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Review of the UK–Overseas Territories Joint Declaration

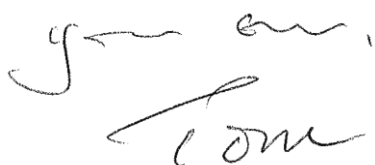
Thank you for the Government response to the policy letter of 17 April 2026 setting out the findings of the Constitution Committee’s inquiry into the 2023 UK–Overseas Territories Joint Declaration.

The Government response states that “the Government recognises the 1999 and 2012 Overseas Territories White Papers were produced under different administrations and in a different operating context, and recognises that significant geopolitical, climate, health, security and governance developments since then mean they no longer reflect the full range of current challenges and priorities. The Government also recognises the strength of feeling among OTs on the case for a further White Paper.” This amounts to agreement with our conclusion that the 2012 White Paper is now badly out of date.

It is therefore very disappointing that the Government has not also accepted the recommendation that flows logically from this, that a new White Paper is now urgently required, and should be brought forward in the current parliamentary session. The Government response states that “the Government remains open-minded about future options, including a new White Paper in due course, and will keep this under review considering progress on existing initiatives and changes in the wider operating environment.” Our inquiry demonstrated the overwhelming case for a new White Paper, and we therefore repeat our recommendation for the Government to take forward a White Paper in the current parliamentary session.

We also stress again the value of Bilateral Partnership Compacts as tools to apply the shared principles underpinning the UK’s relationship with the Overseas Territories to the specific circumstances in each Territory. We note the update the Government response provided on progress so far and urge you to continue to work with the Overseas Territories to develop these as a priority.

We will continue to monitor these matters, and we invite you to keep the Committee informed of relevant developments in the coming months.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Strathclyde', written in a cursive style.

The Rt Hon. Lord Strathclyde CH
Chair of the Constitution Committee

Members' interests

Committee Members' registered interests may be examined in the online Register of Lords' Interests at www.parliament.uk/hlregister.

For this letter, Members declared the following interests¹:

- Lord Burnett of Maldon chaired a Constitutional Tribunal set up by the Governor of Bermuda, which concluded its work in April 2025.
- Baroness Laing of Elderslie visited the Cayman Islands from 13-18 February 2026, as a factfinding mission with the Cayman Islands APPG—flights and accommodation costs were paid by the Government of the Cayman Islands.

Members had no other relevant interests to declare.

¹ These interests are published at Constitution Committee - Declarations of interest - Committees - UK Parliament.