

Premier Wheatley Attending OECS Council of Ministers of Immigration Conference

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Premier and Minister of Finance Honourable Dr Natalio D. Wheatley is away from the Territory from March 4 to 6 attending the Third Annual Council of Ministers for Immigration meeting in Grenada.

The Premier, who also serves as the Minister responsible for the Department of Immigration, is accompanied by the Acting Chief Immigration Officer, Mrs. Nadia Demming Hodge, and will engage with regional counterparts to discuss critical immigration policies and cooperative initiatives aimed at strengthening border security, facilitating regional mobility, and enhancing immigration frameworks across the Caribbean.

"Immigration policies play a crucial role in shaping economic and social development across the region," Premier Wheatley said, adding, "This conference presents an opportunity for the Virgin Islands to contribute to discussions that will influence the future of immigration frameworks in the Caribbean. Our goal is to ensure that policies remain effective, fair, and beneficial to our people."

Acting Chief Immigration Officer, Mrs. Nadia Demming Hodge, added, "The conference will allow us to engage in meaningful dialogue on regional migration

matters, explore best practices, and strengthen partnerships that will enhance our immigration operations in the Virgin Islands. I am eager to contribute to these important discussions."

The Premier is scheduled to return to the Territory on the evening of March 6.

In his absence, Deputy Premier and Minister for Environment, Natural Resources, and Climate Change Honourable Julian Fraser, will assume the responsibilities of Premier and Minister of Finance in accordance with Section 55 (1) of the Virgin Islands Constitution Order, 2007.

The section states, "If the Premier is expected to be absent from the Virgin Islands for more than forty-eight hours, the Governor shall authorise the Deputy Premier to perform the functions of the office of Premier; and the Governor shall revoke this authority on the return to the Virgin Islands of the Premier."

The Government of the Virgin Islands is dedicated to fostering sustainable economic development, strengthening governance, and enhancing the quality of life for residents. Through strategic partnerships and forward-thinking policies, the Government remains committed to transparency, innovation, and progress in all sectors.