

Press release: UK stands by Caribbean and Overseas Territories

On her first overseas visit International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt has reaffirmed that the UK stands by those Overseas Territories and independent Commonwealth Caribbean countries devastated by the recent hurricanes and seen how British aid is helping to rebuild people's lives.

The International Development Secretary accompanied His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales during a visit to the British Virgin Islands and Dominica, where she thanked British humanitarian heroes and the military for working tirelessly on the relief efforts on the worst-hit islands. She also visited Antigua and Barbuda.

The Secretary of State set out a new £15 million package for Dominica (£12m) and Antigua and Barbuda (£3m) to help recovery and long-term reconstruction on the islands. This is in addition to a further £15m recently allocated to the affected Overseas Territories.

Speaking during the visit, Ms Mordaunt, said:

We can be proud that in their time of crisis the UK stepped up to provide the vital immediate relief that was fundamental in getting these islands back on their feet.

The UK aid mission was huge, covering small islands stretching more than 1,000 miles apart, where buildings, airports and infrastructure had been razed to the ground. I want to pay tribute to the governments of the Overseas Territories, our humanitarian staff and to the military effort, which has been absolutely essential in delivering relief.

Now as we move on from the immediate response phase, on to the long-term future of the islands, Britain will continue to stand by people whose lives were devastated. We are also talking to the international private sector who can support the reconstruction efforts to make sure the islands can build back, and better.

The support package, which brings the total UK contribution to £92m, will include £10m to help Dominica to rebuild critical infrastructure damaged during the hurricanes. In Dominica 97% of the water system was destroyed. This is one example of where UK funding could help rebuild so Dominica is better able to withstand future natural disasters.

The UK contribution to Dominica also includes an additional £2m for early recovery, building on the £5m committed in September, which will support:

- Repairs to homes and roofs, through the International Organization for

- Migration, to provide hundreds of households with urgent shelter;
- Debris clearance through the UN Development Programme and the National Employment Programme to help establish healthy and safe living conditions in communities, to enable agricultural land to be put to use once again, and to support restoration of economic activity and livelihoods;
 - Cash assistance through the World Food Programme, helping those worst affected to meet their needs flexibly and to revitalise the local economy.

For Antigua and Barbuda, the UK stands ready to assist with a £3m fund which will be deployed once the priorities for reconstruction on Barbuda are agreed with the local government.

For the Overseas Territories of Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands and Turks and Caicos, the £15m being announced today is delivering accelerated power reconnection and support to prisons, repairs to air and sea ports and support for policing. This is short-term funding to aid the territories' early steps to recovery.

The UK Government continues to work with the governments of the Overseas Territories as they develop their longer-term recovery plans.

At the World Bank meetings last month the UK announced a private sector task force will mobilise business to play a prominent role in the reconstruction in the Overseas Territories. The task force will identify and drive forward practical ways of increasing flows of private sector financial support to reconstruction in the region.

Notes to editors:

- The International Development Secretary will arrive into Antigua on Friday 17 November where she will visit the shelters where people evacuated from Barbuda are staying. The next day she will travel to the British Virgin Islands where she will meet volunteers for the Red Cross who played a huge role in rescues and aid distribution. That evening she will attend a reception where she will thank the military who have helped restore critical infrastructure on the islands, including power and water plants. On Sunday she will travel to Dominica to see the impact of the UK's response. She will meet farmers to discuss efforts to rebuild the island's agriculture and will travel to Pointe Michel, to meet residents and see the destruction Hurricane Maria caused. She will also have a chance to thank the humanitarian staff who have been coordinating the UK's response.
- Hurricane Irma (category 5) hit the British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos and Antigua and Barbuda at the beginning of September. It was closely followed by Hurricane Maria which affected Dominica, leaving 98% of buildings damaged and thousands without power. It was the first category five hurricane to hit the island in living memory, affecting almost the entire 70,000 population.
- The support announced is on top of £62m the government has committed so far to the hurricane response. The UK is also matching public donations

to the British Red Cross Appeal up to £3m.