



COMMUNIQUÉ

17th April, 2026

The 2026 Conference of Overseas Territories Attorneys General, hosted by the Attorney General of The Virgin Islands, Hon Dawn J. Smith, brought together Attorneys General and senior law officers from across the Overseas Territories from 13-17 April, 2026. The United Kingdom Attorney General, the Rt. Hon Lord Hermer KC, participated virtually.

The Attorneys General were joined by colleagues from the United Kingdom, Crown Dependencies and the United States of America. Discussions were held under the theme Stronger Together: Common Challenges, Collaborative Solutions.

The Conference reaffirmed the importance of this forum in strengthening collaboration on shared legal, constitutional and governance challenges and solutions. Delegates reflected on the increasingly complex, interconnected and fast-moving nature of these issues, agreeing that effective responses require co-operation grounded in mutual respect and shared democratic values.

Rule of Law, Governance and Human Rights

Discussions on constitutional law considered recent judgments and their implications, alongside forthcoming constitutional reform consultations and reviews across several Territories. Exchanges were candid and constructive, reflecting the trust and maturity that characterise these discussions.

Discussions on human rights emphasised the importance of moving beyond formal compliance towards practical implementation, including effective public consultation in the development of legislative change. Delegates considered a range of issues including equality, workers' rights and protection for marginalised communities. They highlighted the leadership role of Attorneys General, including their engagement with Human Rights and Integrity Commissions, in maintaining public confidence and upholding the rule of law.



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Governance and integrity discussions addressed the particular challenges faced by small jurisdictions and committed to strengthening capability in this area. Delegates agreed that strong governance arrangements were essential to public confidence, institutional resilience and reduced vulnerability to future crises. They agreed on the value of sharing effective approaches to reform and of institutional capacity building. And they noted that where the office of the Attorney General is weak, the rule of law in a Territory is correspondingly weakened.

The Conference discussed sanctions, recognising the significant role played by the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies in supporting the United Kingdom's international responsibilities. Delegates welcomed the United Kingdom Government's support in developing capability and capacity in recent years and highlighted progress achieved through co-operation, shared expertise and sustained investment.

The final session under this theme examined disaster preparedness and recovery, considering differing approaches to emergency powers alongside legislative and regulatory frameworks for disaster management and major incidents. Delegates reflected on the importance of ensuring that emergency powers are lawful, proportionate, time-limited and compliant with human rights, while enabling effective and timely action to protect communities.

Justice Delivery, Technology and Security

Discussions on judicial modernisation and digital justice explored the potential for technology to enhance efficiency and resilience within justice systems. Delegates emphasised that human judgement and discernment remain central, and that digital tools alone do not guarantee access to justice. Offline options must continue to be available. Several Territories shared experience of remote hearings and jurisdictional control, and of cross-jurisdictional co-operation supported by digital tools.



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Safeguarding discussions examined evolving risks, particularly relating to children and the digital environment. Delegates emphasised the importance of policy and guidance developing alongside legislation and the value of multi-agency approaches. They noted the need for responsive legal frameworks to keep pace with technological change through risk-based regulation and effective cross-Territory and international co-operation.

Discussion of migration and cross-border crime reinforced the need for systemic responses within small jurisdictions. Delegates highlighted the importance of public confidence in authorities' ability to protect and safeguard communities. Attorneys General play a central role in ensuring that legal and procedural frameworks shape operational responses, including in relation to detention and the protection of vulnerable persons. Delegates also underlined the importance of legal co-operation and information-sharing to address threats that transcend jurisdictional boundaries. In particular, delegates expressed appreciation for co-operation with United States of America law enforcement partners.

In the final session, the Conference reflected on the shared responsibility of the United Kingdom and its Overseas Territories for a vast and diverse marine estate, presenting regionally varied legal challenges. Delegates discussed developing expertise on the Law of the Sea, including on Exclusive Economic Zones and fisheries protection. They also discussed the United Kingdom Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Act 2026, and the development of a Hamilton II Declaration. Continued collaboration was seen as essential to safeguarding maritime security and advancing sustainable marine management.

The Conference concluded with a shared commitment to continued collaboration in support of effective governance across the Overseas Territories. Delegates recognised the distinguished contribution of the longest-serving Territory Attorney General, Hon Samuel Bulgin KC JP, marking his 23 years of service as Attorney General of the Cayman Islands.

A list of follow-up actions to support delivery, accountability and ongoing collaboration over the coming year will be circulated to delegates.

Delegates welcomed Gibraltar's offer to host the next Conference in 2027.

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L-R: Principal Legal Adviser, British Indian Ocean Territory: David Edwards, Attorney General of Saint Helena, Ascension Island and Tristan Da Cunha: Mr. Andrew Duncan, Attorney General of the Cayman Islands: Hon. Samuel Bulgin KC JP, Attorney General of Anguilla: Hon. Rachel Spearing KC, Attorney General of The Virgin Islands: Hon. Dawn J. Smith, Attorney General of Bermuda: Hon. Kim Wilkerson JP, Attorney General of Montserrat: Hon. Sheree Jemmotte-Rodney, Attorney General of the Turks And Caicos Islands: Hon. Rhondalee Brathwaite-Knowles OBE KC, HM Solicitor General of Bailiwick Of Guernsey: Hillary Pullum KC.