

# JOINT DECLARATION OF GOVERNMENTS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM & BRITISH OVERSEAS TERRITORIES

## A MODERN PARTNERSHIP FOR A STRONGER BRITISH FAMILY

We, the Government of the United Kingdom, and democratically elected Governments of the British Overseas Territories of Anguilla, Ascension, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat, Pitcairn Islands, St Helena, Tristan da Cunha, and Turks and Caicos Islands met on 14 to 15 November 2023 to decide this Joint Declaration.

We noted progress and challenges since the publication of the 2012 White Paper – The Overseas Territories: Security, Success, and Sustainability, and reaffirm that each UK Government Department is responsible for supporting the British Overseas Territories as needed, within its areas of competence and expertise. We acknowledge the political, economic, and technological shifts which have created a more complex international environment for the United Kingdom (UK) and British Overseas Territories to navigate.

Against this backdrop, we reaffirm the deep, historic, and enduring partnership between the United Kingdom and the British Overseas Territories.

We recognise and celebrate the diversity of the UK and each British Overseas Territory, our communities and cultures. We are family, united by shared values and working together to deliver for our peoples and overcome collective challenges. We reaffirm the unique and intricate bond between our communities.

We affirm the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples of the British Overseas Territories, as enshrined in the United Nations (UN) Charter, and re-state our enduring commitment to countering hostile sovereignty claims.

We are proud of a relationship that delivers for our peoples, conscious of the historical and profound cultural ties which connect us.

### I. STRONGER GLOBAL FAMILY

- i. We uphold the strong democratic values which underpin our global British family: free and open democracies that respect human rights and the rule of law.
- ii. We reaffirm our commitment to maintain, defend, and respect the rules-based international system.

- iii. We believe that the strongest, safest, and most prosperous societies are those in which all people can live freely without fear of unlawful discrimination and play a full and active part in society.
- iv. The UK will support closer links between the British Overseas Territories and the Commonwealth, and we will work together to examine options for the greater participation of the Territory Governments and peoples in its organisations.

## II. EMPOWERING TERRITORY GOVERNMENTS

- v. The UK will support democratically elected British Overseas Territory Governments to accept additional responsibilities and greater autonomy, alongside accountability, where they wish to. The UK would take such steps in line with its sovereign responsibilities and international law, while ensuring that obligations are met under the UN Charter and relevant international conventions, as well as under each British Overseas Territory's constitution.
- vi. The UK will continue to engage closely and proactively with each British Overseas Territory where the democratically elected Territory Government seeks engagement on reviewing their constitution.
- vii. For those British Overseas Territories with permanent populations who wish it, the UK will continue to support requests for the removal of the Territory from the United Nations list of non-self-governing territories. The UK will also support Territories to provide updates to the UN's Decolonisation Committee.

## III. MUTUAL EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- viii. The UK will ensure there is, at a minimum, an effective mechanism to consult British Overseas Territory governments in the exceptional cases when proposed new UK primary legislation would, when enacted, extend to their Territories. This does not affect any established practice in individual British Overseas Territories on the mechanism for the extension or application of UK primary legislation to that Territory.
- ix. We will promote our collective interests in international fora. The UK will improve its processes for consulting and informing British Overseas Territories regarding new international obligations.
- x. We respect the constitutional roles of elected Governments, legislatures, the UK, and Governors. In the spirit of family, we affirm the need for transparency and for swift discussion and resolution at the right level when challenges arise.

- xi. We will develop bilateral Compacts between the UK Government and each British Overseas Territory that wishes to, reflecting shared priorities and objectives and detailing how both parties will achieve them. These Compacts will also set out the responsibilities of the UK, elected Governments and Governor, consistent with each British Overseas Territory's constitution.
- xii. We will support the development of bilateral Compacts between individual British Overseas Territories. Where appropriate, the UK will support Territories to enter into bilateral agreements with independent nations and other bodies, and to strengthen links with regional and international organisations.
- xiii. As members of the British family, we will all practise the highest standards of governance, including in the areas of human rights, rule of law, integrity in public life and financial management.

#### IV. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- xiv. It is in all our interests to develop thriving and resilient communities and economies and to pursue the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We will continue to work together to build local resilience, capacity, and capability of British Overseas Territories Governments.
- xv. The UK, in collaboration with the British Overseas Territory Governments who are not financially self-sufficient, will continue to prioritise financial support to enable the development of their economies in accordance with the UN Charter. British Overseas Territories in receipt of budgetary assistance are committed to reducing their reliance on UK aid, where there are viable options through which to do so.
- xvi. For those British Overseas Territories not eligible for Official Development Assistance, the UK will consider their vulnerability when making decisions on financial support to them.
- xvii. The UK will continue to work with the British Overseas Territories to develop the provision, transparency, and sustainability of financial support available.
- xviii. We will strengthen our partnership to protect and manage sustainably our unique and globally significant environments and tackle climate priorities, recognising the global environmental importance of the British Overseas Territories, their vulnerability to the effects of climate change, and their value to international environmental science.

#### V. EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC SERVICE

- xix. We will support each other whether through prosperous or difficult times. Whilst we face many challenges that are unique to each British Overseas Territory, those that we share

will require collective, committed, coordinated approaches, and focused partnership to resolve.

- xx. We will strengthen and improve our public institutions, across all areas of responsibility, to ensure they deliver good governance for all, manage public finances effectively, and are at the cutting edge of worldwide efforts to combat illicit finance and corruption including increasing transparency, implementing and upholding global standards and ensuring the implementation and enforcement of effective sanctions regimes.
- xxi. We will build collaborative links between our governments and public services to assist the greater transfer of technical support and wealth of experience and knowledge, and to mitigate threats such as cyber-crime.

## VI. IMPLEMENTATION AND OVERSIGHT

- xxii. The Joint Ministerial Council (JMC) remains our highest forum for political dialogue and consultation. We will strengthen collaboration and communication between our governments, whether through changes approved at the JMC or through other fora.
- xxiii. We will hold ourselves accountable to implement this Declaration through the JMC. The UK will set out how it will deliver on its commitments through a published strategy, the development of which will include meaningful collaboration with the democratically elected Governments of the British Overseas Territories.

We are united by these shared values and commitments. We will work together to achieve our collective ambition through our global partnership to deliver a prosperous and secure future for our peoples.

Agreed by:

The Honourable Dr Ellis L. Webster, Premier of Anguilla

Councillor Laura Shearer, Ascension

The Honourable E. David Burt JP MP, Premier of Bermuda

The Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley, Premier of the British Virgin Islands

The Honourable Juliana O'Connor-Connolly JP, MP, Premier of the Cayman Islands

The Honourable Mark Pollard MLA, Chair of the Falkland Islands Legislative Assembly

The Honourable Fabian Picardo KC MP, Chief Minister of Gibraltar

The Honourable Joseph E. Farrell, Premier of Montserrat

Mr Simon Young, Mayor of Pitcairn Islands

The Honourable Julie Thomas, Chief Minister of St Helena

Councillor James Glass, Tristan da Cunha Chief Islander

The Honourable Charles Washington Misick, OBE, JP, Premier of the Turks and Caicos Islands

David Rutley MP, Minister for the Overseas Territories, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

*The above text is a true and complete copy of the Joint Declaration of Governments of The United Kingdom & British Overseas Territories, agreed on 14 December 2023 by the Signatories or Parties thereto, and was concluded in the following languages: English.*

*Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office*

*London*