



UNITED KINGDOM OVERSEAS TERRITORIES ASSOCIATION YOUTH SUMMIT 2025 COMMUNIQUÉ

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Thursday 27 February 2025

British Virgin Islands House, 15 Upper Grosvenor Street, London W1K 7PJ

Participants:

Chair - Malia Choucoutou (British Virgin Islands)

Jody-Ann Dunn (Anguilla); Kordell Smith (Anguilla); Najique Davis (Anguilla); Jasiah Durham (Bermuda); Katherine Gunther (Bermuda); Thea Shaye Foster (Cayman Islands); Brittany Evans (Cayman Islands); Jak Hurlstone (Cayman Islands); Marvis Chipunza (Falkland Islands); Benjamin Bahamonde Wastavino (Falkland Islands); Johan Perez (Gibraltar); Francis Devincenzi (Gibraltar); James Vinet (Gibraltar); Josiah Persaud (Montserrat); Hayley-Shai Kassie (Montserrat); Shary Barzey (Montserrat); Cheyenne Astwood (Turks and Caicos Islands); Saloman Dormeus (Turks and Caicos Islands); Demari Fulford (Turks and Caicos Islands).

We, the youth representatives of the United Kingdom Overseas Territories (OTs), convened at the Overseas Territories Youth Summit 2025, recognize the importance of advocating for diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunities for all members of our communities. We acknowledge the disparities in awareness, support, and policies within our Territories and the United Kingdom and call for a collective commitment to progress. This communiqué outlines our shared priorities and aspirations for a more inclusive and equitable future.

In reflection on recent events, we would like to especially acknowledge our solidarity with the Chagossian diaspora in their quest for self-determination.

Diversity and Inclusion as a Foundation for the Future of the OTs

We reaffirm that diversity and inclusion are fundamental to the prosperity and cohesion of our societies. Many communities within the OTs face systemic barriers that limit equal access to opportunities. We call for:

- Increased awareness and open discussions about diversity and inclusivity within our Territories.
- Collaboration across OTs to foster progress and promote inclusive policies.
- Representation of marginalized groups in policy-making processes.

Neurodiversity, Disability, and Impairment

We recognize the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities and neurodivergent conditions across the OTs. While progress has been made in specialized education, stigma, lack of awareness, and inadequate support remain significant concerns. To address this, we urge:

- The expansion of specialized education programs ensures that every young person has access to the support they need to thrive.
- Increased awareness campaigns to dismantle stigmas and educate parents, teachers, and peers on neurodiversity.



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- Greater government commitment to inclusive policies, including early intervention programs, investment in trained professionals, and the improvement of public amenities for individuals with disabilities.
- Involvement of neurodivergent individuals in shaping policies that directly impact their lives.
- Recognition and accommodation of 'hidden' disabilities, ensuring that all individuals receive the support they need.
- Expansion of vocational, trade school and dual-enrollment opportunities to provide diverse career pathways beyond academic-focused jobs.
- Support structures for neurodivergent students in higher education and the workplace, ensuring successful transitions and retention of talent within the OTs.

LGBTQ+ Rights and Inclusion

We affirm that equal human rights should be afforded to LGBTQ+ persons. Many individuals from the OTs feel compelled to leave their homes to live freely and authentically elsewhere. While progress has been made in some Territories, others continue to face discriminatory policies influenced by religious and societal factors. We call for:

- Recognition of fundamental human rights to LGBTQ+ individuals across all OTs.
- Legal and policy reforms to protect LGBTQ+ individuals from discrimination.
- Increased public education and awareness initiatives to combat stigma and promote tolerance and acceptance.
- Mental health support structures to address social isolation and its impact on well-being.
- Respectful dialogue that distinguishes between personal beliefs and legal human rights.

Immigration and Migration:

- Employment and Economic Impact
 - Many youth struggle to find job opportunities in their home countries after studying abroad.
 - Expats play a crucial role in financial services and international business but may also contribute to local job shortages.
 - Migration affects workforce dynamics, with guest workers often filling jobs rejected by locals.
 - Entrepreneurship is seen as a possible solution to job shortages.
- Brain Drain and Return Migration



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- Young people frequently leave for education and work, leading to concerns about brain drain.
 - Some regions have policies to encourage return migration, such as guaranteed jobs after apprenticeships.
 - Housing subsidies, repatriation programs, and job coordination with students abroad were suggested solutions.
- Cultural and Social Impact
 - Concerns about the loss of local identity and culture due to Americanization and external influences.
 - Challenges in integrating back into local communities after studying or working abroad.
 - Xenophobia and discrimination against certain migrant groups were highlighted as concerns.
 - Legal and Policy Issues
 - Some Territories prioritize jobs for locals by law, but discrepancies exist in how this is implemented.
 - Immigration policies, work permits, and status recognition create disparities, particularly for long-term foreign residents.
 - The impact of Brexit on cross-border movement and employment was a major concern in Gibraltar.
 - Worker Rights and Protections
 - Reports of discrimination against both locals and expatriates in the job market.
 - Issues with work permit revocation and limited protections for expatriate workers.
 - Suggestions included stronger worker protections, a grievance hotline, and mentorship programs for locals to take over expatriate-held roles.

Youth Participation and Policy-Making

As young people, we emphasize the importance of inclusive governance where all voices are heard. Policies affecting youth should not be made without youth involvement. We advocate for:

- Youth representation in decision-making processes across all levels of government.
- The establishment of youth advisory councils to contribute to policy discussions.
- Increased investment in youth leadership and advocacy programs.

Our Call to Action

We commit to working collaboratively as Overseas Territories to build a future that is inclusive, equitable, and representative of all individuals, regardless of ability, background, or identity. We urge our governments, institutions, and communities to:



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- Actively implement the recommendations outlined in this communiqué.
- Strengthen inter-territory cooperation to share best practices and resources.
- Engage with youth as equal partners in the shaping of our collective future.

Diversity and inclusivity are the building blocks of progress. By fostering an environment of acceptance, understanding, and opportunity, we can create a future where all individuals feel valued and empowered to contribute to society.

To be adopted after Overseas Territories Youth Summit 2025.