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SWEARING IN CEREMONY, COURT AND ASSEMBLY CHAMBER
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Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honour and a privilege to stand here as Governor. I am conscious that I follow a long and distinguished line of predecessors, many of whom I count as friends. So it is more than simply convention to pay tribute to all they have done, and in many cases continue to do, for the islands which they all have come to love. In particular, I know that it will be difficult to follow Alan Huckle, whose wisdom, knowledge and ability to make connections with everyone, I have long admired. But times change, and people move on. All I can do is promise to do my best to meet their high standards.

I should say at the outset, however, that one thing that has not changed is the United Kingdom Government's commitment to the Falkland Islands. Perhaps this should go without saying. Sukey Cameron, your outstanding representative in London, tells me that, at a recent party conference, a senior politician visiting the Falkland Islands' stand wondered why she still attended, year after year. After all, he said, "surely there can be no doubt in anyone's mind of the Islanders' right to self-determination?" In one sense he was right: in my recent calls on the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of State I was left in no doubt about the strength of the new Government's support for this right, expressed in your wish for continued United Kingdom Sovereignty. But some things bear repeating: when others in the region seek to raise the political temperature with tendentious and misleading assertions, it is as well, calmly, to remind everyone of the simple clarity of Article 1.2 of the United Nations Charter. Yes, we want friendly relations with other nations. But these must be based on respect for the principle of self-determination of peoples. And it is a principle we remain committed to defend.

While the United Kingdom's commitment to these Islands has not changed, the way in which the relationship is managed has changed, and will continue to do so.

Your new constitution is well-suited to a modern and vibrant democracy, giving a greater voice to the Islanders through the Legislative Assembly, and clarifying the way in which the various parts of machinery of Government work together. While in one sense it could be seen as constraining, in that it clearly delineates powers and responsibilities, it can also be seen as very much enabling, as it ensures that all have to work together cooperatively and constructively to achieve results. The power of mutually reinforcing institutions is considerable, and I will do all I can to ensure that it can be harnessed here.

In addition, you will know that shortly after the present United Kingdom Government took office, it decided, in the words of the Minister responsible for Overseas Territories, "to bring renewed focus to the UK's relationship with the Overseas Territories and the important strategic, historic and cultural links that we

share”. This has resulted in the commissioning of a review of the way that relationship works, which will consider, amongst other things, better defining the framework for the management of issues such as risk and good governance. It is early days yet; but I will, of course, keep you closely informed as thinking develops.

Processes and Mechanisms are important. But only if they help achieve results. And the next few years – the lifetime of the present Legislative assembly, and my term as Governor - are likely to be particularly important period for the Islands, as you seek to agree and take forward the Economic Development Strategy. There are many challenges and opportunities ahead, which the consultation paper sets out clearly. You already have good management structures in place for key sectors, such as agriculture, fisheries and tourism, although each of these, worldwide, is volatile. You are working to identify new sectors. But, of course, the sector that is likely to preoccupy thinking over the next few years is hydrocarbons. Even at the exploration stage, the effects of the hydrocarbon industry are being felt on the islands. Should production start, those effects will increase considerably, with political, social and environmental challenges. The Economic Development Strategy consultation paper seeks to address these points. But it is an exciting prospect, and – though I know you do not need this reassurance – the United Kingdom fully supports you in taking exploration forward. It is your legitimate business.

I am aware from my discussions that, as important as sustainable economic development is to the Islands, what is even more important is the unique environment in which you live. The beauty of the islands, and their incredible biological diversity, are famous throughout the world. Beyond that, however, is your reputation for careful stewardship of your environment. You have a strong biodiversity action plan, and a real commitment to implement it. I believe this is something that other countries can learn from, and hope that the islands can soon become a centre of excellence from which academics and practitioners throughout the region, and beyond, can benefit.

I am grateful to everyone for enabling this ceremony to take place so soon after my arrival. I am keen to meet as many people as possible, and visit as many places as possible, as quickly as possible. I was born with a dislike for sitting behind desks: I want to roll my sleeves up and get on with the job. Those of you here, looking at my uniform, will realise what a challenge that will be.

Finally, Louise and I have been touched by the warmth of your welcome. Thank you very much. I am conscious that, throughout this short speech, I have referred to those on the Islands as “you”. I hope that soon you will feel we have earned the right to say “we”.