



**Remarks by Chief Minister and Minister for Immigration  
Honourable Dr. D Orlando Smith, OBE  
Residence and Belonger Status Ceremony  
Central Administration Building Breezeway  
Tuesday, 22 November 2005  
9:00 a.m.**

**Keeping the Promise**

Thank you Mr. Turnbull  
Ladies and gentlemen  
Good morning

On Monday, 6 December 2004 this Government announced the introduction of a new Immigration Policy for residence and believer status.

At that time we promised to clear an outstanding backlog of applications for Residence and Belonger status, with regards to those who applied before 1 January 2003; having continuously lived in the Territory for over 20 years; and who qualified after the normal screening process. With the granting, today, of Residence and Belonger status more than 80 percent of the backlog has now been cleared.

Today — this Government is conferring status on a new group of individuals who have satisfied the requirements and have shown a desire to deepen their bond to this, our beloved Territory. I am aware of the fact that you have waited long and patiently for this day to arrive and now it is finally here!

In a few minutes time you will have the privilege of calling this Territory home by virtue of your new immigration status. Thirty of you will receive Belonger status and 90 of you, Residence status. You would note that I said “the privilege of calling this Territory home” and not the right; I am sure that you would appreciate the reason for this.

In the true spirit of friendship and common humanity this Territory continues to open its doors to individuals who have lived and worked here for many years. You, the latest group of recipients, have displayed good deportment and have convinced the Immigration Board and my Government that you have the character and qualities to justify our collective embrace as Residents or Belongers of these islands.

The act of gaining unrestricted status in any foreign land is akin to a sacred gift.

As you know all sacred gifts must be well guarded so they are not lost; after-all a gift is always a privilege and never an absolute right. That same attitude must apply to your new immigration status in this Territory. I urge your wisdom in treating it with dignity and deference.

Ladies and gentlemen, by awarding Residence or Belonger status, our Government and Territory have deposited great confidence and trust in you. Do not let us down!

With these certificates, you are no longer subject to immigration control; but, may I remind you that no one should disregard or ignore the authority of immigration officers upon returning to this Territory after traveling overseas.

I want you to continue being good law-abiding citizens, both in this Territory and also wherever you may travel. I also encourage you to be good ambassadors for this Territory at all times.

All around this world countries are becoming more particular when it comes to the granting of unrestricted immigration status, especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States of America and subsequent global war on terror, which rages on even at this very minute.

In just about every country the process of gaining citizen or even resident status has become very meticulous. It is imperative that we, in the British Virgin Islands, observe and implement equivalent rules and regulations, where appropriate, to ensure that we keep pace with the rest of the world in these very important matters.

In closing, let me reiterate a statement that I normally make at ceremonies such as this one.

As inhabitants of this earth, while we do not have the privilege to choose where we are born, we should be allowed the privilege to choose where we can live.

It is evident that my Government and our Territory have afforded you this privilege of choice today.

I have no doubts that it is a privilege of which you will be always proud.

Therefore I urge you to make the best of this choice as we all strive to make the BVI a better place in which to live.

Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of my Government and the people of the BVI — I welcome you to our family and congratulate you on your success in this venture.

I look forward with hope and expectation to the future and the wonderful possibility of what we might yet build in these islands – together.

Congratulations to all of you.