

Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council

Communiqué

We, the political leaders and representatives of the UK and the Overseas Territories, met in Lancaster House in London on 4-5 December 2012.

We welcome the elections held in the Turks and Caicos Islands on 9 November, the restoration of democratically elected Government, and the participation of elected representatives in this meeting.

This is our first meeting as the new Joint Ministerial Council which succeeds the Overseas Territories Consultative Councils. The Joint Ministerial Council will meet once a year at a mutually convenient time and will:

- lead work to review and implement the strategy and commitments in the June 2012 White Paper *The Overseas Territories: Security, Success and Sustainability*;
- provide a forum for the exchange of views on political and constitutional issues between the governments of the Overseas Territories and the UK Government;
- promote the security and good governance of the Territories and their sustainable economic and social development; and
- agree priorities, develop plans and review implementation.

We share a vision for the Territories as vibrant and flourishing communities, proudly retaining aspects of British identity and generating wider opportunities for their people.

We are committed to a modern relationship based on partnership and shared values. We share a commitment to the principle and right of self-determination. The people of each Territory have the right to choose whether or not their Territory should remain a British Overseas Territory. Any decision to sever the constitutional link between the UK and a Territory should be on the basis of the clear and constitutionally expressed wish of the people of the Territory. We believe that the UN decolonisation committee should delist Territories where this is their wish.

Each Territory is unique and has its own Constitution. In most Territories these have been negotiated since 1999 and reflect the wishes of the people of the Territory. We will continue work to modernise Constitutions and to ensure that these operate effectively. We will sustain a mature dialogue on Constitutional issues, taking into account the expressed wishes of the people of the Territories. We encourage stronger links and more active dialogue between the UK Parliament and the national assemblies in the Territories.

The UK and Territories will seek further to raise the profile of the Territories in the UK and internationally. We welcome the recent agreement to fly the flags of the Territories on ceremonial occasions in the UK and on Territory national days.

We discussed a range of priority issues and agreed action points as follows.

Our commitment to growth and jobs

We acknowledge that the current uncertainty in the global economy affects us all but creates disproportionate risks for the smallest economies. We therefore commit to redouble our work together to create inclusive and resilient economic growth. We believe that job creation must be at the heart of our actions to restore economic growth and confidence and that it is for Territory governments to lead efforts to diversify Territory economies and build increased resilience to economic shocks by prudent fiscal management and effective planning. The UK Government will support this.

We recognise that having a viable and sustainable financial services industry is important to the economic resilience of some Territories. Territory Governments remain committed to complying with international standards on tax co-operation, financial sector regulation and combating financial crime and will share their experience to promote the application of high standards in other jurisdictions. The UK will provide support, particularly in international fora, including championing those Territories that meet international financial sector standards and working to ensure that the same international standards apply to all jurisdictions and that competition is on a level playing field.

We recognise the importance of the private sector in generating economic growth and the supportive role governments can play, including investing in human capital, creating a business friendly regulatory environment and improving infrastructure. We will work together to increase trade and investment links between the UK and the Territories. The UK Government will work with Territory Governments to identify business opportunities and to develop the work it does to help the Territories in this area. Territory Governments asked the UK Government to reconsider the Air Passenger Duty banding structure as they felt it disadvantages the Overseas Territories.

We have agreed to work together on the following priority actions:

- to encourage investment in the Territories by agreeing clear and transparent policies for incentivising investment and removing unnecessary red-tape and restrictions on economic activity;
- to organise a business forum next year involving the Overseas Territories;
- to promote trade and investment between the Territories and UK;
- to support Territories to overcome obstacles to trading with third countries;
- to inform Territories of developments in the World Trade Organisation and other international fora which could affect them;
- to support the development of entrepreneurship and growth of small businesses in the Territories;
- for Territories to offer each other the same trade benefits as the EU offers to the Territories;
- to be a source of advice for Territories on the Rules of Origin provisions in the Overseas Association Decision;

- to prioritise necessary infrastructure development and to work together to identify appropriate and sustainable financing options;
- to continue to meet international standards on tax co-operation, financial sector regulation and combating financial crime, bribery and corruption;
- to organise discussion at the next JMC on financial services and gaming involving Territory leaders and HMT.

Cherishing the environment and creating green growth

We recognise that the Territories are home to many species and environments found nowhere else in the world and that sustainable economic growth and livelihoods within the Territories depend on the responsible stewardship of these natural resources. Territory Governments recognise their responsibilities for the sustainable management of the natural environment and the need to put environmental considerations at the heart of policy and decision making. The UK recognises the supportive role that it can play with Territory Governments to help make this shared agenda a reality, in cooperation with NGOs, the private sector and other stakeholders.

We have agreed to work together on the following priority actions:

- to develop sustainable fisheries – including developing sustainable management plans and facilitating development of the sector (with the UK providing - as necessary - support for scoping studies on fish stocks, model legislation and fisheries monitoring and patrols);
- to create sustainable long-term incentives and encourage private sector investment in renewable energy;
- to take a more strategic approach to the management, protection and conservation of the natural environment, including embedding that understanding into Government policies and decision-making;
- to ensure that where commercial use of natural resources takes place, it is carried out in the most sustainable and environmentally responsible way (including through the use of environmental impact assessments, evidence-based management plans, and protection of important areas);
- to share knowledge and best practice in the areas of food security and agricultural and aquaculture production;
- to continue to implement Environment Charters, and to work towards the full implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements where these have been extended to the Territories;
- for the UK to strengthen the way it represents Territory interests in relevant international fora;
- to identify and share best practice.

Support from the EU and Commonwealth and other International Organisations

The Territories value their special relationships with the EU and the Commonwealth and want to strengthen these and develop links with other regional and international organisations. Gibraltar is part of the EU by virtue of the UK's membership and most other Territories have associate status as overseas countries and Territories. We

encourage the EU to agree an ambitious Overseas Association Decision that provides real opportunities for enhancing trade and provides effective support for economic development and takes into account the specific interests of the UK's Territories. We encourage the Commonwealth to continue to consider opportunities for the Territories to participate, where appropriate, in Commonwealth life, including with small island states, which face many similar challenges. We hope to schedule the JMC to facilitate coordination with preparations for the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting.

We have agreed to work together on the following priority actions:

- to enhance, as appropriate, the Territories' special relationships with the EU and to maintain EU support focused on supporting economic development;
- to explore options to strengthen Territories' engagement with the Commonwealth, for consideration by Commonwealth member Governments;
- to arrange a tripartite meeting with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the UK Overseas Territories Association to explore the future relationship between the Commonwealth and the Overseas Territories;
- to ensure that the Territories are briefed by the UK Government on the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting agenda, have the opportunity to feed in comments to the UK Government and are informed of the outcomes;
- to continue to explore the possibility of creating observer or associate member status of the Commonwealth from which the Territories might benefit;
- to further develop links with United Nations and its agencies and regional partners particularly in the Caribbean.

Working together for better government

We believe that the peoples of the Territories and the UK are all entitled to good government. This means meeting the same basic standards for democratic and accountable government for the UK and the Territories.

We share a belief in an independent judiciary and a strong legislative framework and are committed to adopting and implementing the highest international standards to combat corruption and bribery.

We recognise the importance of strong and impartial public services that can support elected leaders by providing effective and efficient policy advice, public services and regulation. We will share experiences from our efforts to reform our public services. We welcome the extension to the Territories of the Civil Service Learning programme to support training of public servants particularly through online delivery. We will continue to identify opportunities, including through the Overseas Territories Jubilee Programme, to increase the capacity and expertise of the public services in the Territories, recognising that this will also benefit the UK public service.

We intend to build on the work started in the meeting of Heads of Public Service from the Territories in London in October.

We also recognise the crucial role played by Attorneys General and the wider legal sector in ensuring the effective administration of the Territories.

We believe that economic growth depends on sound public financial management and ensuring public debt is sustainable. We believe in transparency over public finances and the need to strengthen assurances, as necessary, that public spending delivers overall value for money. We also believe in open, transparent and competitive procurement processes which are operated and applied in accordance with international standards. We are committed to building and preserving those institutions required to promote and protect good governance, while respecting and preserving their independence.

We have agreed to work together on the following priority actions

- to continue to develop democratic institutions that serve and take account of the interests of all the people in the Territories;
- to encourage the adoption and implementation of the seven principles of public life set out in the annex hereto;
- to strengthen public services to provide effective and efficient policy advice, public services and regulation;
- to share experience of improving service delivery including through e-government;
- to support the development of a programme of secondments and exchanges between the public services in the Territories and the UK, and partnerships between Territories and UK local government;
- to put in place, as appropriate, and implement codes of practice for Ministers, Parliamentarians and public servants;
- to strengthen public financial management and ensure it is undertaken transparently and is open to external scrutiny in order to provide the conditions necessary for sustainable economic growth;
- to strengthen public sector procurement as necessary in line with good international practice;
- to promote systems for fair and transparent recruitment and continuous professional development in the public service;
- for each Territory to adopt a framework for public finances that demonstrates a commitment to limits on borrowing; and to building reserves, building a strong and sustainable revenue base, ensuring transparency and accountability, and effective budgeting and management of expenditure;
- to monitor and take action to mitigate fiscal risks and ensure that liabilities are sustainable.

Building stronger and healthier communities

We are inspired by the Olympics and Paralympics to work together to build a lasting sporting legacy that will motivate people of all ages and abilities to play more sport. We believe in the importance of having inclusive environments that ensure that all persons, including those with disabilities, are able to participate fully as creative and productive members of society.

We share a belief in tackling discrimination so that all citizens have an equal opportunity to play an active role in society. We recognise that addressing disability, child safeguarding, care of the elderly and providing opportunities for youth are areas that require cross-government responses to improve opportunities and provide safeguards. They are also areas that require support from communities, civil society organisations and business organisations to provide support and ideas.

Territory Governments asked the UK Government to consider paying an annual increase to overseas pensioners in the Overseas Territories where this is not already the case.

We note that the Heritage Lottery Fund makes funding decisions independent of Government and can make grants to support good causes in the Territories to organisations based in the UK and working in the Territories.

We have agreed to work together on the following priority actions:

- to expand the opportunities for people of all ages to participate in sport and develop healthy lifestyles;
- to improve the opportunities for people with disabilities to participate fully in society;
- to improve ways of looking after vulnerable members of society in particular strengthening capacity to care for ageing populations and particularly vulnerable families;
- to improve strategies to ensure the safeguarding of children, based on a strong belief in zero tolerance to child abuse in whatever form it comes;
- to work to remove any other forms of discrimination in society;
- to explore options for the development of sustainable pension programmes as necessary;
- to encourage, as appropriate, international sporting associations to recognise the Territories.

Working together for safer communities

We recognise the threats to our societies from serious crime and natural and man-made disasters. We will strengthen our work together to reduce and prevent crime and to ensure people feel safe in their homes and communities. Territories face particular challenges because of their size and locations. Overall crime levels in the Territories are low but we are determined to respond robustly to problems that do occur, including outbreaks of gang and violent crime. The Territories are vulnerable to natural disasters and the emergency services in a small Territory can be overwhelmed by a major disaster. The UK recognises its responsibility to support a Territory facing a disaster. We recognise that maintaining the safety and security of air and sea links is vital for economic and social development. It is similarly important to ensure effective immigration and border controls. The UK takes its responsibility for security seriously. The UK and the Territories want to share our experiences and work together to build effective cross-government systems to tackle security issues.

We have agreed to work together on the following priority actions

- to strengthen action to tackle problems of gangs and youth crime including by setting up National Security Councils, where appropriate, to coordinate work across government and to identify and tackle the root causes of crime and gang culture at their source;
- to develop systems for the independent inspection of prisons and to reduce re-offending of prisoners;
- to develop sentencing and probation systems designed to reduce offending and hence better protect communities;
- to improve our resilience and the capability to prepare for and respond to a range of natural and man-made hazards by working together on the development and testing of hazard management plans.

Health

We agree the importance of delivering high-quality public health systems, while recognising the challenges of so doing in small, isolated communities.

We agree on the importance of health security and on achieving compliance with the requirements of the International Health Regulations by June 2014.

We will identify and make use of all available sources of assistance, in particular from regional and global health organisations such as the Pan-American Health Organisation and UN agencies. We will share best practice on health strategies and processes with special emphasis on treatment and care of non-communicable diseases: a major burden for both the UK and Territories.

We have agreed to work together on the following priority actions:

- to improve treatment and care for people suffering from chronic non-communicable diseases:
 - o improving the sharing of information on UK health strategies and practices to the Territories;
 - o sharing expertise on the audit and review of healthcare standards;
 - o improving treatment of the mentally ill, building on work carried out by the Royal College of Psychiatry.
- to use telemedicine and other distance support arrangements where this can improve healthcare in the Territories;
- to address gaps identified by situation analysis of International Health Regulation compliance;
- to improve representation of the Territories and linkages with the work of global and regional health bodies;
- to review health care support for the people of the Territories including the NHS quota arrangement, assistance for the cost-effective procurement of medicines and professional training.

Education

We share a vision of building well-educated societies in which opportunity is more equal for children and young people no matter what their background or family circumstances. This starts with a strong foundation delivered through an effective

early childhood education system. We recognise the need to continue to raise educational standards in order to get the best from our people. We acknowledge the difficulties of providing quality education in small remote societies. We recognise the importance of a culture of life-long learning that contributes to building a skilled and productive labour force and to economic development.

We have agreed to work together on the following priority actions:

- to improve participation in education and raise attainment levels;
- to improve sharing of UK best practice and to strengthen education monitoring standards;
- to expand and enhance provision of early childhood education and encourage inclusion;
- to encourage more tertiary level students from across the Territories to study in the UK;
- to encourage mature learners to take part in further education in an increasingly globalised digital world;
- to strengthen links between education institutions in the Territories and the UK.

London

5 December 2012

The Seven Principles of Public Life

The UK Committee on Standards in Public Life has set out these principles for the benefit of all who serve the public in any way. They have been adopted by many public bodies in the UK and the Territories.

SELFLESSNESS

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

INTEGRITY

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

OBJECTIVITY

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

OPENNESS

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

HONESTY

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

LEADERSHIP

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.