



**Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
to the United Nations**

685 3rd Ave., Suite 1108, New York, NY 10017 • Tel: (212) 599-0950 • Fax: (212) 599-1020 •

svgmission@gmail.com | <http://svg-un.org>

Statement

by

H.E. Hon. Dr. Ralph E. Gonsalves

Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

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Mr. President, Your Excellencies:

St. Vincent and the Grenadines congratulates His Excellency Mr. Dennis Francis of Trinidad and Tobago for his country's assumption of the Presidency of the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. [Trinidad and Tobago, a central column of our Caribbean neighborhood, a magnificent component of our Caribbean civilization and its institutional expression, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), will undoubtedly head this Presidium with distinction, with honor, in accord with the highest ideals of our United Nations.]

We reaffirm, too, our solidarity with the governments and peoples of the Kingdom of Morocco and Libya at this their current hour of peril consequent upon the recent natural disasters. We express sincerest condolences for the immense loss of lives.

Your Excellencies, across the world today, in large measure, men and women are pained, gripped with melancholy, and are adrift; they are perplexed, even confused, at the complexities and challenges of our

human condition, which is awash with multiple contradictions, from which arise a yearning for sustainable resolutions.

Large numbers of people, globally, are possessed of an admixture of resignation, a sense of futility, a routinization of indifference — even cynicism; and yet at the same time, there is resident in them—in us— an elemental hopefulness and a sense of social solidarity, a search for justice and goodness, a pursuance of equity and equality, and a quest for peace, security, and prosperity for all — not only for a privileged few in a handful of privileged nations.

[Which side of the dialectical push and pull will in the end win out in this life and death struggle? The one which embraces a diet of lamentations, learned helplessness, hegemony, domination, superordination and subordination, which all spring from the less uplifting, even darker, corners of life, living, and production? Or the side which elevates “the genius of the peoples” from which emerges a grounded faith, fresh hope, and a love that looks on tempests and is never shaken, in a better world bereft of dastardly power plays, obsessive vainglory, imperial pursuits, or hegemonic ventures?]

It is widely acknowledged that the global political economy is broken and needs fixing, not by tinkering here or there, but through fundamental restructuring of a kind that endures for the benefit of all humanity, especially those who are disadvantaged, dispossessed or marginalised. It is widely accepted, too, that the vital Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will not be attained by 2030; indeed, there will be a significant deficit for practically every developing country. Similarly, it is widely recognized that “the climate change agenda” is stalling, in some respects, reversing, with dire consequences for humanity, particularly the most vulnerable countries. At the same time, too, war and conflict rage senselessly across the globe; in at least one case, Ukraine, the principal adversaries — the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and Russia — may unwittingly open, the gates to a nuclear Armageddon.

Contemporary drivers of insecurity and conflict are all jostling in an invidious march to infamy and human misery. The expansive and expanding list includes: Racism and Xenophobia; the continuing oppression of women under a patriarchy in too many countries; the

seemingly uncontrollable chariots of artificial intelligence; threatening pandemics and the anti-people consortia of Big Pharma; poverty and food insecurity; ignorance, miseducation, and disinformation; terrorism and its associated malcontents; the illegal trafficking in persons and narcotics; the subversion of participatory democracy and human rights; the failure and/or refusal of former colonial powers to entertain just and legitimate demands for reparations to repair the contemporary legacies of underdevelopment caused by native genocide and the enslavement of African bodies; and the failure and/or refusal of the major emitters of greenhouse gases to cough up the requisite resources to the affected vulnerable countries for the required adaptation, mitigation, loss and damage. And the list goes on! The heard melodies are troubling; those unheard are damning.

Excellencies, powerful countries and blocs of like-minded states are unwilling or unable to fashion inclusive and efficacious modalities, through a genuine multi-lateralism, to address the extant global challenges facing humanity. Their reflex actions in quest of a continuing imperium or an emergent hegemony are dressed up as

self-serving calls for a “New World Order”— all sauce and gall but of little or no substance, difficult to swallow. From the tough trenches of the periphery, St. Vincent and the Grenadines poses, yet again, in response, three haunting queries: What’s New? Which World? And Who Gives the Orders?

In this context, the urgency of genuine reform of the United Nations Security Council is to be embraced after decades of futile bickering and foot-dragging. [We must cease the continuing folly of talking to the death necessary and sensible initiatives simply because this or that member of the Permanent Five considers it unworthy, even if the rest of humanity holds a contrary view.] Surely, it is long overdue for sensible compromises on this matter, reflective of the contemporary condition of our world.

In these troubled and uncertain times enveloped in limitations and weaknesses, there are nevertheless strengths and possibilities. The wise and mature political leadership of this collective, the United Nations, is immediately required in this great endeavour to put things right for humanity: [To reduce, as far as is humanly practicable, our

global limitations and weaknesses; to enhance our strengths and possibilities; and to work, meaningfully, in solidarity with each other, despite our differences in systems of government or ideological outlooks, to make a much better world for all nations and peoples. This is not an infantile or unrealistic agenda free of conflicts or dissatisfactions; it is not the pious mantra with the hopeful proclamation, without more, that “weeping may endure for the night but joy cometh in the morning”. On the contrary, it is a sober, plaintive submission for understanding, wisdom and maturity by the collective leadership of this august body at this pivotal historical juncture.]

[It is a truism that, usually, men and women make history only to the extent that the circumstances of history permit them so to make; they do not normally make history as they please or under self-selected circumstances, but under conditions existing already, encompassing, too, baggage inherited from the past, inclusive of ideas which oft-times weigh like a nightmare on the minds, and hurl stinging arrows on the souls of the living. However, these objective circumstances can be marinated, and, in some cases, altered,

through the initiatives of leaders, in solidarity with each other and their respective peoples, for uplifting purposes in the interest of all. History is replete with kindred examples.] We gathered here, as representatives of national or regional interests, are not, and cannot reasonably be, agents of purely impersonal forces driving humanity, inexorably, to further peril and even damnation.

Notwithstanding the imperfections of a multi-lateral system, grounded in international law and civilised norms, we at this General Assembly, in concert with each other and our peoples, can be the fresh hope, the beacon, the light, not merely to inspire, but to draw out of each other and our respective peoples a goodness, a high quality, and a nobility which oft-times we may not even as yet know that we possess.

In the process, let us clear certain ideational cobwebs from our brains. It is, for example, wholly unhelpful to frame the central contradictions of our troubled times as revolving around a struggle between democracies and autocracies. St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a strong liberal democracy, rejects this wrong-headed

thesis. It is evident to all right-thinking persons, devoid of self-serving hypocrisy, that the struggle today between the dominant powers is centred upon the control, ownership, and distribution of the world's resources. [It has been so from time immemorial; colonialism and imperialism have in fact exacerbated the exploitation of the resources of developing countries for the gain of the rulers of the colonial, the imperial, citadels of monopoly capitalism.] The struggle has been, and is, about who gets what, when, where, and how. Civilised life and living now demands fairness, justice, peace, security, and prosperity for all. This civilised goal is unlikely ever to be satisfactorily attained if the strong and powerful continue, with impunity, to do what they can, and the weak and fragile suffer what they must, despite their oft-times enfeebled resistance.

Throughout history, powerful countries exhibit a certain schizophrenia: They possess and deploy all their instruments of domination; yet they are racked by bewildering insecurities which frequently turn them into beasts of unreason to their own detriment; in this way, they over-reach and sow seeds of their own down-fall; in the process, sadly, they hobble humanity needlessly.

Excellencies, let us accord mature consideration to a matter of immediacy in “Our America” — to use José Martí’s telling formulation. We urge the United States of America, our friend, the most powerful and economically dominant country since the dawn of human civilisation, a nation which espouses humane values, to end its unilateral and oppressive sanctions and impositions, that are contrary to international law, which have been rolled out against Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. [Such actions are unworthy of a great power; and they are counter-productive in every material particular. Engagements based on mutual respect, without pre-conditions and without unilateral sanctions or impositions, are sensible, practical paths for mature leaders of understanding and wisdom to pursue in the interest of peace, security, and prosperity. In a world so racked by awesome existential challenges, these egregious punitive measures against the heroic people of Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela reek of vengeance, and possibly more. I plead with our American friends in Washington to act justly, show goodness, and exercise power with an ennobling restraint as befits greatness. Isolation, exclusion, sanctions and unjust declarations

make no sense in today's interconnected world.] It is also plain silly and factually incorrect to label Cuba a sponsor of state terrorism—a label prompted by partisan domestic politics of South Florida; but it hurts the Cuban people massively and unnecessarily.

The sanctions and coercive measures against Venezuela, including the weaponizing of the US dollar, have caused the collapse of the Petro Caribe Agreement which delivered substantial benefits to over a dozen Caribbean countries, including St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We in the Caribbean have thus become collateral damage.

At the same time, it is long overdue for the Republic of China (Taiwan) to be brought in from the diplomatic cold. The magnificent Chinese civilisation, through the fever of its history, has delivered to the contemporary world, in practical terms, more than one recognisable national political expression, institutionally. [Taiwan has a population of 23 million, a nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of some US \$800 billion and an annual per capita GDP of US \$34,000; it is the 21st largest economy in the world, and is in the top-tier of

producers of strategic inputs for information communications technology.] Surely, Taiwan's quest for participation in relevant specialized agencies of the United Nations is reasonable and ought to be accommodated. Repeatedly, Taiwan has shown itself to be a responsible member of the international community. Peace across the Taiwan Straits is an imperative for the prosperity, and security of the world.

[Excellencies, science and right reason have established, compellingly, that the risk levels of human-induced disasters, inclusive of climate change phenomena, nuclear weapons, and newer technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), are far greater today than at any time since the origin of the human species. What are we doing about these and other existential threats? Not very much at the global level.]

On the bundle of issues touching and concerning climate change, global warming, biodiversity challenges, land degradation and desertification, there is a veritable Tower of Babel; there is an overabundance of sweet-sounding lyrics by the major emitters but they

turn out to be bitterly deceptive. A lack, or an insufficiency, of meaningful corrective action by the irresponsible climate polluters—countries and companies—constitute unpardonable, egregious wrongs, indeed it is a species of barbarism. [All of this is objectively documented by independent observers. Still, there are disingenuous efforts by some leaders in the developed world to attend or surround the virtuous lady of climate truth with a bodyguard of lies.]

The upcoming Conference of Parties under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in the United Arab Emirates is a critical test of humanity's commitment to save our planet from the ravages of man-made climate change. We know the oft-repeated benchmarks and the corrective agenda: [the containment of global warming to under 1.5 degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels; the requisite climate finance package for adaptation and mitigation; the adequate funding of a compensatory mechanism for loss and damage; the sustainable use of oceans; the preservation and enhancement of tropical forests; and the alteration of life, living and production now and for the foreseeable future to save our Mother Earth from becoming a living wasteland for billions

of people.] In this composite package of policies and measures, especial consideration has to be accorded the most vulnerable countries such as Small Island Developing States in the Caribbean and the Pacific, and the poorer communities in climate-distressed areas of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Excellencies, criss-crossing the issue of financing for development in the era of climate change and the down-side ramifications of the structural distortions in the global economy for poor, and vulnerable middle-income, countries, is the Bridgetown Initiative 2.0, proposed by Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados and endorsed already by the Caribbean Community, the Community of States of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Association of Small States (AOSIS) and dozens of countries in the African Union, and elsewhere. This progressive initiative contains creative financing proposals that would result in much more resources on highly concessionary terms for poor and vulnerable regions [from developed countries, the international financial institutions (IFIs) and the private sector globally; the setting-up of a well-resourced Green Bank; the reform of the IFIs including the World Bank and the International Monetary

Fund (IMF); and particular sensitive treatment of debt-distressed developing countries.] The Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) championed by vulnerable middle-income countries, including those in the Caribbean, finds a place in this reform mix of financing for development. St. Vincent and the Grenadines urges strong support of the Bridgetown Initiative 2.0 and the MVI by this United Nations General Assembly.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines also endorses the initiative of The Bahamas to remove from the OECD—the rich club—any global authority it assumes for suzerainty on international taxation and related matters. Properly they ought to be resident in the United Nations.

[Excellencies, it is to be noted that some developed countries and even some functionaries in the IFIs are giving lip-service to the Bridgetown Initiative while at the same time seeking to rob it of its progressive content and intent, by introducing or inserting metaphoric Trojan Horses. The developing countries are alert to these shenanigans, which will be resisted. We will not roll-over-and-

play dead; we will make accommodations that we consider necessary and desirable in the circumstances, but even so, we will not abandon our core principles of fairness, equity, justice, and reasonableness; and be assured, we will resist creatively in the interest of our people's humanisation. We know from our history and our contemporary realities that we in the developing world cannot survive and thrive unless we resist creatively, in solidarity with one another and with progressive peoples in developed nations.]

Excellencies, developing countries must refrain from being mere prideful villagers obsessed with immediate trifles and blind themselves to the far more compelling issues beyond their individual control, and which demand a unifying solidarity with others to confront successfully their travails. Poor vulnerable, climate-distressed and resource-challenged developing countries are absolutely fed up and insulted by the unfulfilled perennial promises of the developed world on climate financing. [The barbarism of recklessness on continuing climate damage cannot be assuaged by a nickel-and-dime approach. And we who suffer most must stop any expression of docile gratitude for climate trinkets; it un-becomes us.]

Excellencies, in September 2015, at our United Nations, all nations signed on to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), targeted for achievement by 2030. [Through the changes scenes of life and the global political economy, including the COVID pandemic, natural disasters, wars and conflicts, sharp contradictions in monopoly capitalism, and economic downturns, it is now widely agreed that the SDGs are unlikely to be achieved in the declared timeframe.] Earlier this week, the bundle of issues centred on the SDGs were accorded especial consideration and, admirably, a refreshing of them has been canvassed. But the critical issue of a sufficiency of financing for development, including climate financing and reparations, remains the proverbial elephant in the room to be effectively harnessed to serve the deserving. Here again, agreed commitments entered into must be translated into real actions.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines has been insisting as a part of the conversation on the SDGs, that there must be a special carve out for reparations from European countries for the legacies of underdevelopment engendered by native genocide and the

enslavement of African bodies — horrendous crimes against humanity. In this matrix, an especial focus is required for our Haiti. The case for reparatory justice within the framework of the SDGs is compelling, and answerably strong. The time for reparations has come; this demand will not go away. Africa, the Caribbean, our Diaspora, and others who hanker for a just world insist on it.

[The Caribbean Community insists that the United Nations embrace this just demand for reparatory justice. The African Union, the Community of States of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAC), and some other nations have endorsed CARICOM's Ten-Point Agenda on Reparations.]

Excellencies, in our Caribbean Community, one of our member-states, Haiti, continues to be confronted by multiple existential challenges of immediacy lodged in the political, security, social, humanitarian, and environmental domains. CARICOM is seeking to facilitate a political solution by engaging the widest cross-section of stakeholders to fashion a government of national unity to replace that which is bedeviled by a lack of legitimacy and effectiveness, and to

prepare the way for democratic elections in a suitable time-frame. [The political actors in Haiti, upon whose agreement this broad-based government is to be grounded, are required to own this process and hammer out the necessary compromises. Thus far, this has not happened, but the Eminent Persons Group of CARICOM are determined to persist with their efforts to build a desirable political consensus.] The United Nations' Security Council cannot reasonably stand askance from this process in circumstances in which the criminal gangs, inclusive of those with links to the government and National Police, are essentially in control of the capital city and major productive centres in the country. Security supports, not an imperial invasion, are required to accompany a political consensus so as to bolster humanitarian assistance, economic development, and a more orderly way of life and living. Huge economic assistance — a veritable Marshall Plan —, financed by the international community, has to be mounted in tandem with the political, security, and humanitarian initiatives. The situation is dire and growing worse by the day. We must not allow ourselves the luxury of Haiti fatigue.

Indeed, the guns and bullets in the hands of the Haitian gangs are also in the bosoms of assorted criminals across the Caribbean and Latin America, and sourced mainly from the USA. The US, the Caribbean and Latin American governments must work together, more earnestly, to stop this massive flow of guns and bullets.

Across the globe, resolutions to wars and perennial conflicts are urgently required. The terrible situations, for example, in Ukraine, Palestine, several countries in Africa, and elsewhere, cry out for peaceful settlements between the warring parties. It is inhumane and wrong for the Palestinian people to be enduring colonial domination and externally-induced suffering for decades. [Israel and its powerful global allies must listen attentively to world opinion on this matter, as has been repeatedly and overwhelmingly expressed in this General Assembly, and act accordingly.] Similarly, Russia, NATO, and Ukraine should embrace peace, not war and conflict, even if peace has to rest upon a mutually agreed, settled condition of dissatisfaction. And the African Union knows that it has to redouble its leadership efforts in sorting out troubling conflicts in much of Africa.

In our America, CELAC, led currently by the Pro Tempore Presidency of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, is at the forefront of seeking to fortify our political cooperation and enhance integration efforts. CELAC is building vital bridges with the European Union, the African Union, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the BRICS, the Arab League, and the USA. All of this is designed to promote peace, security, prosperity, and sustainable development for all. It is vital that our shared experiences be translated into shared expressions, including institutional expressions, to get the practical work done to enhance life, living, and production for all humanity. And CELAC ought to be allowed to follow the African Union into membership of the G20. Let us be more inclusive in solving intractable problems in practical ways. I thus welcome the proposed initiative of the European Union to initiate an institutional summit between the EU, the African Union, CELAC, ASEAN, and with the Secretary General of the United Nations. I await the details.

[Excellencies, given that two or more countries, singly or in blocs, are vying for top billing as the world's most dominant economy and

military power, it is inevitable that these very countries become central to any conversation on the refashioning or recalibrating of the global political economy in the interest of all peoples.] It is evident that the old ways of more or less unfettered dominance or power exercised by any one nation or bloc are unlikely to persist; other power centres are emerging, or have emerged, even if not yet to the extent of fashioning a sustained multi-polarity, but signaling, in practical terms, that uni-polar dominance has lost, or is losing, its sway. Potentially, this shift represents, at one and the same time, both a potential for a dangerous reaction to the ruptures of the old order, and a glorious opportunity for a mature acceptance of the necessity and desirability of a rebalancing of global power relations. Again, I emphasize the need for mature and wise political leadership to chart a better way forward through an efficacious multilateralism in the interest of all humanity. [At this UN General Assembly less powerful or less influential countries must speak to this issue courageously and with clarity.]

The days of masters and vassals are over; the days of imperialism are drawing nigh; and the would-be hegemons waiting in the wings with

their illusions of grandeur, past or imagined, are bound for disillusionment. In any New World Order, the metaphoric lions and the lambs, must lie down, and rise up, together, in mutual self-interest, and for a much better world. This world of eight billion people deserves better. We in the developing world reject the crumbs; there is a loaf to be shared reasonably, with equity; and we must be at the deciding and the eating table. Those who think that we speak with our heads in the clouds are profoundly mistaken; we know that in the great cathedral of the sky, there is a sun for steeple; it illuminates our pathways; we see things clearly. Men and women who see things clearly will never give up in their pursuit of peace, goodness, equity and justice. We do so with urgency, yet with a patience and a calm knowing that even now the greener leaves explode, sun brightens stone, and all the river burns.

As I conclude, a summation from one of my country poets is apt: “*We are all time; only the future is ours to desecrate; the present is the past; and the past our fathers’ mischiefs*”. In order to avoid the desecration of the future, we must be serious about the challenges at hand and work assiduously, in solidarity, to address them satisfactorily. To be

sure, there is no perfection this side of eternity, but we can do far better than we have been doing. Time is not on our side! Let us sleep not to dream, but dream to change the world, for the better!

Thank you!