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## The Virgin Islands To Make Application for Full Membership at CARICOM Heads of Government Meeting

Release Date: 26 February, 2026



A significant milestone in regional cooperation and partnership will be achieved for The Virgin Islands when Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley, attends the 50th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in St Kitts and Nevis, 24 - 27 February 2026.

The Premier's Office has confirmed that the Territory will now be pursuing full membership in the regional organisation.

Premier Wheatley emphasised the strategic importance of deeper engagement with CARICOM. He said: "The Virgin Islands is committed to strengthening regional ties, fostering economic growth, and contributing meaningfully to the Caribbean community. Full membership in CARICOM presents an opportunity to collaborate on trade, security, climate resilience, and education initiatives that benefit our people."

While The Virgin Islands is exploring full membership, the Premier clarified that the Territory will not commit to participation in the free movement of persons protocol at this stage. Negotiations have not yet begun, and the government intends to approach discussions carefully to ensure the interests of residents are fully protected.

Other anticipated benefits of CARICOM membership include enhanced trade opportunities, collaboration on public health and education, strengthened diplomatic ties, and joint initiatives in disaster preparedness and climate resilience.

People from over 100 different countries live and work in the Territory. Premier Wheatley sees this as a powerful asset that mirrors the diverse spirit of the Caribbean itself. He believes that by formalising this bond through full membership, The Virgin Islands can better leverage its multicultural identity to bridge gaps within the region.