel writers, organized by the Bermuda Tourism Authority, and attended by its CEO Bill Hanbury, who was also in London marketing Bermuda. Joining us were writers from the Independent, Tatler, Family Traveller, Travel Mole, Your Media, and National Geographic Traveler.

Mr. Speaker

As you can clearly tell, this was a full and hectic visit to London, but one that I am certain will benefit Bermuda. While we may be blessed to live on a beautiful island in the middle of the Atlantic, and while it may be romantic to think of ourselves as living in another world, the reality is that we are subject to and need to be responsive to forces that emanate outside of our

22 square miles. Thus, relationships with other countries, their leaders, and those who influence those leaders are important. We have an important relationship with the United Kingdom, and we will continue to maintain that relationship in service of the best interests of Bermuda. Similarly, we will continue to nurture our relationships with our fellow Overseas Territories, while remaining mindful of our unique value proposition. And we will continue to talk with international media to ensure that the Bermuda story is told accurately.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker