

Bermuda Must Abide by International Cannabis Standards

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Bermuda's proposed changes to cannabis laws could receive backing from the UK, provided they fully comply with international conventions that both the island and the United Kingdom have agreed to uphold.

Andrew Murdoch, the Governor of Bermuda, recently suggested that the controversial Cannabis Licensing Act might succeed if amended to align with these international legal

obligations. Mr Murdoch took up the post in January, following his predecessor, Rena Lalgie, who in 2022 withheld Royal Assent from the Act, citing inconsistencies with United Nations conventions.

The Cannabis Licensing Act was initially presented by Bermuda's Progressive Labour Party government as part of its pre-election platform ahead of the February 2025 polls. Mr Murdoch praised the Government for a "carefully constructed" policy on cannabis use but emphasised the importance of adhering to international treaty commitments.

"It's vital to recognise the relevant international conventions and treaty instruments that bind the UK regarding cannabis," Mr Murdoch said.

In March, Bermuda's Premier, David Burt, indicated a willingness to revise the 2022 legislation to secure Parliamentary approval, acknowledging the need to address concerns about international law compliance.

"The UK Government has been clear on the necessity of adhering to its international legal obligations," Mr Murdoch told The Royal Gazette. "Whether dealing with issues like Ukraine or Israel and Gaza, compliance with treaties remains fundamental."

The Governor clarified that the 2022 legislation did not fully meet British obligations but indicated there is scope for further dialogue on the issue.

"Is this the end of the discussion? Perhaps for that piece of legislation, but generally, there are ongoing conversations about UK Government policy versus the legal limits set by international treaties, which do not always coincide," he explained.

"Countries may adopt stricter domestic policies than required by treaties, but cannot go beyond those international legal limits. Bermuda must consider where its cannabis policy aligns with those boundaries."

He encouraged an open and nuanced discussion on how Bermuda's cannabis policy could proceed within the constraints of international law.

On another matter, the Governor echoed the Government's stance regarding Bermuda's bid for full membership of the Caribbean Community (Caricom). Recent debates in the House of Assembly suggested a referendum on the issue is unlikely.

Mr Murdoch said a draft agreement is expected to be presented in due course, and the public will have the opportunity for full consultation.

“As with any significant matter, I encourage the population to engage fully in the consultation process,” he added.

The evolving cannabis legislation and Caricom membership discussions highlight Bermuda’s efforts to balance local policy ambitions with international obligations and diplomatic relationships.