



**Ministerial Statement**  
**by**  
**The Hon. Jache Adams JP, MP**  
**Minister of Public Works and Environment**

**Introduction of the Marine Resources Enforcement Strategy**

**Friday, February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

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**Mr. Speaker**, earlier today I tabled the Marine Resources Enforcement Strategy, a document that represents a major step forward in how Bermuda protects one of our greatest national assets: our ocean.

**Mr. Speaker**, Bermuda may be just 21 square miles of land, but our maritime domain stretches nearly 180,000 square miles. This means that over 99% of Bermuda is ocean. Our waters feed us. They protect us from storms. They support our tourism industry. They provide recreation, livelihoods, and opportunity. And they are central to our identity as a people.

But **Mr. Speaker**, protecting 180,000 square miles of ocean is no small task. And for too long, marine enforcement has been constrained by outdated legislation, limited tools, and fragmented coordination.

This Strategy changes that.

**Mr. Speaker**, the vast majority of Bermudians who use the ocean, such as our commercial fishermen, weekend anglers, divers, and boaters follow the rules. They respect closed seasons. They respect size limits. They respect protected areas. But when illegal activity goes unchecked, when fish are sold without licenses, when protected areas are ignored, when penalties are inconsistent, it undermines fairness. It hurts those who play by the rules. And it damages public confidence in enforcement.

This Strategy is about restoring that balance.

It is about fairness. It is about credibility. And it is about protecting the long-term value of our marine resources.

**Mr. Speaker**, this Strategy moves Bermuda from a reactive and sometimes fragmented enforcement model to one that is modern, coordinated, and intelligence-led.

So, what does that mean in simple terms?

It means using better data to identify high-risk areas, improving coordination between agencies, modernizing laws so officers are not required to “catch someone in the act” in order to prosecute, investing in the right tools and training, ensuring that when violations occur, they are followed through properly. In short, it means making sure that enforcement leads to real consequences when necessary, and real deterrence overall. Because enforcement that is inconsistent is enforcement that is ineffective.

**Mr. Speaker**, the Strategy is built around five clear priorities:

First, strengthening the legal and policy framework as some of our marine legislation dates back decades and does not reflect modern realities. That will change.

Second, building a capable and professional workforce as our enforcement officers must have the training, tools, and legal backing to do their jobs confidently and effectively.

Third, modernizing surveillance and technology. From better vessel tracking systems to improved data analysis, enforcement must be informed by intelligence, not guesswork.

Fourth, strengthening partnerships. No single agency can manage Bermuda's maritime space alone. This Strategy enhances coordination across Government and with regional partners like the U.S. Coast Guard and CARICOM.

And fifth, promoting voluntary compliance through education and engagement. Because **Mr. Speaker**, the best enforcement system is one where most people comply because they understand the rules and believe in them.

**Mr. Speaker**, the Strategy also addresses something that has been acknowledged openly, and that is the fact that historically, marine violations have not always resulted in meaningful follow-through. Too often, cases did not reach what experts call "legal finish." This Strategy supports a cultural shift. When serious violations occur, there must be credible consequences. Not to punish for punishment's sake but to maintain deterrence and protect fairness.

At the same time, proportional tools, including administrative penalties where appropriate, will allow enforcement to be efficient and practical.

This is about balance.

**Mr. Speaker**, our Blue Economy depends on healthy ecosystems and strong governance. Tourism depends on clean water and thriving reefs. Fishing livelihoods depend on sustainable fish stocks. Future economic opportunities, from marine research to emerging ocean industries, depend on credible regulation.

**Mr. Speaker**, the Strategy also acknowledges emerging threats, such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, transnational maritime crime, pollution, climate change, and cybersecurity risks to our maritime systems.

These are modern realities, and enforcement must evolve accordingly. This document adopts an adaptive approach, meaning it can respond to changing risks and new information over time.

**Mr. Speaker**, this Strategy was not developed in isolation. Fishers, enforcement officers, environmental groups, and members of the public contributed through consultation last Fall. Their feedback strengthened the document. Transparency and accountability are core principles of this Strategy.

We will monitor performance. We will evaluate outcomes. And we will adjust where necessary. Because good governance requires both action and accountability.

**Mr. Speaker**, to those who follow the rules, this Strategy supports you. To those who rely on marine resources responsibly this Strategy protects your livelihoods. To those who care about Bermuda's environmental legacy this Strategy strengthens it and to those who choose to ignore the rules, enforcement will be more coordinated, more informed, and more consistent.

**Mr. Speaker**, this Strategy does not promise overnight transformation. Implementation will be phased and practical. Some measures can begin immediately, such as improved coordination, legal review, and enhanced training. More resource-intensive initiatives will follow as funding and capacity allow.

But the direction is clear. Bermuda will employ the right tools, in the right place, at the right time. We will protect our waters not only for today, but for future generations. Because our ocean is not just a resource. It is our heritage. It is our shield. It is our opportunity and it deserves modern, credible, and effective protection.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**.