



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Louise.fox@fcdo.gov.uk

Statement today in Parliament from Governor, Jane Owen

Members of Parliament, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Afternoon.

I am greatly honoured to be taking part in this swearing in ceremony following the General Election in our Cayman Islands on 30th April. I know that His Majesty King Charles III, and the British Government, including our Minister for the Overseas Territories, Stephen Doughty, join me in celebrating Cayman's democratic tradition, and affirming the United Kingdom's commitment to continuing to build a strong partnership with the new Government.

We are gathered together today in this hallowed hall of Cayman's democracy to welcome and formally confirm the 19 representatives who were successfully returned by our electorate. Congratulations to you all, and I look forward to working with you as we plan to deliver for our people over the coming four years of this Parliament.

My thoughts are, in particular, with those newly elected members of Parliament, here for the first time. And, I wish a warm "welcome back" to all those who are returning to this chamber. I think I can also express, on all of our behalves, gratitude to those who stood for election, but were not successful – we recognise their endeavours and their ideas, and hope they will take heart from the experience and continue to contribute to the policy debate.

I want to take a moment here to reflect upon the last four years (two during my time as Governor) and acknowledge the leadership of Premier Juliana O'Connor Connolly and former Premier Wayne Panton, to your Deputies, your Ministers, and Parliamentary Secretaries over these past years. You have all shown great commitment and dedication in your service to our communities, and your achievements will remain part of the building blocks of our history.

Today brings us to the conclusion of the election process as we stand on the threshold of our incoming administration. Since I announced the date of the election back in December, I have observed the democratic path that has brought us to this ceremony in Parliament today. Our General Election was carried out, as is our tradition, in a free, fair and transparent manner, which should make us all proud.

In that context, I pay tribute to our Supervisor of Elections, Mr Wes Howell, his Deputies Mrs Sheena Glasgow and Ms Chevala Burke, the over 300 polling staff and volunteers, the police and special constables and many others who worked so hard to ensure a robust process.

Over these past weeks, I have been impressed by how our polling staff teams have enthusiastically dedicated their time and efforts in training and preparation. I have seen how the mobile and postal voting (which has doubled since the last election) has facilitated participation for those with reduced mobility, for our emergency services, our polling staff and for those travelling or living abroad.

I would also like to thank the electorate, our people, for taking part and for making your vote count. Collectively you help foster our sense of civil pride. In this election there were 25,643 registered voters in Cayman – an increase of over 2000 from the year 2021. We achieved a high voter turnout of 73% - which is impressive by any international standards, although I am sure we would like to see absolutely everyone who is eligible to vote making the effort to exercise that right, particularly among our young people who represent the future aspirations and opportunities of Cayman.

We were joined over the last weeks by an International Election Observer Mission from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. I am pleased to note that their initial findings are positive, confirming a robust ballot process and highlighting Cayman's inclusive and welcoming attitude to all voters. We are also grateful for the work of our Domestic Observer Mission of 7 persons, very ably led by Mrs Deborah Ebanks. We look forward to receiving detailed reports from both missions in due course, and I hope the incoming Government will take steps to address some key areas in their

reports for future development, including more transparent campaign financing, reviewing our constituency boundaries and developing our regulations around social media.

As we gather today, we also note the results of our Referendum held concurrently with the Election on 30 April. These results are clear, although they are not binding, and the Government will have discretion in how it proceeds to develop policies in regard to the three issues under deliberation in ways that best support the will and the interests of our people.

And to our new Premier and his Government: I pledge to work with you in partnership and trust, respecting the Government's autonomy in domestic affairs, ensuring together that we uphold good governance and the rule of law, the separation of powers, and integrity in all we do. I will also work with you to fulfil my own responsibilities for internal security in particular, as we protect and promote the security of our population in all areas of national life and work.

I want to thank today the Deputy Governor, the whole Civil Service, and the Attorney General and his Chambers, for the support you continue to afford me and the Cabinet in implementing the policies developed by the Government and approved by Parliament. We are fortunate in Cayman to benefit from a professional and passionate public service and everyone in that public service join with me looking forward with enthusiasm to tackling the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

As we prepare to welcome our incoming Government today, the United Kingdom reinforces its commitment to Cayman as a British Overseas Territory – recalling the enduring partnership that we both continue to enjoy. I hope that Honourable Members will join me today in recognising that this relationship brings significant benefits through the United Kingdom's position within the UN and in many international decision-making bodies in the fields of trade, finance, health, defence, climate and development, to name but a few. I believe there is much scope to develop our partnership further as we plan for the future. At a time of global dissonance and friction, it is a good moment to treasure close friends and shared values.

In closing, I want to say to all the Parliamentarians gathered today, to our new Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition: we are all privileged to serve the people of the Cayman Islands. Together we have so much to be thankful for. We treasure our islands and everything they stand for. And we treasure each other – including through our different backgrounds, different perspectives, different priorities.

It is often through finding a middle way that we can build a successful future. So, let us today also celebrate that special Cayman Kindness to each other, and the unity that it inspires. The last verse of our national song sums up eloquently our desire to respect and value each other:

When tired of all excitement
And glam'rous worldly care,
How sweet thy shores to reach
And find a welcome there,
And when comes on the season
Of peace, goodwill to man,
'Tis then I love thee best of all,
Beloved isle, Cayman.

God bless our beloved Cayman Islands.

ENDS

Notes to Editor

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