GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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Building on Success: UN-VI Partnership Charts Course for Next Phase of Cooperation

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The Government of the Virgin Islands today (17 March) convened a High-Level Dialogue on United Nations–Virgin Islands engagement for sustainable development, bringing together senior government officials, representatives of United Nations agencies, and members of the Virgin Islands National Sustainable Development Coordinating Committee.

The Dialogue, held as part of the Sustainable Development Forum from 16–17 March 2026, comes at a critical time as the Virgin Islands continues to address structural vulnerabilities despite its high-income status, including exposure to external shocks, climate risks, and socioeconomic disparities.

It also takes place against the broader context facing Eastern Caribbean Overseas Territories, which continue to encounter significant barriers in accessing affordable and reliable development finance, contributing to persistent financing gaps for climate resilience and sustainable development.

Premier and Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development, Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley, said the discussions would help to ensure that the Country Implementation Plan (CIP) for 2026 reflects the priorities of ministries and departments and supports the continued implementation of the National Sustainable Development Plan Vision 2036.

In his opening remarks, the Premier stated, “Today’s High-Level Dialogue provides an important opportunity for us to review our collaboration under the United Nations Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, to reflect on the progress that has been made over the past several years, and to shape the priorities that will guide our engagement in the next cycle of cooperation.”

He added, “The partnership between the Virgin Islands and the United Nations system has strengthened considerably since 2022, when the Territory began engaging more systematically with the UN through the Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the Caribbean.”

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development, Mr. Joseph Smith-Abbott, emphasised that the Country Implementation Plan is the operational framework that translates the broader

United Nations Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework into a set of coordinated, country-specific activities and outputs. He said it outlines the agreed areas of technical assistance and support that United Nations agencies will deliver in partnership with the Government to advance national development priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals over the defined period.

The Country Implementation Plan for 2026 was signed off this morning by Premier Wheatley and UN Resident Coordinator for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, Mr. Simon Springett.

Mr. Springett said: “The United Nations are proud to partner with you. We highly value the cooperation as well as the trust placed in us. The world continues to face many interconnected challenges, and only by working together, across politics and geography can we together ensure economic and social progress. As we work to better understand and to support your priorities, the Joint Implementation Plan will guide our cooperation throughout the remainder of 2026. It will also provide a foundation for the new Caribbean Cooperation Framework that the United Nations is developing with your government and many other CARICOM Member States. I look forward to this constructive dialogue. I look forward to understanding better your priorities and how the United Nations can further support your government.”

The UN-VI Forum builds on ongoing collaboration between the Government and the United Nations system to address development financing constraints, including work under a regional roadmap initiative aimed at improving access to development finance for Overseas Territories through advocacy, technical assistance, and strengthened regional partnerships over the 2025–2027 period.

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About:

The Government of the Virgin Islands is committed to promoting good governance and the sustainable development of the Territory with a view to ensuring a well-informed, prosperous, cohesive and stable society. The Premier’s Office serves as the focal point for coordinating cross-sectoral policies and programmes and promoting the sustainable development of the Virgin Islands to ensure a well-informed, prosperous, cohesive and stable society.

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