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**Remarks by THE LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS
THE HONOURABLE D. KURT TIBBETTS, JP., MLA
Cabinet Press Briefing
Thursday 7th August, 2008**

CONSTITUTIONAL MODERNISATION - THE WAY FORWARD

At the June 27 Cabinet Press Briefing I announced the government's decision to postpone the Constitutional referendum for a number of reasons including that July was not a suitable time to hold a poll as most Caymanians are off island during the summer months and because there was concern that there would be a low turn out if the referendum was held at that time.

However, the postponement of the referendum has by no means signaled the end of the constitutional discussion, but rather a redirection of the programme.

The month of July has seen renewed dialogue between myself as Leader of Government Business, representatives of the Foreign and Commonwealth

Office and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition with a view to moving forward with the Constitutional programme.

Accordingly, as of to date, it has been agreed by all that constitutional talks between a Cayman delegation and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will begin the week beginning September 29, 2008. The purpose of these talks will hopefully result in the production of a draft constitution to be presented to the Caymanian people early 2009 for consideration and their endorsement. It is expected that approximately 3 to 4 meetings will be required to negotiate a new constitution and the first meeting will be held here in Grand Cayman.

In preparation of these meetings, the government has proposed to the FCO that the Cayman delegation should consist of:

- Up to four Government MLAs
- Up to four of the Opposition MLAs
- A representative of the Chamber of Commerce
- A representative of the Cayman Ministers Association
- A representative of the C.I. Mission of Seventh Day Adventists.

The technical assistance of our Constitutional Advisor Professor Jeffrey Jowell QC and the Director of the Constitutional Review Secretariat and her staff will also continue during this time.

Likewise I have also taken the opportunity to respond to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition's letter of July 9 regarding the way forward. I

welcome his statement that we should now work together for the good of the country, even though I had hoped that the last seven months would have produced a constitutional position by the Opposition and that we would have by had an opportunity to discuss our differences with a view to arriving at a compromise.

Nonetheless, the government's intention to move forward for the good of the country continues, and I have written to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition highlighting the importance of using the time allotted wisely and to hold preliminary meetings in good faith with a view to agreeing the position on of the Cayman delegation and presenting a united front at the September 29th meeting with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

To facilitate this process, I have asked the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to provide me with the Opposition's position on each of the Revised Proposals and present a clear statement of any additional proposal that the Opposition recommends. It is hoped that the Opposition's position will be provided latest, the end of August, in good time for our internal negotiations early September.

At this time I also would like to take this opportunity to thank the Constitutional Review Secretariat for its outstanding job. I am sure that when the Honourable Leader of the Opposition finally presents his proposals and recommendations to the government and country the technical assistance of the Constitutional Review Secretariat and Professor Jeffrey Jowell QC will prove invaluable to the Cayman delegation before, during and after the negotiations with the FCO.

I look forward to updating the Caymanian people as major developments occur. On behalf of the government I would like to congratulate the Caymanian people for their keen interest in the constitutional future of these islands during the last seven months and for engaging the government on the issues.

This exercise has been a fine example of the dedication of the Caymanian people to see this process through, now it is for us your representatives to truly represent you and agree a position for the country with a view to successfully negotiating a draft constitution for your future consideration and vote in the referendum to come.