



**Statement by Junior Minister for Culture and Tourism
Honourable Luce Hodge-Smith, MHA**

75th Anniversary of the Virgin Islands Legislature

4 November 2025

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to make a contribution during this Special Sitting to Commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Restoration of the Legislature under the theme: “Honouring the Past, Shaping the Future: The Virgin Islands’ 75 Year Journey Towards Self-Determination”.

Today, we gather with pride, gratitude, and reverence to commemorate a truly historic milestone — the 75th Anniversary of the Virgin Islands Legislature. This observance is not merely a reflection of time passed, but a celebration of progress, perseverance, and purpose.

Seventy-five years ago, in 1950, our forebears took a bold step toward self-governance when the Legislative Council was re-established, giving Virgin Islanders a voice in shaping our destiny. Those early members—visionaries and patriots in their own right—served not for personal gain, but out of deep love for these islands and their people. They laid the foundation upon which our modern democracy now stands.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we pay heartfelt tribute to all those who have served in this noble institution—from the pioneering members of the Legislative Council, to the men and women who have since sat in the House of Assembly, debating, legislating, and leading through the tides of change. We also recognize with deep appreciation the former and present Speakers, and former and present Clerks of the House and the supporting staff—the quiet force behind the scenes who ensure the smooth operation of our legislative process. Without their dedication and professionalism, the wheels of governance could not turn as effectively as they do. I acknowledge the former members who have served in this honourable house in varied capacities and are presently in the gallery today.

When we look back to those early days, we see a very different Virgin Islands. Our population was smaller, our economy modest, and our infrastructure limited. Many families relied on fishing, farming, and seafaring to make ends meet. Roads were few, communication was slow, and opportunities were scarce. Yet, even then, there was a spirit of hope, determination, and faith that carried us forward.

Fast forward to today—our Virgin Islands have transformed dramatically. From a subsistence economy, we have grown into a thriving tourism and financial services hub, known across the globe for excellence, integrity, and natural beauty. We have modern schools, advanced healthcare facilities, expanding infrastructure, and a vibrant cultural identity that continues to flourish. This transformation did not happen by chance—it is the product of vision, planning, and the hard work of generations who believed that the Virgin Islands could stand proudly among the nations of the world.



This 75th anniversary reminds us that progress is not only measured by economic gains, but by the strength of our people—our ability to stand tall in the face of hurricanes, global crises, and economic challenges. Time and again, Virgin Islanders have proven that resilience is part of our DNA. We rebuild. We recover. And we rise—stronger each time.

But as we celebrate, we must also look ahead. The future of the Virgin Islands depends on how well we nurture the next generation—how we teach them the value of public service, integrity, and unity. We must empower our youth to take up the mantle of leadership, to innovate, and to continue building on the solid foundation laid by those who came before.

Mr. Speaker, this milestone, the 75th anniversary of the Virgin Islands Legislature, is not only a celebration of history—it is a call to action. It reminds us that democracy must be guarded, that governance must be transparent, and that the people's voice must always be heard.

As we move forward, let us continue to build a Virgin Islands that remains a model of resilience, good governance, and community pride. Let us stand united—government, private sector, and people alike—in the shared vision of a stronger, more prosperous territory for generations to come.

To our citizens, I encourage you to take part in the list of activities planned throughout this observance. These events are opportunities not only to reflect on our past, but to connect with our present and dream about our future. Tune in, participate, and celebrate the journey that has brought us this far.

Today, we honor the past, we celebrate the present, and we embrace the future with faith and determination.

On behalf of all gathered, and with great pride in who we are as a people, I say—

Happy 75th Anniversary to the Virgin Islands Legislature!

May God continue to bless our leaders, our people, and these beautiful Virgin Islands.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to speak on this special occasion!

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