



# **ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

**PERMANENT MISSION OF ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
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Statement

by

**H.E. Dr. The Hon. Ralph Gonsalves  
Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**

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United Nations**

**24<sup>th</sup> September 2004  
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*Check against delivery*

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

This 59<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly, coincides with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the independence of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The last quarter of a century has been a mighty challenge for the people of my country to develop in a world increasingly indifferent to the particular problems of small, poor developing states. But it is a challenge that the citizens of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have embraced with courage, fortitude and hope - never doubting our ability to survive, thrive and ultimately prosper as we contribute to the uplifting of our unique, independent, distinctive and noble Caribbean civilisation. Thus far, our country has progressed but much more remains to be done. We look forward to succeeding in our quest for self-mastery.

Mr. President, I congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the 59<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly. We are confident that you will perform your duties with dignity and skill. Let me just say, Mr. President, that you do have a hard act to follow. Your predecessor, our esteemed Mr. Julian Hunte, is a distinguished son of the Caribbean, who hails from our sister island, St. Lucia. He made us proud in his stint as President of the General Assembly.

Mr. President, the peoples of the Caribbean and the Southern United States are still traumatized by the devastation caused by hurricanes in this season. Jamaica, the Bahamas, the Cayman Islands, Haiti, Cuba and other Caribbean countries, including my own, have been severely affected, but our nearest neighbour, Grenada, has suffered cataclysmic destruction and is now in a state of national crisis. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and other Caribbean nations have reached out a helping hand to Grenada but the magnitude of the devastation in that country on September 7<sup>th</sup> is beyond the capacity of the Caribbean to address satisfactorily by itself. Indeed, Grenada has become an international responsibility.

I therefore reiterate the call of the Caribbean Community, CARICOM, for the urgent convening of an International Donors Conference to address the matter of Grenada's utter devastation and its reconstruction.

Simply put, Grenada has moved from the status of a middle-income developing country with a modern, sophisticated society and a well run, democratic state machinery to a devastated land in a matter of three hours of pounding from Hurricane Ivan. Today in Grenada there is no economy, no functioning government as we have come to accept that term, and a highly traumatised civil society.

Arising from all this is a strategic issue in our quest to turn Grenada's setback into a regional advance for a more profound and meaningful Caribbean integration. Hurricane Ivan has spoken eloquently to the fact that nature has made our region one; history further has moulded us as one people who were drawn originally from diverse lands and cultures. Yet we in the Caribbean continue to buck, rather

than accommodate ourselves appropriately to both nature and history. This is a species of vanity which we can ill-afford.

It is tragic, Mr. President, that it takes a catastrophe of this nature to hammer home the point that the Small Island Developing States have been making for some time - namely the need for Special and Differential Treatment because of, among other things, our vulnerability to natural disasters. I repeat, with no exaggeration, that Hurricane Ivan, in a few short hours, reduced Grenada to rubble, and, at a stroke, undid the hard work and achievements of its people since independence in 1974. We in St. Vincent and the Grenadines feel the pain and know that but for the grace of God and the vagaries of nature, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines would have suffered the same fate.

Accordingly, Mr. President, the crisis in Grenada, occasioned by nature, prompts St. Vincent and the Grenadines to give the highest priority to the International Conference in Mauritius in January of next year when the specific and distinct problems of Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) will be highlighted. We will be stressing the need for the international community to take urgent action on the problem of global warming and climate change which, if left unchecked, could lead in this century to a global human and economic calamity. The international community must become focused on the avoidance of this threatened apocalypse.

## HAITI

Mr. President, since we met here last year, CARICOM has faced another crisis in our region — this time, political — as one of our member states, Haiti, descended into chaos, violence and anarchy. We saw an elected Head of State removed in circumstances which bring no credit to our Hemisphere. We remain deeply troubled by the controversial interruption of the democratic process which took place in the early hours of the morning of 28<sup>th</sup> February in Port-au-Prince this year. It is worth remembering that CARICOM States were instrumental in preparing a "Plan of Action" for Haiti to ensure that the Constitution of that country was respected and to create the basis for mobilisation of resources to avert a humanitarian disaster. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of February, 2004, CARICOM was successful in having the matter raised at a meeting of the Security Council. We came armed with a draft resolution. We pleaded for the international community to respond to the rapidly deteriorating situation in Haiti. The resolution presented by CARICOM to the Security Council was "noted" but politely ignored. The rest is history. The government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines are anxious to help the Haitian people in the sorry plight in which they currently find themselves. But before engaging with the so-called interim government of Haiti, we must see, among other things, unequivocal evidence on the ground, of advances in democracy and freedom, and credible guarantees of free and fair elections within a reasonable time. A regime which tries at midnight an indicted murderer, who was hailed by the very regime as a liberator, and frees him before the first cock crows, has failed the most elemental tests of justice, freedom and democracy.

## SUDAN

Mr. President, the dire situation in the Darfur region of the Sudan has caused great distress to the government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. My own personal grief prompted me to write letters in May of this year to several world leaders, including the distinguished Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, offering the slender resources of my country to assist in whatever small way we could, to alleviate the suffering of the afflicted Sudanese people. Most of those I addressed responded positively. It is true that, thanks in large measure to the diligence of various journalists and the news media, this tragedy has now been brought forcefully to international attention. But the question we must nevertheless ask ourselves is this: has the international community reacted in an appropriate way to this calamity or have we merely engaged in the usual perfunctory and routine denunciations? The images and reports coming out of Darfur are a chilling reminder of man's inhumanity to man and a haunting condemnation of those who can truly help but who stand by idly or down play this humanitarian disaster callously. In this regard, the government of Sudan must shoulder its responsibility to its citizens and to humanity.

Mr. President, three months have gone by since I wrote to the Secretary-General and this massive human tragedy continues to unfold before our appalled eyes. I suggest, Mr. President, that we cannot allow the blood bath to continue. We must save those who can still be saved In what have become the killing fields of Africa. The genocide of yesterday in Rwanda stands as a monument of shame to the international community. As an international community we must, today, take the shame out of our eyes in Darfur with urgent practical measures. A similar effort is required to address the harsh conditions of life of other peoples, including the heroic nation of Palestine, whose humanity is daily assailed by outside forces.

## TERRORISM

Mr. President, I would like to express, on behalf of the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, our deepest sympathy to the Government and people of the Russian Federation on the tragic and inexplicable events in Beslan on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September. A tragedy of this magnitude, and especially the slaughter of so many innocent children, cannot fail to cause heartfelt sorrow. Since September 11th, 2001, the fight against international terrorism has intensified on all fronts. It is right and proper that rich and poor countries be engaged in this on-going war on the barbarism of terror. St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a reliable partner in this global struggle against the evil of terrorism. Still, it is necessary for me to point out that the cost of being a reliable participant in this war is a heavy burden on the slender resources of developing countries like St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Our international obligations and circumstances necessarily pull us into this war which we did not occasion or initiate. Yet we bear this imposed burden with equanimity and pain.

This august body must, however, be reminded yet again that there is another terrorism which we must fight relentlessly. It is the terrorism of war, poverty, illiteracy and disease, including HIV/AIDS. We must never forget, either, that daily hunger for one billion persons worldwide is truly a weapon of mass destruction. Together we must fight this terrorism also.

### UNITED NATIONS REFORM

Mr. President, the case for a Judicious and balanced reformation of the United Nations to better reflect the reality of the 21<sup>th</sup> century is unanswerably strong. Yet, entrenched power appears to defeat right reason. We must redouble our collective efforts to persuade those who fear, unreasonably, the consequences of a just reform.

### TAIWAN

Mr. President, since St. Vincent and the Grenadines became an independent State, it has had unbroken diplomatic relations with the Republic of China on Taiwan. We see this country of liberty and democracy as a most important component of the magnificent Chinese civilisation. Taiwan has the world's 17<sup>th</sup> largest economy, the 15<sup>th</sup> largest trading volume internationally, and is third in the global ranking of the extent of foreign exchange reserves. Taiwan's 23 million people ought properly to be represented in this universal body by the government of their choice. It is a mistake to continue to deny Taiwan international membership of organisations. The relations between St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Taiwan have been exemplary. Our friendship demands that we plead their just cause.

### CONCLUSION

Mr. President, I conclude with these observations. Some states boast ownership of boundless territory, vast natural resources and potent firepower but none of these by themselves or a combination of all three guarantees peace or prosperity. In some other States poverty, hunger conflict and disease are the norm. If, instead of investing in war knowing its certain side effect of the wastage of young, innocent lives, nations cooperated with each other striving for ways to solve problems common to all, it is just possible that the world we bequeath to our children will be more peaceful, richer in the ways that matter and boasting cleaner air and a healthier environment. Internationally, and in our own countries, let us emphasise the power of love rather than the love of power. Let us extol not the rightness of power but the righteousness of being human.

I thank you, Mr. President.

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