

# Inaugural Speech of H.E. Peter Beckingham, Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands

9 October 2013

Your Honour The Speaker, His Lordship the Chief Justice, Honourable Premier, Ministers, Honourable Leader of the Opposition and the House of Assembly, Police Commissioner, Distinguished Visitors from TCI and overseas, thank you very much for the warm and friendly welcome, for which Jill and I are most grateful.

Can I say at the outset how honoured and privileged I am to be here today in the Turks and Caicos Islands?

Honoured, because of the trust placed in me by HM The Queen, the Secretary of State and the British Government to represent them here in your Islands.

Privileged, because of the opportunity to work with your Government, the opposition and the entire population, and to live here with my wife Jill for the next three to four years in one of the world's most beautiful environments.

I have just completed nearly four years working in one of the world's most populous countries, India, where I was the UK's Deputy High Commissioner, based in the commercial capital Mumbai – where there was probably a larger population in the street we lived in than in all of Grand Turk!

Among other things I was responsible there, and in earlier positions, for stimulating and nurturing a great deal of business and investment between the UK and India including with what is now Britain's biggest manufacturer, Tata, and one of our largest groups of shopping mall developers.

As Premier Ewing noted on my appointment, I bring a good deal of experience working with investors, and I hope that will prove useful to your Government as they seek to stimulate more business interest from overseas, which can only benefit the entire population.

I was intrigued to note, in reading a history of your Islands that the Premier's father, the Honourable Hilly Ewing, underlined to the State Council in 1971, "the dangers of passing hard laws to keep out investors from coming to our lands".

I have already had an opportunity to meet in London the UK investors in a major development in TCI, which they aim to complete by 2015 and earlier this week I was invited to meet the Chairman and others from another major investor in TCI, Carnival.

More investment will stimulate the economy, and I am delighted to hear that the Government has already succeeded in raising GDP, not only through capturing more business developments, but also pressing ahead with programmes designed to boost revenue.

Our joint objective must be to deliver sustainable, long term prosperity for the people of the Islands and, looking ahead, to enable TCI to finance its borrowing independently after 2016.

Growth and prosperity will be a key theme of discussions that the Premier will be having with the other Territories, and UK business, when we attend together the Joint Ministerial Council in London in November.

As the British Prime Minister noted recently his Government is also delighted that your Government, along with the other Caribbean Overseas Territories, signed up to recent commitments before a G8 meeting in June to a more open and transparent financial services sector.

That openness, combined with a continued, unrelenting focus on retaining and showing the highest standards of governance, will be crucial in developing the Islands reputation internationally, especially in the financial sector.

As well as strengthening the economy the preservation of your superb environment will of course be an important part of also retaining TCI's standing as one of not just the Caribbean but as one of the world's most appealing destinations.

I know personally one of the world's top business leaders who is returning here this Christmas to enjoy the environment with his family, and I hope I will be able to encourage more senior Indian visitors, for both pleasure and possibly business.

I have already had an opportunity to discuss sustainable development in tourism with some NGOs, and look forward to meeting more. I was pleased as well as to have the opportunity to attend a seminar on disaster management in the Caribbean when your Disaster Management Director, Dr Clerveaux was a participant.

I look forward to meeting in the next few weeks the heads of all the Public Service Departments and other bodies, and hearing from them about their work to strengthen TCI's environment, economy and way of life for the whole population. The influx of significant number of illegal immigrants, and the need to continue to enhance education and health, are major priorities for the public service.

At the start of any new assignment there are always a mixture of emotions and hopes: mine include humility in the face of the range of challenges, excitement at the prospect of working here, and commitment to do my level best for the people of your Islands.

I hope that gives you, the Government, the Opposition and, most importantly, the entire population an insight into my priorities as I and my wife begin this journey with you.

I look forward to meeting and listening, as soon as possible, to communities and individuals in every part of your Islands, and hearing about their aspirations; I know from previous appointments that you don't begin to understand a country by staying in its capital.

I would like my time here to be seen by the Government and the community at large as having purpose, being business-like and at all times constructive in order, as the Premier said, to work together in mutual respect for the betterment of the Turks and Caicos.

My wife and I are delighted and privileged to be here, and I am honoured to be sworn in as the thirteenth Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

May God help me and bless the Government and people of the Turks and Caicos Islands.