GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

STATEMENT

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REMARKS BY HONOURABLE VINCENT O. WHEATLEY MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT UPDATE ON VIRGIN GORDA DUMPSITE FIRE

Release Date: 2 October, 2026

Good day to the people of The Virgin Islands.

I wish to provide an update on the recent fire at the Virgin Gorda dumpsite. On 26th September, 2026, a significant fire developed in the active waste area along the outer edge of the site. The fire produced heavy smoke and required a sustained response from the Department of Waste Management, Fire and Rescue Services, and other supporting agencies.

The cause of the fire has not yet been determined. Once the circumstances have been assessed and the findings confirmed, the Ministry of Health and Social Development will provide a further update to the public. The Ministry and the Department of Waste Management will also review the incident and take appropriate steps to reduce the risk of a similar occurrence at the site.

Crews used heavy equipment to cover and compact the burning waste with soil, reducing the oxygen supply and helping to bring the fire under control. Water trucks were also used to cool the affected area and suppress smaller flames. With support from additional equipment and personnel mobilised from Tortola, crews were able to continue suppression and cooling efforts, and the fire was extinguished by the evening of Monday, 28th September, 2026.

Following the response, the site was inspected and operations resumed once it was safe to do so. The Department of Waste Management continues to monitor the area as a precaution. Thankfully, no injuries were reported, and no equipment on site was damaged.

I fully recognise the concern, discomfort, and frustration caused by this incident, particularly for residents of Virgin Gorda and for persons in communities on the eastern side of Tortola who were also affected by the smoke. As Minister for Health and Social Development, and as the representative for Virgin Gorda, I do not take those concerns lightly. I live in this community, and I understand the concern, disruption, and frustration that incidents of this nature can cause.

I want to assure the public that this matter is being treated seriously. While the immediate fire has been extinguished, the work does not end there. The Ministry and the Department of Waste Management will continue to assess the condition of

the site, and identify practical measures to strengthen prevention, monitoring, and overall site management.

I also wish to thank the Department of Waste Management, Fire and Rescue Services, the Ministry of Communications and Works, the Water and Sewerage Department, and the contractors and personnel who assisted during the response. Their efforts helped to contain the fire, protect nearby communities, and restore operations safely.

The Ministry remains committed to keeping the public informed and to advancing the necessary improvements to waste management across the Territory.

Minister for Health and Social Development

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