



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

**Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith of
Richmond Park**
Minister of State for Overseas
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John Rankin CMG
Governor
British Virgin Islands

4 April 2023

Dear Governor,

Thank you for your letter of 15 February enclosing your second Quarterly Review of progress in implementing the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry Report into governance in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) and also for your letter of 17 February with proposals from the Premier of the BVI for new deadlines.

During my visit to the BVI earlier that month, the Premier and Ministers reassured me of their commitment to promote good governance and carry out the reforms necessary to address the issues identified in the Commission of Inquiry. It is however clear from your Quarterly Review that progress has been too slow. I am particularly concerned that there have been signs of insufficient commitment in some specific areas.

Your Review notes that 19 Recommendations were completed by the end of January. I understand that most of these were in areas of your responsibility or where you led the initial process; I am grateful for your leadership. I appreciate that many remaining Recommendations represent substantial and complex areas of reform for the GNU, but I would have expected more progress by now. Too many areas lag substantially behind and I am concerned that much of what has been delivered so far does not yet represent genuine legislative reform and safeguards to prevent future abuse.

I note that in some areas there has been progress. I was pleased that you were able to report in January and in this Review a continuing trend towards best practice in procurement. This was a good example of delivering meaningful change in a short space of time. The audits published since your Review are a strong reminder of the importance of assuring the BVI public that its money is spent wisely. It is vital that the BVI Government learns from the events of previous years and embeds sustainable change. I am pleased that many of the reviews recommended by the COI are complete or

substantially under way. I am grateful to the numerous reviewers for their efforts. I trust that the public will be able to see this work, and politicians act upon it, without delay.

The BVI Premier has requested eleven extensions to deadlines for delivery of Recommendations for which he is responsible; you have sought two. Some of the reasons given are more understandable than others. It is a concern that the GNU has still not put in place the necessary resources to deliver on the recommendations in line with the commitment made in June 2022. However, I also accept that some of the original deadlines have turned out to be unrealistic. I am therefore content to agree changes.

Overall, I agree with your conclusion that serious efforts, and a clear prioritisation of time and resources, are required to pick up the pace to deliver the reform the people of the BVI want and deserve. The UK Government remains committed to taking the necessary actions to ensure that the people of the BVI see that reform delivered.

Accordingly, I would be grateful for you to agree with the next BVI government a refreshed timetable for delivery of the remaining Recommendations and reforms which were set out in the Framework Document. This should include ambitious yet achievable deadlines to ensure the necessary reforms have taken root no later than May 2024, which should allow the Order in Council to be lifted then (or sooner if implementation is done more quickly). In parallel, I would like you to consider whether there is anything that you need to support and/or accelerate the new government's reform programme for instance resources, a grant of additional powers or technical expertise.

I would be grateful for this refreshed plan, your advice and your next Quarterly Review no later than the end of May this year.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith
Minister of State for Overseas Territories, Commonwealth, Energy, Climate & Environment