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USVI and BVI To Meet Monthly To Further Mutual Cooperation

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Governor Albert Bryan, Jr., center left, and BVI Premier Andrew Fahie, center right, pose for a picture with cabinet members during the first Inter Virgin Islands Council meeting since 2017. By. BVI Government

ROAD TOWN, TORTOLA — Following Tuesday’s meeting of top officials from the British and United States Virgin Islands, representatives of twelve standing committees of the Inter Virgin Islands Council (IVIC) will meet monthly to address the shared goals of both territories.

BVI Premier Andrew A. Fahie welcomed his USVI counterpart Governor Albert Bryan for a packed day of talks.

The 8th IVIC meeting was the first since both territories experienced severe damages during hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017. It was also the first for both Mr. Fahie and Mr. Bryan, who are at the 1-year point of their respective administrations.

“One of the things coming out of this meeting is there will be no business as usual, but business unusual,” the BVI Premier said. “This means that our standing committees will meet once a month to ensure that we iron out the areas we have in common and work out the grey areas where there are differences.”

He said the objective is for the committees to work together so that in the next couple of months, they can come up with solutions ahead of next year’s meeting.

“We had a very productive day going over a variety of issues that will be mutually beneficial to our people,” Governor Bryan said. He added, “The one thing that is key is the strong familial ties that lie between the British and U.S. Virgin Islands and our constant commitment to ensure that our people are resilient in the face of our challenges and that we can take advantage of the possibilities and opportunities of a collaborative Greater Virgin Islands.”

During the February 4th meeting, the Council discussed tourism strategies and the potential for regional collaboration on tourism marketing, airport and seaport development, inter-territorial cooperation between charter yacht companies, border security, fisheries, and response to the potential threat of Coronavirus.

The Council’s Committee on Tourism, comprised of officials from the USVI Department of Tourism, U.S. Virgin Islands Port Authority and the BVI Tourist Board, presented reports on tourism development plans including enhancement projects underway at the Cyril E. King airport and Red Hook Ferry Terminal in St. Thomas as well as the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport and Gallows Bay Ferry Terminal in St. Croix. The committee also discussed the potential for joint tourism initiatives.

Representatives of the USVI Marine Council, the USVI Department of Planning and Natural Resources and officials from the BVI’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth Affairs, Fisheries and Agriculture discussed ways to enhance cooperation and communication of policies.

The Inter Virgin Islands Council was established on May 29th, 2004, when former USVI Governor, Dr. Charles Turnbull and former BVI Chief Minister, Dr. D. Orlando Smith, OBE, signed a joint Memorandum of Understanding.

The Council’s first meeting convened on St. Croix in April 2005.