



ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

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

by

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Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations coincides with the commemoration of my country's twenty-fifth year of independence. The pre-ambule to the constitution of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reaffirms that our nation is founded on the belief in the supremacy of God and the freedom and dignity of man. Our national motto *Pax et Justitia* - Peace and Justice - symbolises both our reality and our dream. The universal ideals which inspired the Founding Fathers of the Charter of the United Nations are those which prompted the lofty proclamations in my nation's constitution. The UN Charter taught us a truth, as though engraved on a tablet of stone, that while some sleep to dream, we must dream to change the world, for the better.

We in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines accept unequivocally the fulcrum around which the outcome document of the High Level Plenary meeting revolves, namely: To create a more peaceful, prosperous, and democratic world, and to undertake concrete measures to continue finding ways to implement the conclusions of the Millennium Summit and other major United Nations gatherings so as to provide multilateral solutions to the problems which touch and concern development, peace and collective security, human rights and the rule of law, and the strengthening of the United Nations.

Yet, the outcome document, though certainly a codified and presumably consensual package, falls short of what is truly demanded by these extraordinary challenging times in the first decade of the 21st century. The larger and more powerful nations are gripped by an unreasonable FEAR which, in the process, constrains them from being reasonably FAIR. Less powerful Nation-States and those which are small and weak internationally, often beat their collective chests with an unbecoming self-righteous purity which restrains them from knowing or understanding what impurity is, even within themselves. So, an unwholesome stand-off results. Meanwhile, around us all, there is a carnival of misery, a festival of guns. A Caribbean poet laureate tells us that the faces of men of women are strained and anxious. Many, if not most persons, become skeptical, nay, cynical, of the grand efforts of the world's leaders. They search instead for an amazing grace which makes the blind to see and the wretched to be saved. Along the way, the majesty of faith becomes metamorphosed, in too many of the world's inhabitants, into a believer's extremism. Man's reason cannot quite fathom, this side of eternity, the evil which extremism breeds. This is an enduring conundrum of our times which, on this earthly city, we, amidst all our limitations and weaknesses, must seek to address appropriately with all our possibilities and strengths, but without the baggage of economic, military or cultural imperialism.

Mr. President, economic imperialism muzzles the mouth with the food that it eats to live and thus builds resentment in that very mouth that eats, and even moreso among those who receive not any food to eat. Military imperialism begets armed resistance in which a triumph is but a cause in its impermanence. Cultural imperialism distorts the mind but, in that very distortion the seed of its rejection germinates, blossoms

and bears a bitter, and even chauvinistic, fruit. The presumed solutions of the powerful have been shown, historically, to be mirages. Surely, there must be a better way. Nelson Mandela has taught us that. Together, we are the world; we are the future. But of all time only the future is ours to desecrate; the present is the past; and the past is our fathers' mischiefs.

Underlying all of this is a seemingly intractable socio-economic product of modern globalization, that is, the contradiction between, on the one hand, a growing inequality in income distribution globally and, on the other, the increasing commonality of consumption patterns. Modern communications, including the revolution in information technology, have connected the world as never before. Yet, this very enhanced connection breeds, justifiably, a great impatience among those who are most disadvantaged. Economic adjustment has to be made more swiftly. Time is of the essence. But that very swiftness engenders socio-economic dislocation which poses immense difficulties for political management.

Mr. President, these profound challenges require a series of measures including more Official Development Assistance more speedily disbursed, a fair system of international trade, international peace based on tried and tested principles of international law, and appropriate reformation of the United Nations and its associate institutions, and a more tolerant and educated population worldwide. But we must set about doing so immediately with conviction, resolution, solidarity and dignity. The alternative is: APOCALYPSE NOW!

Mr. President, no difficulties, no hardships, no crises, can justify terrorism. Terrorism wounds the poor and disadvantaged ever so much. Its barbarism must continue to be resisted by civilised peoples and nations internationally. No space must be given to terrorism.

Mr. President, a small multi-island nation like St. Vincent and the Grenadines has a bundle of special needs. We are therefore encouraged by the collective recognition by all the member states of the United Nations that special needs and vulnerabilities attend Small Island Developing States. We are heartened, too, by the reaffirmation of the member-states' commitment to address these special needs and vulnerabilities. There are reams of paper commitments in the Mauritius Strategy adopted by the international meeting to review the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island -Developing States, in the Barbados Programme of Action, and, in the outcome of the 22nd Special Session of the General Assembly.

We realise that the just-concluded High-Level Plenary Meeting of the UN has undertaken to promote greater international cooperation and partnerships for the implementation of the solemn commitments through, among other things, the mobilisation of domestic and international resources, the promotion of international trade as an engine for development, and increased international financial and technical cooperation.

These splendid commitments and undertakings, like all words, must be made flesh if they are to signify anything. To be sure, heard melodies are sweet but those unheard will be sweeter in uplifting action. In this regard, I reaffirm without here repeating, all that which I stated in my speech to this august body last Friday, September 16th, on the development agenda focused on the MDGs, and a sustainable condition beyond them for countries like my own. Certainly, a fair resolution to the banana trade impasse in Europe must be fashioned without condemning our poor banana farmers and workers to further penury and misery.

Mr. President, the recent occurrences in Asia, the Caribbean and the Southern United States of devastating storms and hurricanes, and in Africa, of terrible droughts, demand a more coordinated and rational approach internationally to issues of climate change, disaster preparedness, and post-disaster rehabilitation. By and large, there have been ad hoc national, as distinct from, international, approaches. To the extent that international mechanisms exist for prompt and appropriate relief work, they are clearly inadequate for the tasks at hand. This is undoubtedly an area in which the United Nations and one or more of its agencies or associate institutions ought to be able to make a significant difference to the well-being of real flesh-and blood people. After all, natural disasters respect no territorial boundaries or power blocs; calamities from nature have a studied ideological neutrality. They are the same sad songs heard from ancient times by emperor, vassals and clown; and in modern times, increasingly by the rich and the poor. But they afflict the poor more disastrously than any other group. This matter demands urgent international attention. The pain and anguish evoked by President George Bush in his most recent speech on the Katrina disaster must surely move even those who stand amidst an alien corn to concerted international action.

A sustained, coordinated response is needed if we are to avoid an ignoble "disaster fatigue" which treats a natural disaster in one country as a momentary distraction from normalcy, as television images determine, until the next one arrives. Grenada is a case in point. It was laid waste in September 2004 by Hurricane Ivan but its recovery effort has been slowed by the focus on the more recent catastrophes from nature in South Asia, Niger and the Southern United States. Grenada still cries out for massive international assistance. We must help! There is still an enduring need, even after the television cameras have gone elsewhere. This applies, too, in relation to man-made disasters such as in Darfur.

Mr. President, the ever-deteriorating state of affairs in our CARICOM neighbour Haiti demonstrates vividly the inherent dangers of meddling with the democratic process. Since I spoke on the issue, more in sadness than in anger, one year ago, the situation has disintegrated. The so-called government, implanted without any mandate from the people, has neither the political will nor the popular support to undertake the measures necessary to return that poor, traumatised country to some semblance of normality. There has been no serious effort at disarming the gangs that roam the towns and rural areas and practice mob justice. Political victimization continues apace with the cruel detention and violation of human rights of former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, the most glaring example, while, on the other side of the coin, the decision of the Supreme Court to quash the sentences of 15 FRAPH thugs convicted of involvement in the 1994 Raboteau massacre, has all the elements of political motivation.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, with its CARICOM partners, is anxious to welcome Haiti back into the organs of our regional body. But it would be a betrayal of all that we hold dear to ignore the interruption of democracy, the abuses of human rights and the break-down of law and order merely to appease perfidious power. We support the work of MINUSTAH in Haiti while believing that the UN forces have neither the manpower nor the resources required to perform the miracle that they have been entrusted to conjure.

Mr. President, from time to time one or more of our traditional friends and allies may show displeasure at one or more of our decisions in the field of international relations. Some appear not to appreciate the necessity and desirability of small states such as St. Vincent and the Grenadines seeking, and oft-times finding, more economic and

political space to enhance their capacity to address more efficaciously the harsh winds from the external political economy and to do so in the interest of our people's humanisation. Countries like St. Vincent and the Grenadines possess politically mature populations with an enduring democratic temper and sophisticated political leaderships stuffed with experience, wisdom, balance and acuteness of judgment. No one has anything to fear from us! None of our friends can reasonably ask us to adopt their enemies as our own. It is part of our quest to get adversaries to speak sensibly to one another and resolve their differences, particularly if they are our neighbours. We pick fights with no one; and we do not pick other people's fights. We draw sustenance from a pristine international solidarity in which justice flows down as water and righteousness as an overflowing stream. We hold aloft the force of a redemptive righteousness and not the rightness of force. This is not naivety; this is good sense grounded in our extant circumstances, in the soft power of persuasion, in a sensibility regarding the illusory nature of an unbridled and unilateralist "hard" power, and in a belief in man's capacity for nobility even as it jostles, within and without, with evil.

Mr. President, one of the best and most loyal friends over our country's twenty-five years of independence has been the Republic of China on Taiwan. Our relationship, which has been exemplary, is characterized by mutual respect, solidarity, and a desire for international peace in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Taiwan, a magnificent political expression of the Chinese civilization, has partnered beautifully with St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a component of our Caribbean civilization. We unequivocally support the quest of Taiwan to be represented at the United Nations and other international bodies. It is unfair, unreasonable and irrational to exclude a country of 23 million persons with a thriving economy and a nobility of purpose from the United Nations. Further, we urge the United Nations to take the lead in promoting constructive dialogue and friendly engagement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China on Taiwan. Bellicose conduct across the Taiwan Straights cannot be condoned in a world striving for enhanced peace and collective security.

Mr. President, let me end by expressing the hope that the United Nations achieves, in the next sixty years, greater and greater success in its goals of bringing hope to the hopeless, providing food for the hungry and spreading peace, stability and sustainability for now and forever. Let this not be the road least traveled on.

I thank you.

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