



# United Kingdom Overseas Territories Association

*From the office of the Chairman*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 10, 2017

## **Hurricane Irma – UK Overseas Territories call for stronger British Government relief action and, longer term, support for economic and fiscal diversity to drive sustainability**

**Hamilton, Bermuda**—On behalf of the Leaders of the Overseas Territories, in his capacity as President of the United Kingdom Overseas Territories Association (UKOTA), the Premier of Bermuda, The Hon E. David Burt MP, has expressed deep concern and sympathies for all those affected by Hurricane Irma, and other current related developments.

Premier Burt said:

“Our thoughts and prayers are fully focused on all affected by the current severe storm patterns across the Caribbean. In particular, there is an urgent need for health and social welfare support which must be met now.

We welcome the commitment from the UK Government in providing some immediate resources to British Nationals within the Caribbean, while questioning the adequacy of its response in other areas such as a regional reconstruction fund, and the two-week wait for the arrival of HMS Ocean. We note that the House of Commons Foreign Affairs and International Development Select Committees have raised these issues in terms as well.

The Overseas Territories are diverse in our constitutions, populations and economic sustainability, encompassing the Caribbean, Europe, and most remote islands in the South Atlantic. We therefore call upon the UK Government not only to commit immediate resources but also to examine and develop the long term economic self-sustainability of the Overseas Territories.”

In addition, the Premier highlighted the following areas as offering scope for further discussion once some of the most immediate relief issues have been addressed:

1. The resilience of island infrastructures and planning; global best practice in construction and other coping systems must be adopted.

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2. The global insurance and reinsurance industries are likely to face increasing demands on capacity, and key hubs in the US, UK, and Bermuda will need to apply expertise against adverse scenarios of likely growing severity to cope with the levels of relief and recovery that will be required over the long term. The swift availability of substantial funds to the areas affected is well supported by many of the current structures in these hubs, and these should arguably be enhanced and certainly protected at current levels.
3. The Overseas Territories have shared traditions of excellence in financial services, banking, and risk management. Any upward trend in environmental or other catastrophes will emphasise their dependence on these sectors, which must be recognised in UK Government and other international policy.

Premier Burt concluded; "The people of Britain's Caribbean Territories are courageous and resilient, but they face unprecedented devastation. Now, more than ever, we need the United Kingdom to fulfil its obligations by providing comprehensive and lasting support to ensure a sustainable future".

- ENDS -

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