



---

# **ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

---

**PERMANENT MISSION OF ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
800 Second Avenue, 9TH Floor • New York, N.Y. 10017 • Tel.: (212) 599-0950 • Fax: (212) 599-1020**

## **Statement**

**By**

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

**61<sup>st</sup> Session of the General Assembly of the  
United Nations**

**21<sup>st</sup> September 2006  
New York**

*Please check against delivery*

Madam President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

You, Madam President, arise in this august Assembly as a breath of fresh air and preside as an inspiration to women, particularly in the Middle East, and to human beings the world over who treasure the stone that the builder rejects and which becomes the head cornerstone. I am sure that your Presidency will make a positive and lasting impact on our General Assembly. Thank you very much for being and doing.

Madame President, humanity's condition today is difficult, complex and challenging yet pregnant with possibilities for a better future. Everywhere, the faces of men and women are strained and anxious; yet, amidst the anxieties, pain and sorrows there is joyous laughter, which soothes the soul, and summons the human race to embrace the promise of a redeeming grace which eschews hate, greed, callousness, oppression, injustice, and violence. It is still possible for this divided world of inequity and the inhumanity of man to man, to sing, with meaning, our redemption song of peace and justice, prosperity and freedom, democracy and tolerance, unity amidst diversity, equality and mutual respect.

This quest to mend the broken world is grounded in the ideals which constitute the core of the United Nations. This idealism seeks not a world of perfection but one of goodness, one of civilisation over barbarism, of humanity over inhumanity. The world, especially the majority of its inhabitants who happen to be poor and disadvantaged amidst an orgy of plenty which resides in a minority, looks to this United Nations as their hope, as a brightness which illuminates and not blinds. I bring this simple but powerful message from a small, developing country in the nearby Caribbean Sea on behalf of the marginalised of the world, without the vanity of a pretentious hegemony, an arrogance of power, or a triumphalism of a presumed manifest destiny. It is both necessary and desirable to speak this truth to power!

So, more than eighty per cent of the people who reside in the developing world, and, indeed, all right-thinking persons, want and demand, in this regard, coherent leadership from a reformed United Nations which is true to its central mandates to serve humanity well. Unfortunately, the reformation of the United Nations is moving at a snail's pace which frustrates its work, undermines its efficacy, and damages its credibility.

To be sure, some modest progress has been made by way of the establishment of a new Human Rights Council and the Peace Building Commission. But, frankly, too much time is wasted on fussing and fighting on esoteric issues touching and concerning the so-called "mandate review" and "management reform" rather than focusing on the critical matter of the implementation of the "Development Resolution" adopted by the General Assembly. In the process, too, let us have a reform of the Security Council which is meaningful and democratic.

Madam President, the world's marginalized and disadvantaged look askance at a United Nations which daily seeks to choreograph the dancing of angels on the head of a pin. They care very little for the bureaucratic harangue that the United Nations' "system-wide coherence has been addressed and enhanced", important as that may be for some professional diplomats. The world's people want to know, and see the practical evidence, that the United Nations is tackling in a purposeful way the issues of global

poverty, environmental degradation, climate change, the empowerment of women, the protection of children, the promotion of peace and security, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the provision of clean water and an adequate supply of food, among other such telling requisites.

Undoubtedly, many, if not most, of the world's governments of the rich and powerful countries, show signs of fatigue and disengagement towards the developing world. This is evident in their parsimony on Official Development Assistance (ODA) and their failure and/or neglect to advance meaningfully the Doha Development Round. Better must be done here.

Please note that my strictures are leveled at the governments of these countries and not their people or their civilisations. Sufficient persuasive evidence exists which show that the people in many, if not most, of these rich countries are sensitive to the concerns of the developing world but their governments do not sufficiently reflect these sensitivities, despite their occasional rhetoric to the contrary. Accordingly, the peoples and civilisations across national boundaries must link themselves in a tighter nexus or bond, with or without the mediating formal state apparatuses, and name and shame those governments which ought to be named and shamed. In this regard, the proposal before the United Nations for an Alliance of Civilisations holds immense promise provided that it is not captured by those States which hanker after an ignoble, unattainable, unsustainable and fundamentally immoral hegemony. Our Caribbean civilisation, and its Vincentian component, stands ready and willing to be part of this magnificent quest for an ennobling brotherhood and sisterhood of humanity.

Madam President, while many rich countries turn aside from the development thrust of world's marginalized and disadvantaged, there is an encouraging trend towards more and better South-South cooperation. In the case of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, we are benefitting from a closer integration network through the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. Further, countries such as Cuba, Venezuela, Mexico, Malaysia and Taiwan, among others, have especial and model relations with St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Recently, at the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Cuba, the leaders of this 118-member body redefined its purpose and mandate, in an increasingly unipolar world, to embrace a thorough-going development agenda and to facilitate the building of a more peaceful, just and secure architecture of international relations. This renewed enthusiasm of the NAM strengthens the hands and voices of those who truly believe that a better, more civilised world is possible and nigh.

Madam President, next year, in March 2007, people of African descent and all freedom-loving peoples and nations commemorate and celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of the Act abolishing the British trade in African slaves to the Caribbean and the Americas. This is an occasion for historical reclamation and the righting of historic wrongs. The trade in, and enslavement of, Africans was a monstrous crime against humanity and an exercise in genocide unmatched in the history of the western world. European nations and their North American cousins have failed and/or refused to acknowledge this

sufficiently or at all. There has been no apology for this crime against humanity and genocide, conducted over a prolonged period. There has been no practical recompense in the form of reparations to the affected nations and peoples in Africa, the Caribbean and the Americas. Surely, this issue must be put squarely on the agenda of the United Nations for speedy resolution.

Without in any way diluting the force of this representation, indeed in bolstering it, it is necessary, and desirable, to link it in our region with the genocide of indigenous peoples, including the Callinago and Garifuna of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and the wholly wrong and inhumane exploitation by colonialism and imperialism of indentured labour from Africa, Madeira, India and China after the abolition of African slavery in the Caribbean. Europe has much to answer for on these matters and should be made to answer properly, appropriately. Historic wrongs not righted remain scars on the soul of the oppressor and the oppressed alike which continue to haunt over the ages; it is a hateful burden which must be lifted. This dark night must give way to a brightened day.

Madam President, of all the tragedies engulfing our modern world few touch the human soul and spirit as the condition of the people in Darfur and Palestine. The entire world knows who are responsible for the crimes against humanity in Darfur and in all areas of the Palestinian homeland. Yet, the basic human and national rights of the people in these geographic regions are trampled upon daily by alien forces. Meanwhile, the United Nations appears helpless and its authority undermined. Surely, the time is long past for a resolution of these conflicts, and other enduring ones worldwide, including Lebanon and Western Sahara. Oppression will not endure indefinitely. That is the powerful lesson of history. The people's right to self-determination must be fully respected.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is pleased to see Haiti's restoration to democracy. The cynical ouster of the former democratically-elected President Jean Bertrand Aristide in February 2004 ushered in immense suffering in Haiti under a so-called interim administration installed by imperialism. The Haitian people, who endureth forever, must be applauded for their commitment to democracy and progress. Their election of President René Preval represents a strong rebuke of those who mistakenly believe that the dangling of money is everything. We heartily congratulate the new Haitian government and pledge to work closely with them in their efforts to develop their heroic country, the land of Toussaint L'Ouverture.

Madam President, St. Vincent and the Grenadines again pleads with the United Nations to permit Taiwan, a democratic and progressive country of 23 million people and a legitimate political expression of the Chinese civilisation, to be accorded its rightful admission to the United Nations and its specialised agencies. There is no adequate justification for the continued exclusion of Taiwan from any participation in the numerous global exchanges in the several international bodies, including the UN.

Further, the United Nations has a major role to play in ensuring an easing of tensions across the Taiwan Straits. Aggressive conduct must be restrained in a context where Taiwan is committed to peace and a comprehensive political dialogue.

Madam President, modern terrorism is a barbarism out of sync with civilised life. It affects adversely not only powerful nations but developing nations in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. This evil of terrorism, including state-sponsored terrorism, must be fought relentlessly. It must be given no space to thrive. At the same time, terrorism must be attacked sensibly and not in a counter-productive way. Too many innocent lives have been lost through terrorist acts. St. Vincent and the Grenadines pledges itself to continue to work resolutely and fearlessly, without hypocrisy, with all nations, and the United Nations, to eliminate this dastardly scourge, and its causes.

Madam President, permit me to thank Secretary-General, Kofi Anan, for his splendid work at the United Nations and throughout the world. His accomplishments have been immense and we applaud him as his incumbency draws to a close. We wish him and his family well.

I conclude by reaffirming that it is our sacred duty to humanity and those unborn to ensure that we contribute to a safer, more peaceful, more prosperous, more civilised world.

We who have come from yesterday with our limiting burdens must face tomorrow with our enabling strengths. We must never forget that in our work here at the United Nations it becomes possible to glimpse morning before the sun; possible to see early where sunset might stain anticipated night. Let us thus not sleep to dream but dream to change the world, for the better.

Thank you!

New York  
21 September 2006