



Foreign, Commonwealth
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John Rankin CMG
Governor of the British Virgin Islands
Government House
P.O. Box 702
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17 October 2022

Dear John,

Thank you for your letter of 3 October enclosing your first Quarterly Review of progress in implementing the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry Report into governance in the British Virgin Islands (BVI).

It is one of my top priorities as Minister for the Overseas Territories to ensure that the people of the BVI see the reform that is desperately needed after years of poor governance. In my first week in this role, I received a detailed briefing on the Commission's work and its Report, the BVI Government of National Unity's Framework document with its plan to implement 48 of the recommendations, and the then Foreign Secretary's decision that an Order in Council to implement the 49th should be made, but not immediately brought into force.

I am therefore pleased to see from your Review that there has been some real progress, and most deadlines have been met. It is understandable that it proved challenging in this first period to meet all the deadlines set out in June. However, I would not expect to see any further missed deadlines now that most actions are well under way.

I was also pleased to learn of the Premier and Cabinet's overall continued commitment to driving delivery in constructive partnership. I was, however, disappointed to read of your concerns that this commitment may not be as strong in some areas which are vital to the necessary changes.

In particular, the Framework document contained a clear commitment by the BVI Cabinet to ensure, with immediate effect, that "tender waivers are only agreed in exceptional, unavoidable cases, and which must be explained publicly". Similarly, single source procurement must only be used in exceptional circumstances: this is made clear in the Public Procurement Act 2021.

A proper and transparent tender process provides the BVI public with assurance that their money is being well spent by Government. In the rare cases where such a process is not possible, it is important for Government to do more to provide that assurance. I would expect immediate and substantial improvement against this clear commitment, while recognising that there may be some legacy procurement issues from the previous administration which should be addressed proactively and promptly. I would be grateful if you could submit a report at the start of December on the issue of tender waivers and single source procurement so that I can assess progress ahead of the next Quarterly Review in the public interest.

Overall, I agree that the progress in this initial period is sufficient to continue with the current approach. But it is vital that this be maintained, in some cases improved, with commitments and deadlines met. The people of the BVI want and deserve reform. The UK Government remains committed to taking the necessary actions to ensure that they see that reform delivered.

I look forward to discussing this further with you and Premier Wheatley at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jesse Norman', with a stylized, cursive script.

Rt Hon Jesse Norman MP
Minister of State