

**REMARKS BY THE DEPUTY PREMIER AND
MINISTER FOR ENRCC, THE HONOURABLE JULIAN FRASER, RA
AT THE LAUNCH OF THE FIRST CALL FOR PROPOSALS OF THE VICCTF**

Members of the Board of the Virgin Islands Climate Change Trust Fund, led by its Chairman, Mr. Edward Childs;
Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Chamberlain Emmanuel;
Members of the Secretariat;
Representatives of Government; members of the private sector and civil society; Community leaders; our environmental partners; and, most importantly,
The people of these Virgin Islands.
Good morning

Today marks another important moment in the history of our Territory.

Earlier this year, when we formally launched the Virgin Islands Climate Change Trust Fund internationally, I said that there are moments in the history of every country that define and shape its future. I believe this is one of those moments, because we are now moving from talking about climate finance to putting climate finance into the hands of our communities.

The Virgin Islands Climate Change Trust Fund is now opening its first Call for Proposals. With this Call, we are saying to the people of the Virgin Islands: bring us your ideas; bring us your solutions; bring us the things you know your communities need; and let us work together to build a Territory that is stronger, safer and more resilient.

That is what makes this occasion so important.

The Virgin Islands Climate Change Trust Fund was established by law in 2015. Its purpose is clear: to provide a secure, transparent and accountable mechanism through which we can raise, manage and deploy financing for climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience. But establishing a Fund in legislation and actually putting resources to work are two different things. With the launch of this first Call for Proposals, we are taking that important next step. We are moving from establishment to implementation, and from policy to action.

The Fund currently holds just over six million dollars, and this first Call will make one million dollars available for community resilience initiatives. Nine hundred thousand dollars will be directed toward grant projects, while one hundred thousand dollars will support capacity building and education.

This is not the end of the journey. It is the beginning.

The intention is for this grants window to be replenished through the environmental levy, creating a continuing cycle of opportunities for communities, organisations and innovators across the Territory. So, I want everyone listening today to understand this clearly: this is not a one-time exercise. It is the beginning of a new approach to financing climate resilience in the Virgin Islands.

For many years, we have understood the vulnerability of small island communities. We know what hurricanes can do. We know what drought can do. We know the consequences of rising temperatures, coastal change, flooding, sargassum and other climate pressures on our people, our economy and our natural environment.

We also know that resilience cannot be built by Government alone. That is why I am particularly pleased that the first Call for Proposals is focused on community resilience. The Trust Fund did not simply determine from an office what communities need. It engaged with communities through consultations held across the Territory in July. During those consultations, people spoke about water, sargassum, renewable energy, waste, ecosystems, food security, research, education and other challenges affecting their communities. Those voices have helped to shape the priorities of this first Call for Proposals.

That is how this institution should work.

The people should not simply be recipients of climate policy. They should be participants in creating it. I therefore encourage our community organizations, non-governmental organizations, businesses, farmers, environmental groups and other eligible entities to take full advantage of this opportunity. Do not assume that your idea is too small. Do not assume that your organization is too small. Do not assume that you must have a large staff or a large office to make a meaningful contribution. Some of the most important solutions to the challenges facing small island communities will come from people who understand those challenges because they live them every day.

Today, we are opening a door.

I invite the people of the Virgin Islands to walk through it. Bring your ideas. Bring your partnerships. Bring your determination. Bring your vision for the communities in which you live. And together, let us build a Virgin Islands that can anticipate the challenges ahead, withstand them when they come, recover quickly when necessary, and emerge stronger on the other side. Let us make resilience not merely a response to disaster, but a permanent feature of how we develop our Territory.

With that, I am pleased to endorse and officially welcome the first Call for Proposals of the Virgin Islands Climate Change Trust Fund. May the ideas submitted be bold. May the partnerships be strong. May the projects be transformational. And may the work that begins today help secure a safer, more resilient and more prosperous Virgin Islands for generations to come.

Thank you, and God bless you, and God bless these beautiful Virgin Islands.