GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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VI Delegation Participates in Workshop on Building Climate-Resilient

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A delegation from the Virgin Islands represented the Territory at a five-day regional workshop held in Bridgetown, Barbados from 9 to 13 February. The workshop was themed “Building Climate Change-Resilient Water Management Systems.”

Representatives included Ms. Atoya George from the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change and Mr. Dillon Robin from the Ministry of Communications and Works. The officers participated in technical sessions focused on key areas such as climate risk assessment for water infrastructure, integrated water resources management, and strengthening regional cooperation through improved data and information sharing, among other topics.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change, Dr. Ronald Berkeley, noted that participation in the workshop supports Government’s broader climate adaptation agenda.

He said, “Water security is one of the most critical challenges facing small island states like the Virgin Islands. Climate change is altering rainfall patterns and increasing the intensity of storms. The knowledge gained from this workshop will directly inform national planning, infrastructure development and community awareness initiatives.”

The workshop brought together technical specialists, policymakers and water resource managers from across the Caribbean and Overseas Territories to examine innovative strategies, practical tools, financing mechanisms and policy frameworks designed to improve the resilience of water systems to climate-related hazards.

Participants engaged in technical training sessions, case study reviews and scenario-based planning exercises aimed at supporting adaptation to increasing rainfall variability, prolonged drought periods and extreme weather events such as hurricanes.

The Virgin Islands delegation also shared local experiences, including the Territory’s reliance on desalination and rainwater harvesting, as well as the vulnerability of water infrastructure to storm damage, flooding and sargassum influx. Participants explored best practices adopted by neighbouring Caribbean

territories in water conservation, leakage reduction and climate-resilient infrastructure design.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Communications and Works, Mrs. Elvia Smith-Maduro, added that the workshop provided valuable technical guidance for improving resilience in public water infrastructure.

She said, “I am pleased that Government officials were able to attend this workshop. The training provided important insights into designing and protecting water systems, including storage tanks, pipelines and desalination facilities. These lessons will assist the Territory in strengthening its water infrastructure network, standards and reducing service disruptions following extreme weather events.”

As a follow-up to the workshop, information gained will be used to inform recommendations for updates to the Territory’s Climate Change Adaptation Policy and to enhance the resilience of the water resources sector through the modernization of the Territory’s water supply systems.

The workshop included participation from representatives of 19 Overseas Countries and Territories and was organised by the Green Overseas Programme, funded by the European Union and implemented by Expertise France. The programme aims to support sustainable, resilient and inclusive development across European and British Overseas countries and territories, with a particular focus on climate resilience and energy transition.

The Government of the Virgin Islands remains committed to building a sustainable and resilient water sector to safeguard public health, support economic activity and protect communities from the impacts of climate change.

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