GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

STATEMENT

Tel: (284)468-2730
Official Government Website:
https://gov.vg

Hong Kong Financial Services Round Table

Release Date: 17 February, 2025

Good morning and welcome to everyone present. It is my distinct pleasure as Premier of the Virgin Islands & Minister of Finance, Financial Services and Trade, to welcome each of you to today's Round Table as representatives of BVI's leading financial services Firms and Trust & Corporate Service Providers here in Hong Kong. I express my great thanks, and that of the Government and People of the Virgin Islands, for accepting my invitation, given the extreme importance of Hong Kong and Mainland China to the prosperity of BVI's financial services industry.

While I have attended many industry meetings and roundtables over the last 2 years, this is my first in Asia, as this is my first visit to Hong Kong & Greater China. I am particularly pleased to be here to see for myself the good work our two representative offices are doing in maintaining BVI's most important relationships in the region. Our staff represents us well and w are extremely proud of the work they are doing. As you may be aware, my previously scheduled visit for last year's BVI Trade Mission was delayed due to intense flooding in the Territory and as a result the Mission was ably led by the Honorable Lorna Smith to whom I am very grateful. Never the less, it is absolutely essential that I sit with you today to discuss matters of mutual importance to you as industry practitioners as well as to ourselves. Your firms have been at the forefront of selling BVI business to the Greater China Market and world for the last 40 years as you engage with the

clients, courts, stock exchanges, and regulators across BVI, Hong Kong, and China as the engines that make the industry move. We are therefore making our very best efforts to actively engage you on the myriad of regulatory, compliance, and other changes taking place within the jurisdiction to ensure the transition and absorption of these changes is as seamless as possible. Inclusive of today's roundtable, the BVI Government and Regulator would have held 5 meetings in Hong Kong from 2024 to the present, with a follow-up meeting slated for the early second quarter by the FSC. As Premier, I am here to personally assure you of BVI's commitment to continue servicing Asia-Pacific financial services markets with the innovative, efficient, cost-effective products, according to the highest international standards & best practices, that have defined our jurisdiction for the last 40 years.

The BVI Government and Regulator are keenly aware that the jurisdiction has recently implemented numerous changes within a very short period of time, requiring both the cooperation and patience of industry practitioners in achieving the proper balance between compliance, risk management, cost efficiency, and maintaining the attractiveness of our product. This process requires ongoing engagement with the FATF, OECD, EU, and UK Government, translating their requirements practically into policy and legislation that both maintains the jurisdictions advantages, and can be reasonably implemented by you the practitioners without great difficulty. To that end we ensure that you are consulted on most policy, legal, and legislative changes before hand.

In light of all the changes underway, it is extremely important for me as Premier to layout for you the BVI Government's overarching political approach to the building and maintenance of our financial services industry over the past 20 years to present. First, the industry is of vital importance to the economic well-being of the people of the Virgin Islands and one of our two economic pillars, the other pillar being tourism. This is in reality a very typical and common economic structure for most small offshore financial centres globally and not unique to BVI. As such it is in our interest to protect the industry's immediate and long-term viability at all cost…it is an existential issue at this juncture for the Virgin Islands upon which our prosperity and lively depend. That being said, the structure of our industry will always be guided by adherence to the standards set by international bodies

including the FATF, IMF, OECD, EU, and UN. The Global Economy and international finance are built on a structure within which BVI is not isolated and must operate, therefore we do our utmost best to comply. As you are all aware BVI participates in the international sanctions regime, CRS & FATCA reporting, Automatic Exchanges of Information Regime, and willingly cooperates with UK and International law enforcement. Our track record on this is solid and proven both in the past and presently.

Second, even in complying, our industry is also subject to external attacks of varying types and we must and will do everything possible to protect from those threats, particularly those that undermine the human and legal rights of our clientele, and violate the constitutionality of BVI laws. We will move swiftly to dispel any targeted misrepresentation of the legitimacy of our industry politically or via the media. Third, as a Government we have a responsibility to protect and safeguard the security our clients, legitimately utilizing our products around the world. Legitmate usage or ownership of BVI financial products should neither directly or indirectly cause undue harm, damage, or jeapordize the security and livihood of the product owner by virtue of ownership. Our legislation and policies will remain consistent with the UN's human rights convention and we will utilize judicial means if necessary to protect this position. This is the broad political foundation undergirding the maintenance of BVI's financial services industry, which we will steadily uphold.

That being said, I am extremely optimistic, that just as in the past, we will be able to maintain the integrity of the industry in the midst of the myriad of changes in the global economy and international regulatory landscape. We are committed to doing so, and have invested significant resources to achieve that result. We look forward to working with you to ensure that we get all the transitions as right as possible, particularly the consultations underway on Beneficial Ownership Registers and defining legitimate interests. I am confident, that even in the face of all of our present challenges, by the close of 2025 BVI would have retained its position as Greater China's favoured jurisdiction for offshore finance.

I look foraward to engaging with you as time permits throughout the course of this hor.

Thank you.