



Remarks by

Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley, Premier and Minister of Finance

Public-Private Sector Disaster Management Workshop 2026

*“Without Resilience, One Big Wave Can Change Everything”*

5 May, 2026

I recognise the protocols already established.

Good morning.

I am pleased to join you for this very important Private-Public Sector Disaster Management Workshop, and I extend warm greetings on behalf of the Government and people of the Virgin Islands to all of you who are visiting with us. I also wish to acknowledge our hosts, Tropical Shipping, and collaborative partners – the BVI Department of Disaster Management (DDM), the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), and the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) - for bringing together this initiative for the benefit of the Virgin Islands and the wider Caribbean region.

For more than 60 years, Tropical Shipping has stood with the Virgin Islands and the Caribbean nations as a trusted partner and a true friend - especially in difficult times. Your commitment to our region’s safety, resilience, and recovery has never wavered, and we are grateful.

The theme guiding today’s workshop reminds us of a simple truth: *“Without resilience, one big wave can change everything.”* In small island states like ours, this is not a metaphor - it is lived experience. Hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and even cyber threats can disrupt our lives, our economy, and our sense of security in a matter of hours. Our geography, while beautiful, presents unique vulnerabilities. That is why planning, coordination, and collaboration are not optional; they are essential.

Building resilience requires all of us - government, businesses, community groups, and regional partners - to work together with purpose and foresight. No single entity can prepare for or respond to disasters alone. The private sector plays a critical role in safeguarding supply chains, protecting livelihoods, and ensuring continuity of essential services. Communities strengthen our collective readiness through awareness, preparedness, and local leadership. Government provides the enabling environment, policy direction, and coordination that tie these efforts together.

One of the most important lessons we have learned is the central role of *logistics*. When disaster strikes and everything is in shambles - roads blocked, communications down, ports damaged - it is logistics that determines how quickly relief supplies reach those in need. It is logistics that restores hope. And it is logistics that transforms a moment of crisis into the beginning of recovery.



Tropical Shipping, its collaborative partners and individuals like you who are present today, are experts in this kind of logistics. You know what needs to be done, what can go wrong and, with your wealth of experience, how to push past the obstacles. So, workshops like this help us identify practical solutions to the geographic challenges that small islands face, ensuring that when an event comes, we are not caught off guard.

Your discussions today will strengthen our collective capacity to prepare, mitigate, and respond. The ideas you generate, the partnerships you reinforce, and the solutions you shape will make a real difference for the people of the Virgin Islands and the wider Caribbean.

I thank each of you for your commitment and for the valuable contributions you will make during this session. I wish you a productive and successful workshop, and I look forward to the strengthened resilience that will emerge from your collaboration.

Thank you.

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