

TENTH UK-CARIBBEAN FORUM: COMMUNIQUÉ

Introduction

1. The Tenth United Kingdom-Caribbean Ministerial Forum was held virtually on 18 March 2021. The Governments of the United Kingdom and the Caribbean again reaffirmed their commitment to the Forum as an important vehicle for dialogue, partnership and cooperation, reflecting the special relationship that exists between the United Kingdom, the Caribbean States and the British Overseas Territories.
2. The Caribbean and the United Kingdom share a strong and enduring relationship based on mutual respect, trust and a shared history. The United Kingdom-Caribbean Forum continues to provide a space for sustained joint collaboration to address shared interests and concerns as well as to promote people-focused prosperity and sustainable development. Ministers affirmed the need for United Kingdom and Caribbean efforts to focus on addressing the challenges and maximising the opportunities presented by the post-COVID-19 and post-Brexit realities.
3. Ministers also acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most dangerous global threats to health, human security, prosperity and development, with devastating socio-economic impacts particularly on small and vulnerable states such as those of the Caribbean.
4. At the Ninth United Kingdom-Caribbean Ministerial Forum, recognition was made by Ministers in their Joint Statement of the human and economic losses caused by infectious diseases, and the need to provide the necessary support. The global COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated the primacy and profile of these losses and elevated their impact. The pandemic has effectively put additional pressure on small island states' finances and diverted critical resources away from crucial work in areas such as long-term resilience building.
5. Ministers noted with concern that the COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated the debt situation of several Caribbean countries amidst significant GDP contraction and widening fiscal deficits. Ministers agreed on the need for timely international support for, and action on, exceptional measures to ensure debt sustainability and address new financing gaps as part of a short to medium-term economic recovery package.
6. Ministers recognised the multi-dimensional challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic as an urgent and overriding priority and welcomed ongoing United Kingdom support to the Caribbean in the fight against COVID-19. Ministers also expressed their shared commitment to advocacy and action aimed at promoting and ensuring equitable access to and distribution of vaccines, including through the COVAX facility. The United Kingdom undertook to work with the Caribbean to build back better and more inclusively to strengthen long-term resilience, recognising that the pandemic has demonstrated the necessity and urgency of working together both regionally and internationally particularly in vaccine

rollout and distribution, and the procurement of medical supplies and equipment.

7. Ministers, recognising that no one is safe until everyone is safe, acknowledged the call from CARICOM Heads of Government for an urgent Global Summit to address inequitable access to, and distribution of vaccines to be convened in coordination with the World Health Organisation's Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator.
8. Ministers noted the priority accorded by Caribbean countries to agriculture and food and nutrition security in the context of post-COVID-19 economic recovery, building resilience and achieving sustainable development. Ministers committed to exploring co-operation and investment possibilities in this area in the context of the United Kingdom-Caribbean partnership.
9. Ministers paid tribute to the over half a million West Indians who have made an immeasurable contribution to the socio-economic fabric of the United Kingdom by helping the United Kingdom's public services and economy to thrive. They have built their lives and their homes in the United Kingdom, and have done much for this country, significantly contributing to communities, culture and society, making the United Kingdom stronger, more vibrant, more inclusive, and more successful as a nation.
10. This includes the significant contribution of West Indians of the Windrush Generation who migrated to the United Kingdom between 1948 and 1973, helping to rebuild a post-war United Kingdom as a modern and multicultural society, and developing key sectors such as the National Health Service (NHS) and the transport system across the country.
11. Ministers welcomed the United Kingdom's commitment to righting the wrongs of the Windrush Scandal and the decision to take swift and decisive action to make amends. This includes providing compensation to victims through the Windrush Compensation Scheme, which is making higher payments, more quickly, and implementing the recommendations of the Independent Windrush Lessons Learned Review.
12. Ministers further welcomed the United Kingdom's commitment to deepen its relationship with Caribbean countries, to reinvigorate, redesign and strengthen this partnership and to broaden engagement to include other stakeholders in business, the diaspora and youth. The potential and growing strength of this relationship is demonstrated by the United Kingdom's opening of four new diplomatic missions in 2020: in The Bahamas, Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, and St Vincent and the Grenadines. Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the longstanding diplomatic partnership between Caribbean countries and the United Kingdom, and welcomed the United Kingdom's deployment of additional diplomatic staffing across the Caribbean, as a further opportunity to enhance United Kingdom and Caribbean cooperation on key issues.
13. Ministers welcomed progress made in priority areas since the Ninth United Kingdom-Caribbean Ministerial Forum held in Freeport, Grand Bahama, The

Bahamas on 29-30 April 2016. They agreed to strengthen their collaborative efforts in the following areas, elaborated on in this joint Communiqué and its accompanying Action Plan.

Prosperity and Sustainable Development

14. Ministers committed to strengthening the promotion of economic, trade and investment relations between the United Kingdom and the Caribbean using the CARIFORUM-United Kingdom Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) that came into effect on 1 January 2021. Ministers commended the CARIFORUM-United Kingdom EPA as a trade agreement with the potential for promoting sustainable development and being important for all parties' recovery efforts following the economic shock of the global COVID-19 pandemic.
15. Ministers committed to effective implementation of the EPA, including through the Agreement's joint institutions, which would begin meeting from this year. Ministers also affirmed the EPA's potential to support the joint ambitions of the United Kingdom and Caribbean countries to create enabling business environments for the promotion of trade and investment. The EPA will help to eliminate barriers to United Kingdom-Caribbean trade; provide preferential market access for exporters; reduce bureaucracy that restricts trade and strengthen supportive legislation to stimulate investment and growth.
16. Ministers also reaffirmed their commitment to free trade, in an inclusive, transparent, fair, and open rules-based multilateral trading system, which recognises the special requirements of vulnerable, small economies. Ministers also agreed that the UNCTAD 15 Meeting in Barbados will provide the forum for Ministers to exchange best practices, expertise and experience to address capacity constraints, improve competitiveness and generate investment in sustainable development.
17. Ministers welcomed the United Kingdom's support to Caribbean development institutions, in particular the United Kingdom's recent commitment of up to £21m to the Special Development Fund of the Caribbean Development Bank and to work in partnership with Caribbean countries to maximise the impact of this support and other spending in the region.
18. Ministers welcomed United Kingdom support to Caribbean financial and regulatory institutions and agreed to collaborate further on international financial rules and global standards on tax transparency. Ministers agreed on the need for a framework within which Caribbean countries can be regularly consulted and included in the rules-making opportunities and processes which affect their economies. The United Kingdom agreed to advocate on behalf of Caribbean countries in multilateral fora, including the G7, G20 and OECD, to facilitate enhanced understanding and more effective discussions between the large and more established, and new and emerging financial centres.
19. Ministers acknowledged that although several Caribbean countries have medium to high per capita GNI, giving the impression of wealth; they suffer

disproportionately from diseconomies of scale, external economic shocks and catastrophic climatic events, which significantly and gravely impact their economies and societies; and that determining access to finance, ODA graduation and “differentiation”, based on their GNI per capita, uses a measure known to work poorly for small states. This can mean the end of support before those states have resilience, as opposed to alternative approaches that reduce these risks, including the use of a multi-dimensional vulnerability index.

20. Ministers recognised the debt vulnerabilities for some Caribbean countries, and noted the importance of strengthening debt management capacity and transparency to support future debt sustainability.
21. Ministers stressed the importance of increased awareness of the underlying vulnerabilities of the Small Island Developing States and agreed that these challenges are further compounded by difficulties in mobilising and securing concessional financing. Ministers agreed that joint action is required to address the unique challenges and vulnerabilities of small island states and that they must be supported in their efforts to participate fully and to contribute to sustainable development and prosperity for their people, empowering women, girls and marginalised people, advancing gender equality and leaving no-one behind.
22. Ministers raised concerns over the threat posed to their financial stability by de-risking by international banks, which has resulted in the withdrawal, restricted access to, and higher costs of correspondent banking services to the Caribbean banking sector, alongside the negative impact on trade, investment, remittances and the regions’ ability to integrate into and benefit from the global financial, trade and economic systems.
23. Ministers recognised the importance of maintaining progress in strengthening their respective AML/CFT frameworks in accordance with the Financial Action Task Force’s (FATF) international standards for combatting money laundering, terrorist financing, and WMD proliferation financing.
24. Ministers reiterated their commitment to continue their ongoing efforts to comprehensively meet the FATF standards and ensure the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) is sufficiently resourced and equipped to enact its primary responsibility of assessing its Caribbean members against these standards.

Climate Change and the Environment

25. Ministers acknowledged that COP26, which will be hosted by the United Kingdom in November 2021, will provide an opportunity for both the United Kingdom and the Caribbean to further demonstrate their leadership on ambitious climate action, including through enhanced and updated Nationally Determined Contributions and Long-Term Strategies with pathways to net zero and Adaptation Communications. Ministers expressed their commitment to implementing the UNFCCC Gender Action, delivering gender-responsive

climate finance, policies, plans, strategies and action and delivering on the needs and priorities of those that are disproportionately impacted by climate change, including people living in poverty, women and girls, people with disabilities and marginalised groups.

26. Ministers signalled 2021 as a year of high ambition on climate change and agreed to commit to further explore practical partnerships in accessing green and blue finance, supporting adaptation, embedding climate resilience as well as working with new partners to optimise energy resources and create appropriate regulatory and policy frameworks for private sector investment.
27. Ministers also expressed their concern about the role of gender and other inequalities in exacerbating vulnerability to disasters. In their approach to assessing risks in crises, Ministers set out their commitment to consider the impact of gender, age and disability; prevent and respond to gender-based violence, and support lifesaving sexual and reproductive health services.
28. Ministers underscored the climate vulnerability of Caribbean countries, which are among those at greatest risk from rising sea levels and extreme weather events. Ministers noted that almost all the region's populations and economic infrastructure lie within five kilometres of the sea, and recognised the additional challenges stemming from a lack of regional capacity and financial ability to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. Work is needed to ensure funding and expertise on Adaptation and Resilience is deployed effectively.
29. Ministers also underscored the important role of Standing Forests in maintaining climate stability, combating climate change and managing freshwater and ecosystems. Ministers agreed on the need for prioritising mitigation efforts in the combatting of impacts of climate change and support for the preservation and sustainable utilisation of forest resources.
30. Ministers recognised the efforts by United Kingdom and Caribbean humanitarian and military staff and local authorities, working side by side, to provide life-saving humanitarian support in states in the region affected by hurricanes. Ministers committed to further sharing of technical expertise with and among Caribbean countries, in preparing not only for natural disasters, but also for other types of major events, such as cyber-attacks or public health incidents, using both formal and informal networks.
31. Ministers confirmed their commitment to comply with existing international obligations regarding support to distressed cruise vessels. Ministers also confirmed that the United Kingdom and Caribbean countries will support each other in efforts to repatriate their nationals from such vessels.
32. Ministers agreed to work together to address the challenges faced by Caribbean countries in accessing finance to respond to natural disasters, both for short-term recovery and longer-term resilience building. This includes looking at opportunities for greater disaster risk and insurance provision, and improved access to climate adaptation financing.

33. Ministers reviewed their strong partnership in the field of disaster resilience. They noted examples of progress made since the last Forum, including in 2017, the increased commitment to £330m grant funding for the United Kingdom Caribbean Infrastructure Fund (UKCIF), which invests in climate and disaster resilient economic infrastructure in Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines and Montserrat. They expressed satisfaction that most projects had now received approval for the capital phase, and that works have begun.
34. Ministers also noted progress with the United Kingdom's £43.8m Strengthening Health Facilities Programme, which is supporting the upgrading of 60 health facilities across the region to higher standards of climate and disaster resilience and developments with respect to disaster risk financing tools, shock responsive social protection and recovery planning.
35. Ministers agreed that a healthy ocean and the natural environment are critical to human health, wellbeing, prosperity, and climate resilience. Ministers also recognised with concern that biodiversity is declining faster than at any time in human history. Ministers confirmed their strong determination to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. Ministers thanked those countries who had indicated their support for a global "30by30" ocean protection target via the Global Ocean Alliance, High Ambition Coalition for People and Nature, and High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy and looked forward to welcoming additional countries in the region. Ministers also acknowledged the importance of protecting and conserving coastal and marine areas, particularly their biodiversity and ecosystems, and Ministers looked forward to the agreement of ambitious targets in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.
36. Ministers also recognised the value of the Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme offered by the United Kingdom in supporting Caribbean Small Island Developing States to grow their marine economies, to create jobs, drive national economic growth, reduce poverty, ensure food security and build resilience. As such, Caribbean Ministers encouraged its continuation and expansion where possible.

Our Shared Values

37. Ministers noted that education has long been an area of deep collaboration between the United Kingdom and the Caribbean, with almost 300 Caribbean Chevening Scholars and 81 Commonwealth Scholarship Commission Scholars having studied in the United Kingdom since the last Forum in 2016, and 42 Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholars having registered for study at United Kingdom universities in this period. The United Kingdom looked forward to growing these links by welcoming further Chevening and Commonwealth Scholars later in 2021 and beyond. Collaboration will be further supported by a recently launched British Council scholarship scheme for the next generation of women and girls in STEM to study at United Kingdom Universities for master-degrees, open to Jamaican and Cuban applicants. The

British Council is also committed to working across Caribbean countries to allow 15,000 more people to gain United Kingdom professional and university qualifications by 2024.

38. Ministers acknowledged the mutual benefit brought about by work of the British Council more broadly to the United Kingdom and to Caribbean countries. They will continue to support programmes that develop skills of young people to improve their opportunities for the future. These programmes have influenced change of practice in schools, benefitting about 10,000 students and reaching about 8.2 million people through online engagement, readership and broadcast in Jamaica, and across other Caribbean countries and the diaspora since 2017.
39. Ministers welcomed the United Kingdom's commitment to ensuring people in tertiary education and research institutes across the Caribbean will continue to have access to scholarships, training and internships, and encourage collaboration with academic, technical and vocational institutions in the United Kingdom.
40. Ministers further welcomed initiatives to support exchanges between the brightest and best talent from across the United Kingdom and the Caribbean, including scientists, innovators, academics, and those with special skills in advancing the shared prosperity agenda. In particular, Ministers applauded the recent announcement by the United Kingdom of a new graduate route which, from summer 2021, will allow students from the Caribbean to stay in the United Kingdom for two years (three years for PhD students) once they have successfully completed their studies.
41. Ministers recognise that inclusion, gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls, people with disabilities and marginalised people is critical to national development and agree to mainstream gender equality throughout all national development plans and strategies, as well as to ensure equality of access to economic, social and political opportunities, rights, services, and at least twelve years of quality education.
42. Ministers agreed the value of establishing programs to promote partnerships between tertiary academic institutions to prepare young leaders from the United Kingdom and Caribbean for the 21st century workplace, and encouraging them to come together to exchange ideas and to further opportunities for educational interaction.
43. Ministers from the United Kingdom and the Caribbean countries who are members of the Commonwealth looked forward to a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting which - to the benefit of the whole Caribbean region - promotes sustainability, health, technology and skills, and the rule of law - in line with the values of the Commonwealth Charter; and addressing the particular needs of women and girls, youth, and small and vulnerable states.
44. Ministers reaffirmed support for the principle and the right of self-determination for all peoples, recognising the historical importance of self-determination in the

political development of the Caribbean, and its status under the United Nations Charter.

45. Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to democracy, freedom of expression and independent, responsible and sustainable media freedom, which are essential to the self-determination of all peoples.
46. Ministers also reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring the political, economic, social and educational advancement of their people, empowering women, girls, people with disabilities and marginalised people, and to eliminating discrimination in all its forms.
47. Ministers welcomed the 18 December 2020 decision of the International Court of Justice that it has jurisdiction to entertain Guyana's claim concerning the validity of the 1899 Arbitral Award, which settled the land boundary between then British Guiana and Venezuela. Ministers expressed their concern about the issuance of Decree No 4.415 on 7 January 2021 claiming exclusive sovereign rights for Venezuela in the waters and seabed adjacent to Guyana's coast west of the Essequibo River. They called on Venezuela to follow a peaceful path of adherence to the tenets of international law.
48. Ministers commended the efforts of Belize and Guatemala, which through referenda, have secured the consent of their peoples to refer Guatemala's claim to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Ministers noted that the case arising from Guatemala's claim is before the ICJ for final and definitive resolution, in accordance with the Special Agreement. Pending a resolution of the case before the ICJ, Ministers urge Belize, Guatemala and the Organisation of American States (OAS) to continue implementing fully the Confidence Building Measures that have been in place since 2005. Ministers recalled the undertaking by both countries and the OAS to engage in the design and development of a mechanism of co-operation for the Sarstoon River, which defines the boundary between Belize and Guatemala, and urged both countries and the OAS to reinvigorate their efforts to this end.
49. Ministers reaffirmed their longstanding and unambiguous support for the preservation and maintenance of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Belize and Guyana.

Protecting Our People

50. Serious and organised crime and corruption continue to threaten United Kingdom and Caribbean interests, undermining the security, development and prosperity of the region, discouraging investment and contributing to high levels of violence. Ministers resolved therefore to work together to tackle these challenges, and their enablers, and to cooperate with international and regional bodies to do so. This includes work to combat one of the key enablers, illicit finance, by denying and depriving criminals of the proceeds of crime through robust asset recovery legislation, financial investigations and prosecutions.

51. Ministers agreed that collective efforts against serious and organised crime, including support and respect for the rule of law, are germane to ensuring a safer world. Ministers also agree that working together, to share intelligence, facilitate training, exchange expertise and techniques is an appropriate approach to tackle the threats from terrorism and serious and organised crime in the United Kingdom and the Caribbean and that meaningful cooperation is key to delivering solutions.
52. Ministers also agreed to continue the regular consultation and exchange of intelligence and information on common security matters including criminal deportation.
53. Ministers further encouraged enhanced cooperation among member countries' law enforcement and prosecution bodies to develop criminal justice systems fit for 21st century challenges; strengthened cooperation with the private sector, civil society and relevant international bodies tasked with combatting these issues.
54. Ministers affirmed that an effective approach to counterterrorism is built on uniting the public and private sectors, communities, citizens and international partners around the single purpose to leave no safe space for terrorists to recruit or act. Ministers strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including threats to cyber security, and committed to work together within the international community to ensure that their responses in the fight against terrorism are consistent with international law and conventions, including effective implementation of UN sanctions.
55. Ministers noted the critical role played by cyberspace in the economic, social, cultural and political life of their countries, and its role in connecting those countries with one another and with the rest of the world.
56. Ministers affirmed their commitment to a cyberspace that supports economic and social development and protects, and promotes all human rights, that builds the foundations of an effective national cybersecurity response and promotes stability and reliability in cyberspace through international cooperation and a series of measures outlined in the accompanying Action Plan, in conjunction with the CARICOM Cyber Security and Cybercrime Action Plan (CCSCAP).
57. Ministers stressed the importance of protecting critical national infrastructure, old and new economies as well as preserving social equity and stability of cyberspace without compromising the values of an open, democratic, equitable, peaceful and secure internet, with full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Ministers also highlighted the power and benefits of technology to promote economic growth and capacity building, while balancing these with the need to establish effective and proportionate domestic cybercrime and cybersecurity frameworks.
58. Ministers welcomed that cyber security capacity building will continue with the United Kingdom and regional partners. Ministers also noted the progress made

in promoting online safety for citizens, improving capability and regional cooperation in responding to cyber incidents, the provision of training to tackle cybercrime, and the work to strengthen cyber security for democratic processes, in-part, supported by United Kingdom funding and cyber security expertise.

Conclusion

59. Ministers agreed that the shared ties between the United Kingdom and the Caribbean remain strong, and that they would strive to deepen and strengthen these links. Ministers committed to continuing to work together to protect their people, to promote United Kingdom and Caribbean shared values, and to drive continued prosperity for all; recognising that in a world faced with unprecedented challenges, United Kingdom and Caribbean cooperation remains more vital than ever.
60. Ministers agreed that progress against these commitments will continue to be monitored and reviewed by both sides, guided by the Communiqué and Action Plan of the Tenth United Kingdom-Caribbean Ministerial Forum, as well as the United Kingdom's Caribbean Strategy and the Caribbean's United Kingdom Partnership Strategy 2025.