

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UK Minister Warns BVI of Potential Intervention Amid Slow Governance Reforms

David Rutley expresses UK's readiness to step in if BVI reforms lag further

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Downing Street, located in Westminster, London, is notable for being the location of the official residences and offices of the United Kingdom's Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. By. GETTY IMAGES

David Rutley, the United Kingdom's Minister for the Americas, the Caribbean and UK Overseas Territories, warned the BVI government that British authorities were ready to step in if the sluggish pace of governance reforms continues for much longer.

Just after Minister Rutley arrived in the territory on Sunday, the Office of the BVI Governor issued a press release in which he is quoted as saying that “the UK Government is committed to the security, prosperity and wellbeing of the people of the British Virgin Islands. We want to see a successful, thriving , well-governed BVI, and will continue to do our utmost to support the Governor and the people of the BVI to achieve that goal.”

Warning local government officials that reforms emanating from the Commission of Inquiry were not moving ahead fast enough, Mr. Rutley promised additional technical assistance would be forthcoming from the UK if required. “However, if there continues to be a lack of progress, we will not hesitate to take further action to help deliver the much-needed reforms,” he vowed.

The minister’s comments come on the heels of a request from former governor John Rankin that the BVI Governor’s Office be equipped with more power to push through reforms on its own – a move that sparked [furious backlash](#) from local and regional politicians. A repetition of Mr. Rankin’s sentiments by a British government minister seems to signal that the UK is losing patience with the reform process in the BVI, even as Premier Natalio Wheatley and other government officials tout their progress.

In February 2023, the BVI was [40 percent complete](#) with its reform agenda, according to Dr. Wheatley. By January 2024, the process had only reached 50% completion, again according to Dr. Wheatley’s calculation. Speaking last month, Mr. Rankin said that “additional time alone will not be enough” to move the process along, noting that extensions to the implementation deadline were sought – and granted – twice last year, but “even these extended deadlines are being currently missed.”

Progress in the last few months has been all but completely stalled, accused the former governor, noting that the only item completed since September – the receipt of the required constitutional review report – was not done by central government but by an independent 3rd party.

Newly-installed governor Daniel Pruce said that “the Minister’s visit comes at a crucial time for the BVI, and signals the UK’s interest and commitment to ensuring that the BVI succeeds.”

Critics of the UK’s stance say that the current status quo represents a degradation of the relationship between territory and colonial power, and a regressive step on the path to independence for the BVI.