



PRESS RELEASE

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United Kingdom Overseas Territories at Conference of the Parties (COP) 24

Representatives from countries around the world are meeting in Poland in a further attempt to steer decisive climate action. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the avenue through which global climate policy is negotiated. This 24th meeting of the parties (COP 24) is focussing on the follow up and implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement. Political discussions will therefore also focus on climate finance, emission targets, and the role of large states.

After successful lobbying by Environment Ministers to the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) the UK Government, it was agreed that for the first time ever the UKOTs would be directly represented and form part of the official UK delegation attending COP 24. The Environment Ministers Council of the UKOTs nominated Dr Kedrick Pickering, Deputy Premier of the British Virgin Islands as the political representative from the territories to attend the conference. Dr Liesl Mesilio, CEO and Chief Scientist of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Climate Change at Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar was then nominated as the scientist representing the OTs and providing technical support for Dr Pickering. Together they make up the OT delegation. As part of the conference, they will be meeting the Hon Nick Bridge, the UK Special Representative on Climate Change as well as the Hon Dr Roseanna Cunningham, the Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform.

Dr Pickering, Deputy Premier of the British Virgin Islands and head of the OT delegation said "It is important for us as the OTs to continue to make our voices heard on all the devastating effects of climate change on us as small island development states. We will lobby forcefully for whatever financial help can be had from the Green Climate Fund."

The aims of the OT delegation are to ensure that due consideration is given to the OTs in their ability and efforts to combat the effects of climate change. Raising international awareness on this is a key part of their agenda. Climate change adaptation and mitigation is also high on their list of priorities. With this in mind, their focus will be to network internationally and create opportunities for the OTs to attract green inward investment, displaying them as critical centres for research and



development in the fields of renewable energy deployment, smart cities and sustainable development.

Dr Roseanna Cunningham, Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform in Scotland said “ The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report is clear that we all need to act if we are to keep global temperature rise within the limits set by the Paris Agreement. The UK Overseas Territories are home to unique biodiversity and ecosystems and are on the front line of climate change as we’ve seen with recent hurricanes and extreme weather events.

It is essential that we are all able to contribute in a meaningful way to addressing this crucial issue. Scotland is a nation of islands and I look forward to sharing our expertise and experience and working together with the OTs on what is without doubt the defining issue of our time.”

The urgency to reach the key milestones set out in the Paris Agreement and deal with climate change places very high expectations on COP24. There are still many challenges of international climate cooperation but the atmosphere in Poland is positive and optimistic as countries strive to deliver on this critical agenda.