

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Seventh USVI/British Virgin Islands Council Meeting Set For Friday In St. Thomas

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ST. THOMAS -- The U.S. and British Virgin Islands will continue to strengthen ties as Governor Kenneth Mapp and Premier and Minister of Finance of the British Virgin Islands, Orlando Smith, convene the seventh meeting of the Inter Virgin Islands Council (IVIC), Government House made known Wednesday.

According to the release, government officials will meet on Friday here to report to the council and further discuss areas of shared interests.

The IVIC is the formal side of the USVI-BVI relationship and brings together the governor of the USVI and the premier of the BVI as co-chairs of the council. Government officials

and policy makers will explore with their counter parts different ways to enhance the relations between the USVI and BVI by collaborating to monitor and introduce initiatives designed to improve the quality of life for the people of the two territories, the release adds.

"Both the British and US Virgin Islands not only share a common culture and history, but today, we face some of the same unique challenges. We must strive to work together to secure our borders, enhance visitor experiences and improve the quality of life for all of our people," said Mr. Mapp. "Our relationship with our neighbors has been greatly improved through joint efforts with our law enforcement, tourism and emergency planning agencies. As a direct result of meetings such as IVIC, we will continue to cultivate an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual goals that will benefit future generations of Virgin Islanders."

Mr. Smith said that it was important for the USVI and BVI to continue to work together to address challenges and share resources for our mutual benefit.

"There is no denying that even though we are two separate sovereign lands, the people of the USVI and the BVI are one," he said. "We must therefore continue to collaborate for it is the surest path to a stronger and brighter future for all of us. We have been able to achieve much in the past through mutual co-operation and we must continue to ensure our relationship evolves, by pursuing avenues to resolve our various issues."

A number of initiatives have arisen from the council meetings, according to the release. These include information exchange between law enforcement agencies, research development exchange between the University of the Virgin Islands and H. Lavity Stoutt Community College, and information exchange on renewable sources of energy.

Mr. Smith will head the BVI delegation, which includes permanent secretaries and relevant senior officers, according to Government House. The council will receive updates on law enforcement, pleasure boating, tourism and education. Also to be discussed are initiatives to explore the scope of cooperation in BVI musician work permits.

The council was established on Saturday, 29 May, 2004, when former USVI Governor Dr. Charles Turnbull and Chief Minister Honorable Dr. D. Orlando Smith signed a joint memorandum of understanding. The council's first meeting convened on St. Croix in April, 2005.