**The Virgin Islands (UK)**

In the Caribbean archipelago, the Territory of the Virgin Islands is located near Latitude 18.25◦ north and Longitude 64.30◦ west. The Territory is 80 miles east of Puerto Rico and 40 miles north of St. Kitts, which is its nearest Leeward Islands neighbor. The Territory consists of a group of 60 islands, which cover an area of about 59 square miles, with the largest island being Tortola (about 29 sq miles), followed by Anegada (about 15 sq miles), Virgin Gorda (about 11 sq miles) and Jost Van Dyke (about 4 sq miles). The famous Sir Francis Drake Channel or the Virgin's Gang Way, provides a spectacular sailing adventure, prompting one of the first visitors to the Virgin Islands in 1701 to declare, "It is certainly among the best sailing in the world.” (*Historical account of the Virgin Islands in the West Indies London, 1780*). The majority of the islands in the group are volcanic in origin and have steep central hill ranges that flow into the sea. The exception is the coral-formed island of Anegada, which is extremely flat and low except in the middle where the ground rises slightly. The majority of Anegada land is below sea level, and the island is almost entirely surrounded by reefs. Tortola accounts for 44% of the Territory’s land mass.

The form of governance of the Territory has undergone many changes: The abolition of slavery in the first half of the nineteenth century; the surrendering of the Constitution in 1902; the implementation of legislative authority by the appointment of a Governor-in-Council for some 48 years and the reinstatement of the legislative council in 1950. These major events were followed by the implementation of a ministerial form of government under a constitutional order issued in 1967. This paved the way for further constitutional advancement when an amendment of the constitution in 1977 permitted a greater degree of autonomy in internal affairs. From 1977 onwards, the Territory has shaped its own destiny. In 2007, a new Constitution was adopted, which is currently the subject of a constitutional review.

Today, the Territory is known for its pristine beaches, beautiful turquoise waters and unique sailing. The two main economic pillars of the Territory are tourism and financial services. The Government began permitting the incorporation of international business companies in the mid-1980s, and incorporation fees now account for an estimated 51.4% of Government revenue. The other main revenue source is the tourism industry which attracts primarily the middle class and high-end tourist. The yacht chartering industry generates the majority of tourism revenue in the Territory. The Territory has a very small deficit of US$7.6 million, or 1.5% of GDP; a very healthy economy compared to the world’s biggest economies whose deficits as a share of GDP are much higher. (https://bviglobalimpact.com)/]https://bviglobalimpact.com)

The Territory is a British Overseas Territory with a high degree of internal self-government. Overtime, the people of the Territory have retained a distinct cultural identity. The Territory’s people have a free independent spirit, whose character is based on the qualities of honesty, integrity, mutual respect, and self-reliance. The importance of ownership of the land engenders the Territory’s people with a strong sense of belonging to and kinship with the islands (*Preamble to the 2007 Constitution*). It is these qualities that will sustain the Territory’s people as they look towards the future. Although there is a measure of concern with the social, economic, environmental and political changes since the last Constitutional Review, there is HOPE that:

* Our islanders and residents will be empowered for a sustainable future in an inclusive vibrant society
* A focus on identity building will continue to ensure that the history, national symbols and the Territory’s distinct cultural identity are entrenched at all levels of the education system.
* The Territory will embrace good governance, accountable government and citizens’ participation. (*National Sustainable Development Plan 2021-2036*).