

STATEMENT
BY
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EU OVERSEAS ROUNDTABLE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
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Good morning ladies and gentleman.

This morning I want to share with you the British Virgin Islands' (BVI's) recent experience as co-host and co-Chair of the Caribbean Summit of Political and Business Leaders where the second phase of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative was launched.

I believe this experience is important for the reason that Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT), and small island developing states (SIDS) in general, can benefit from partnerships that help to preserve their environment.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the Caribbean Challenge Initiative, or CCI as we call it, this project was launched in 2008 by a number of Caribbean governments who committed to the protection and sustainability of their marine and coastal areas.

In the CCI's first phase, these governments pledged to conserve at least 20% of their near-shore marine and coastal environment by 2020; and to set up sustainable finance mechanisms and trust funds that would provide long-term funding for conservation activities.

Phase two builds on this. The summit brought together for the first time, Heads of Government, CEOs of major corporations and other stakeholders to

partner around the goal of conserving the region's marine and coastal areas. One of the key goals was to strike partnerships that deliver real results.

We were very fortunate to have Sir Richard Branson, CEO of the Virgin Group, as a co-Chair of the summit. He helped to drive the corporate involvement that contributed to the summit's success, which he hosted on his home Necker Island. He is a true champion of the environment.

We also had two very able Heads of Government as co-Chairs in the persons of BVI Premier Dr. the Honourable D. Orlando Smith, OBE and Grenada Prime Minister Dr. the Right Honourable Keith Mitchell who helped set the tone for the dialogue that took place.

Other participating governments in the CCI that attended the summit included the Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Following the event a number of other Caribbean governments have expressed interest in joining the CCI, which displays its value and potential.

Some of the summit's more notable outcomes included:

- i. Eight Caribbean governments signed a Leaders Declaration that sets out conservation commitments.
- ii. Fifteen companies signed a Corporate Compact and officially joined the CCI. The compact includes a specific commitment to support marine and coastal conservation.
- iii. The three co-chairs approved a communique that highlighted, among other things, three consensus focus areas going forward:
 - i. protection of sharks and rays
 - ii. development of a regulatory framework for marine and coastal conservation; and
 - iii. transition from fossil fuels to alternative energy.

In terms of funding, \$72 million was pledged overall and the governments participating in the CCI announced various environmental commitments aimed at conservation.

I would like to briefly mention some of the things that the BVI Government committed itself to.

We committed to fully implementing our Protected Areas System Plan adopted in 2008 that calls for 33% of the marine, coastal and terrestrial environment to be protected. Three initial priority areas will be declared by the end of 2013 and the entire plan will be implemented by 2020.

Under the framework of the Virgin Islands Climate Change Adaptation Policy adopted in 2012, we are in the process of establishing the Virgin Islands Climate Change Trust Fund that will support climate change adaptation and mitigation activities by government, NGOs and the private sector.

Plans are also being developed for a Sustainable Yachting Initiative to reduce marine pollution from yachts. Our mantra in the BVI is “there is no tourism without the environment.”

We have also committed to developing and implementing a wetlands management plan.

I would like to point out that the British Virgin Islands is the only European Union (EU) associated territory that is a party to the Caribbean Challenge Initiative and we were proud to have co-hosted and co-chaired the recent Political and Business Leaders summit.

We believe that our participation displays that the Overseas Countries and Territories are not simply places that require external support, but rather societies that can be leaders and effective partners in environmental conservation.

Our small size does not necessarily always have to be an impediment, although it remains an important factor in our development. We are actually on a scale that allows us to see clearly what solutions work and what solutions do not work in solving environmental problems.

We can be a model for the EU and the world in how to manage coastal and marine resources sustainably and how to effectively build partnerships that meet this goal.

In fact, as the incoming Chair of the Overseas Countries and Territories Association, the BVI intends to see that OCTs maximize our partnerships with the EU, ACP and other stakeholders to ensure our environmental sustainability, among other things.

I will not go into greater detail on these issues as this is a roundtable and we are best served by an interactive discussion.

I would like to thank IUCN for the kind invitation to participate in this event and welcome any questions you may have.

I thank you.