

After the hurricane

I have followed up the problems facing people in the Caribbean by talking to Ministers and attending briefings. More importantly, the Foreign Secretary has arrived in the area with many more UK people and equipment to support the recovery operations.

The UK sent the 16,000 tonnes Mount Bay auxiliary ship to the region with a helicopter, supplies and medical capability to take care of immediate needs on the British islands, and to help elsewhere. The French sent two 2,600 tonnes frigates to assist their islands and the Canadians sent a larger frigate. These ships also have helicopters. The Dutch have sent a smaller logistics vessel. The UK has helped clear runways and improve air access to the islands, and is assembling suitable air transport to help move people and supplies.

Ministers have ordered HMS Ocean, a 21,500 tonnes large ship loaded with supplies to sail from Gibraltar to the effected area with considerably more supplies and equipment on board. The operation will move from meeting immediate needs to longer term work to rebuild the infrastructure of the islands as events unfold. British consular help and advice is available on the islands and anyone needing assistance should contact the local personnel and help lines.