

99TH Annual American Association of Ports Authorities Convention

Halifax, Canada

Response to Welcome by V. Victor O'Neal

Chairman, Caribbean Delegation

Managing Director, BVI Ports Authority

Good Morning Chairman, special invitees, officers of the American Association of Port Authorities, fellow delegates, ladies and gentlemen, a warm welcome to all. It is a distinct honour to be here and to bring greetings from my colleagues scattered all over the Caribbean to this 99th AAPA Annual Convention.

A sincere thank you to our gracious hosts for the hospitality and welcome extended to us all. As you have heard, we are in for an exciting meeting. At this peak hurricane season, I can safely say that the Caribbean as a whole has not suffered much damage but must add that after over a decade of being spared the British Virgin Islands has sustained structural and landscaping damages from Hurricane Earl. Our little port in the heart of the city has been hit directly and has endured tremendous damage to the roof and windows on the top floor and our other ports had minor damage to the buildings. Consequently, all our ports were closed for two days. This may seem insignificant but considering the number of passengers commuting to the US Virgin Islands and our sister islands then one can appreciate the impact on our fragile economy that depends heavily on tourism.

I recall that last year's AAPA Convention in Galveston, Texas followed on the heels of Hurricane Ike and how remarkably Port Director Steve Cernak and the people of Galveston recovered from that devastation. I am taking a page out of your book Director Cernak.

We are going through some difficult economic challenges that require careful stratagems to keep us afloat. I trust that we will work together as a well balanced team and seize every opportunity available here to iron out our issues while motivating each other.

As we approach the centennial year of the AAPA, let us reflect on the numerous achievements that have been realized and look forward with much anticipation what lies ahead.

May we have a successful Convention.