



Ministerial Statement By

The Hon Walter Roban JP MP

Deputy Premier and Minister of Home Affairs

28th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP 28) – United Arab Emirates from 30th November to 12th December 2023

Friday, 15th December, 2023

Mr Speaker, I rise to inform this Honourable House on Bermuda's representation at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in the United Arab Emirates, otherwise known as COP28.

Bermuda's presence at COP28 is important for the highest level of diplomatic engagement for global cooperation and collaboration which presents an opportunity for Bermuda to build relationships, exchange ideas and shape outcomes with key figures we normally would not have access to.

Mr Speaker, at COP26 in Glasgow, I had the pleasure of leading a delegation of Environment Ministers across the Overseas Territories. I again had the honour to be asked to lead the delegation of Environment Ministers to COP28 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. At COP26, it was through Bermuda's Chairmanship under the United Kingdom Overseas Territories Association that Bermuda took the charge to ensure that British Overseas Territories had the right to be heard and properly represented at every COP under the UK Delegation. Through strong lobbying efforts by UK Representatives based in London, our representation increased immensely to ensure that every Territory at Government level would be afforded a delegation to collectively represent our position. At COP28 all Overseas Territories were afforded the opportunity to be represented for the first time ever.

We have a shared ambition to work towards Net Zero as we are all on the front line of climate change. We are custodians of internationally important habitats which span the globe from the Antarctic to the Caribbean, the South Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. Together with the UK we represent the world's fifth largest marine estate; over 90% of the UK's biodiversity; and are essential to the UK meeting its pledge by 2030 to protect 30% of the world's oceans. Climate change will have a profound impact upon our environments, economies and societies, a failure to act will impact not just us, but our children and all generations to come. To

overcome the climate crisis facing our communities we must increase global solidarity and align our actions.

As coastal and island communities, our economies rely upon maintaining healthy, sustainable marine and terrestrial environments. Together we have committed to take action to protect our fisheries resources and to conserve and, wherever possible, restore our marine ecosystems and biodiversity. Building on the good work already undertaken across the Overseas Territories, we reaffirmed an alliance to take action to tackle the harmful effects of plastic pollution and marine litter, often as a result of other countries which have impacted our shores.

Our biodiversity, terrestrial and marine, support not only our wellbeing, but also contribute to our uniqueness, our nature-based fight against climate change and are important to those of us where tourism makes an important contribution to our economies.

Mr Speaker, Bermuda has committed to a world leading Economic Exclusive Zone representing 20 % of our marine estate, in which there can be no harvesting of resources or other economic activity. We are already seeing significant recovery in the spawning grounds. We are proud to be part of the UK's Blue Shield oceanic protection programme. For Bermuda our Net Zero priorities are focused on:

- Our Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) goal is to decarbonise energy generation to 85% by 2035;
- Decarbonise transport public, commercial and private by 2035;
- Making requisite planning building code provisions to decarbonise construction and raise commercial conservation and efficiency levels;
- Imbed conservation and efficiency into residential development;
- Focus on better demand side management amongst residents, through an effect future tree planting policy spread over the island for sustainable tree coverage

Mr. Speaker for the benefit of Honourable Members I have tabled the document that was recently launched at COP28 entitled, 'The Bermuda Difference, Brining Expertise, Resource and Finance to the World's Biggest Challenge'.

As an island community vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and as a global capital of climate related financial risk management, we are determined that Bermuda will participate in the international response to ensure our collective safety and prosperity.

To that end, Bermuda is committed to increasing our protection of our fragile ecosystem, reducing our carbon footprint, and mitigating the

impact of climate change. As evidenced in the document tabled, the work has already begun.

Mr Speaker, I had the opportunity to join a panel discussion in the UK Pavilion with in the highest-level accredited zone. The event was chaired by Minister Graham Stuart, Minister of State for Climate, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero who also led the U.K. negotiations at COP28.

The Panel entitled ‘On the frontline: how are the UK’s Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies getting to net zero, adapting to and dealing with the impacts of climate change?’

The discussion focused on being small islands and the impact of climate change in our territories, our progress, lessons learned and challenges we face in meeting net zero and how they incorporate youth perspectives in policy making as our future – to ensure we can collectively meet our shared ambitions on net zero and the goals of the Paris Agreement.

I highlighted although Bermuda will not adopt the Paris Agreement we are evermore committed to Net Zero. We are beyond aspirational with innovation such as the Bermuda Sandbox legislation which demonstrates this. Bermuda’s leadership is exemplified with the decarbonisation of public transport, rapid deployment of solar panels on government buildings, waste-to-energy conversion, and the development of the only waver energy park in the region.

Following the panel, I had a frank discussion with Minister Stuart who was complimentary of Bermuda's accomplishments and global leadership not just amongst the territories but across the region with our actions related to protect our climate. The Minister highlighted the need for innovation and driving the solutions of the future and we reflected on the communities’ experience with the planned deployment of offshore wind.

Mr Speaker, throughout the summit I was able to speak on several panels with the highest level of accreditation at COP28 and was afforded the opportunity to deliver a key note address on the first day of the Island Innovation Pavillion – Island of Hope, where I was able to speak about the key role small island states play in preserving ocean health. I highlighted that we are a custodian of a vast marine area and Bermuda has an important role to play. What is certain Bermuda is observed amongst small island jurisdictions as a leader in our approach to tackling climate change. Our dedication through our community, environmental partners and Government Departments is admired by many in the region. We need to change the narrative: ‘we are not a small island state but a large marine state.’

Additionally, I was able to support a Ministerial panel discussion at the CARICOM Pavilion alongside my counterparts across the overseas territories. We addressed the need to coordinate climate finance across the territories and the challenges non-sovereign jurisdictions face in accessing climate finance. This sentiment is shared not only with British territories but all non-sovereign territories across the world.

Mr. Speaker, it was particularly encouraging to have a formal meeting with President of COP26, Sir Alok Sharma MP, in his role as a Fellow of the Rockefeller Foundation. He was interested in discussing how he could support overseas territories in their relationship with the UK Government and with the work of the Foundation. His commitment to supporting small jurisdictions who are vulnerable to climate change is highly recognised. I look forward to future collaborative engagements in his new endeavours in the environment space.

Mr. Speaker, while in the UAE I was keen to support a Bermudian who is making a difference in the Climate Finance arena, Mr Kevin Richards. It was important that we encourage the next generation who are providing unique opportunities for job creation and economic diversification for Bermuda. It was encouraging that Mr Richards was able to host a Bermuda Day to key stakeholders in the UAE whom have a potential interest to invest in Bermuda. It was a pleasure to support as I delivered the key note address at an industry focused Bermuda Day event, highlighting Bermuda's ambitions for COP. This Government is supporting innovation in the climate space including climate finance and will continue to encourage Bermudians to succeed in this field.

Mr Speaker, the most important accomplishment achieved at COP28 was securing a commitment from the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, through Minister Stuart to support a Climate Change Fund dedicated to the overseas territories. I led the OT Delegation in the meeting where we secured the pledge by the Minister to explore this commitment with the Foreign and Commonwealth and Development Office and HM Treasury.

The UK Government has recently pledged £100 million of UK funding to support climate-vulnerable populations to adapt to climate change. Vulnerable countries will be provided with assistance from the UK Government to strengthen the resilience to the increasingly frequent and severe effects of climate change.

Where it relates to the territories, our UK Representatives in London will work together with relevant UK Government Departments to develop a transparent dedicated source of climate funding.

Mr Speaker, in addition to all the showcasing of Bermuda's story we were very much working alongside the UK Negotiation team to ensure that OT priorities were properly represented at the table. Each morning the lead negotiator for the overseas territories met with the delegation. As the UK is our representation under UNFCCC we were able to feed into the negotiations on areas including Global Stocktake, Mitigation, Adaptation, Finance, Transparency and Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. As an innovative jurisdiction on the frontline of climate change Bermuda's voice is acknowledged and respected.

Mr Speaker, there was unprecedented youth interest in COP28. There was for the first time a significant delegation of Bermudian youth were in attendance. We are proud of such a strong youth voice stemming from Bermuda. In view of this we are already exploring avenues to increase youth accreditation for Bermudians at COP29 in Azerbaijan. Bermuda's youth delegation included: Noelle Young, Zayne Sinclair, Malachi Symonds, Olly Cherry, William Campbell and Isaiah Fraser.

The Government of Bermuda London Office supported by Ms Kimberley Durrant, UK Representative for the Government of Bermuda and Mr Brandon Sousa have facilitated Bermuda's presence at previous COPs and will continue to build on this important representation collectively with overseas territories, and Bermuda specifically.

COP is important to Bermuda and Bermuda's participation is important to the discussion of addressing climate change.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**