

Deputy Premier Represents Virgin Islands At Caricom Meeting

Release Date: 26 February, 2025



Deputy Premier and Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change Honourable Julian Fraser, RA, represented The Virgin Islands at the 48th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) last week.

The meeting was held on February 20 and 21 in Bridgetown, Barbados and was chaired by the country's Prime Minister, Honourable Mia Amor Mottley who is the incoming Chair of CARICOM.

Honourable Fraser reaffirmed the Virgin Islands' commitment to regional collaboration and stated that the Territory remains steadfast in its commitment to deepening regional ties and working together to address the shared challenges the region faces.

Honourable Fraser said, "Strengthening economic resilience, enhancing security, and embracing technological innovation are critical to the sustainable development of our region. In the face of global uncertainties, it is crucial that we continue fostering strategic partnerships and leveraging regional cooperation to create a more prosperous and secure future for the people of The Virgin Islands and the wider Caribbean."

The Deputy Premier and Heads of Government of CARICOM engaged in discussions on a range of issues, including regional security, economic cooperation, climate change, tourism, food security, education, technological innovation, and international partnerships.

Honourable Fraser also participated in high-level talks with key international figures including United Nations Secretary-General H.E. António Guterres, European Commission President H.E. Ursula von der Leyen, and representatives from Canada, Saudi Arabia, and various development finance institutions.

These dialogues centred on regional security and stability, economic resilience, and strengthening international partnerships. Special attention was given to efforts to stabilise Haiti and the international pressures impacting the Caribbean.

A major concern raised during the meeting was the growing issue of crime, with particular focus on the illicit trade of firearms, narcotics, and human trafficking. CARICOM leaders underscored the need for enhanced law enforcement cooperation to address these challenges, reaffirming their commitment to working with international partners to combat crime and enhance regional security.

The conference also served as a platform for engagement with Silicon Valley investors, focusing on opportunities for the Caribbean to harness emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI). A key highlight was AI's transformative potential in healthcare, particularly innovations in medical imaging and diagnostics, which could greatly enhance patient care and revolutionise radiology across the region.

One of the key achievements of the conference was Martinique's provisional accession as an Associate Member of CARICOM. Honourable Fraser, along with other regional leaders, congratulated the President of the Regional Council of Martinique, Mr. Serge Letchimy, on this milestone, which paves the way for closer collaboration between Martinique and the wider CARICOM community.

Honourable Fraser also delivered an intervention on financial services and constitutional matters, ensuring that the Virgin Islands' position was recognised at the highest level of the conference.

The Deputy Premier was accompanied by Special Envoy Benito Wheatley, who serves as the Virgin Islands' CARICOM Ambassador.

The Government of the Virgin Islands is committed to the advancement of the Territory through responsible governance, economic resilience, and strong international

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