



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

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Statement

by

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Mr. President, Excellencies:

We are convened at this 76th Session of the United Nations' General Assembly at a time of severe health, socio-economic, political, climatic, and security challenges, globally, though unevenly, not in equal measure. The raging pandemic of COVID-19, which came upon us early last year, has put the world in a veritable tailspin, even as the roll-out of the vaccines has eased the strain somewhat, particularly in the developed world. A major shift has occurred in the global condition; a parallelogram of unruly and complex forces has been unleashed; a new paradigm has emerged; out-moded approaches are becoming, or have become, irrelevant; fresh initiatives and directions are required; and transformational leadership is needed, now more than ever.

In my country, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a small-island developing state with all its historical legacies of under-development and contemporary burdens and limitations, has had to cope, additionally, with the devastating volcanic eruptions of April 2021, the on-rushing Atlantic Hurricane season, vaccine hesitance

amongst the population, and real uncertainty about the future. Amidst all this, our people are nevertheless possessed of a settled resilience and optimism of life and living, undergirded by God's redemptive grace, our own possibilities and strengths, a sterling regional solidarity, and promising internationalist support, inclusive of that of our United Nations, for peace and security, good health and prosperity for our people, as pledged in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Immediately, all of us in this global family of nations, must work together to defeat COVID-19, return to an acceptable level of normalcy and the opening up of our economies. This represents a many-sided and enormous challenge of historic proportions in both diagnosis and prescription. A huge bundle of pre-existing, divisive and debilitating conditions ought to be efficaciously addressed; historic wrongs ought to be righted; and extant and emergent limitations and weaknesses, real or contrived, require appropriate correctives. The metaphoric lions and lionesses, globally, ought to converse with each other meaningfully, rather than hanker for perpetual disorder, insecurity, and war; they do not actually need to

lay down with each other in joyous embrace; they ought simply to resolve their differences, whether ancient or modern; and compromise, where necessary and desirable, in the interest of all. But for the sake of humanity, let us drop the vaunted self-interests, the vanities, and divisiveness — real or imagined, and work together, for the better.

These are the ennobling impulses which prompted the ancient prophets and teachers of all the world's monotheistic religions to summon their peoples, and their better angels, to uplifting purposes in this our Earthly City. These have been the civilising sentiments expressed, from time immemorial, in the voices of wise Emperors and thoughtful warriors. These are humanity's core values which constitute the bedrock upon which our United Nations organisation was originally built, and has been henceforth sustained. Faith in them, and accompanying works, will see us through these troubling times in which it appears that things are falling apart and the centre cannot hold.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put the global community at the critical, proverbial crossroads. What is to be done? First, let us recognise, and internalise, the novel, historic juncture at which we are, and accept, generally, the sage poetic advice that two roads diverge in the woods; and we ought to take the one least travelled by; and that will make all the difference.” This will not be easy for historic combatants or contemporary rivals to do; but it is the only choice that humanity has.

In tackling the pandemic itself, the old ways have tended to predominate, even as the sunlit rays of a possible new path have emerged. Thus, for example, globally, we have witnessed unacceptable vaccine nationalism; the politicisation of the roll-out of the vaccines; and the roll-out of vaccines for the rich first and the poor afterwards. To be sure, we have also witnessed notable, and noble, work by some global institutions such as the World Health Organisation, the World Bank, and the COVAX Facility, to make vaccines more accessible to poor or marginalised countries.

It is true, too, though relatively late in day, that some rich countries in the North Atlantic (USA, Canada, and the United Kingdom) have delivered or agreed to deliver, freely, from their surpluses, vaccines to some less developed countries; we are very grateful. Still, though, some of these countries may be so slow in their promised deliveries that they may end up, embarrassingly, with expired doses of the vaccines running into several millions. It is timely to remind all of us that the noblest form of solidarity is to give not from the abundance or surplus that we may have but from the little that we possess; that is the lesson of the proverbial widow's mite. In this regard, on behalf of the Caribbean, I thank the government of the Republic of India for their early, and meaningful gift of Covishield Astrazeneca vaccines. Sadly, at least one country in the North Atlantic has refused to recognise Covishield for entry of persons into that country.

Mr. President, not only have the ways of the old order, pre-COVID, tended, still, to guide powerful countries in their actions; so, too, the behemoths in global communications. These entities, enveloped in mega profits and profiteering, own and control the various internet platforms, with little or no public regulation, and have ignored or

abandoned any real sense of responsibility for the anti-vax misinformation and disinformation which occupy cyberspace. As a consequence, real people die in their multitudes across the world. Surely, this irresponsibility must stop!

Surely, too, many ancient and long-standing political quarrels ought to come to an end in these new, perilous times which humanity faces. At the top of the list ,must undoubtedly include: The refusal of Israel and its international backers to come to terms with the requisite of an independent Palestine, and a secure Israel, in accord with repeated resolutions of this august body; and, similarly, the refusal of the United States of America to dismantle the internationally unlawful, and crippling, economic blockade of Cuba, and to bring to an end the unjust, harsh, unilateral economic and financial sanctions against Venezuela and, to a lesser extent, Nicaragua.

So, too, it is high time for this United Nations and its agencies to cease their exclusion of Taiwan from meaningful participation. Surely, the world will benefit from Taiwan's inclusion in global bodies such as the World Health Assembly, the United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change, the International Civil Aviation Organisation, and INTERPOL. Concerted, multi-lateral cooperation on global matters such as health, climate change, civil aviation, crime, and so forth requires all hands-on deck, metaphorically speaking. Taiwan is a relatively small, but legitimate, political expression of the magnificent Chinese civilisation; it has been an impressive economic miracle; it is a thriving democracy; and it has a right to ask for meaningful inclusion in the relevant global institutions. New times demand fresh solutions, not old-fashioned hegemonic responses.

By now, Mr. President, the folly of invading and seeking to remake countries in an invader's image and likeness is plain for all to see in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. The human and economic costs are staggering. Still, though, the values of our United Nations demand that women must be respected and empowered, that religious discrimination must be rejected, that theocracies accommodate competing voices, and that terrorism and political violence be not embedded in any statecraft. The sacred principles of non-intervention and non-interference ought not to be blind,

perpetually or at all, to unacceptable and egregious excesses against humanity.

Mr. President, a looming ecological disaster awaits humanity unless we change course, for the better. No serious person who objectively examines the scientific data can but conclude that climate change is an existential threat to humanity, and especially to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and countries, such as in West Africa and the Sahel region, which are being swept into seemingly unending natural disasters as a consequence of desertification and extreme land degradation. Science, the real world, and the Paris Accord have pointed to alternative pathways for humanity but the political will and requisite resources from the major emitters to address the grave challenge of climate change have not gone much beyond pious mouthings and marginal tinkering. St. Vincent and the Grenadines is hoping for the best at the Conference of Parties (COP) in Glasgow in November 2021, but we fear the worst — more procrastination and the ducking of serious responsibility by the major emitters. On this, humanity is at the midnight hour. Can we meet the challenge? We may not live to find out the answer if the usual continues.

Mr. President, there is a range of other pressing concerns relevant to the Caribbean that demand urgent, global, multi-lateral action. These include: Meaningful debt restructuring and a favourable reform of the global financial architecture; the replacing of certain wrong-headed criteria, such as GDP per head of population, by a Vulnerability Index to determine access to development financing; the cessation of the use of unilateral sanctions and the weaponising of the financial and banking systems against small states, including the capricious termination of corresponding banking relationships; the reversal of the diminution or slow-down of Official Development Assistance by rich countries; that Small Island Exceptionalism be accepted as a category to be objectively embraced in efficacious actions on the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) and a rules-based international order; the necessity and desirability for reparatory justice from European nations in respect of native genocide and the enslavement of Africans from which the European nations profited systematically and from which, consequentially, our Caribbean countries have suffered a legacy of under-development;

and the urgent need for an appropriate multi-lateral initiative to assist Haiti, a CARICOM member, in its current peril.

Mr. President, at our United Nations, the reform agenda, including that of Security Council reform, demand renewed impetus. We have been talking about this subject for far too long, and avoiding concrete steps forward. St. Vincent and the Grenadines recognises the difficulties at hand but it is evident to all reasonable persons that the stranglehold of “the Permanent Five” on the Security Council ought to be appropriately loosened or broken in these times which are so different than in 1945.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines has been honoured over the past near-two years to sit as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. St. Vincent and the Grenadines is the smallest country ever to sit on this esteemed Council. All objective observers concur that we have carried out our work and responsibilities commendably, and have contributed to the maintenance and advancement of peace,

security, and prosperity, globally. Importantly, St. Vincent and the Grenadines has been a central party to the establishment of an institutional nexus known as the A3 plus One (the three non-permanent members from Africa plus St. Vincent and the Grenadines), as a distinctive voice for Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America. Long may this nexus continue, especially in this the UN Decade for Peoples of African Descent.

Mr. President,

The lessons of today mirror many of those lodged in the tiring, and oft-times tired, struggles of yesteryear. From whence, in the still smouldering ashes of global conflict, our forebears crafted this multilateral institution called the United Nations to provide hope and stability to all of humanity. Yet, this labour is incomplete. The pervasive inequalities that defined the pre-COVID political and socio-economic order must not become tomorrow's nightmarish reality. Instead, in this COVID era, we must reorganise ourselves, *locally, regionally, nationally and globally*, in a quest to provide peace, security, and development to all countries and peoples, in novel ways

and with fresh initiatives. And let us also, with a renewed sense of urgency and compassion, strive to protect, and improve upon, this planet that we all call home. It is pellucid that of all time, only the future is ours to desecrate. Our United Nations ought never to be accomplices in any such desecration.

So, I reiterate: We are at historic cross-roads of a special kind. We must rise, collectively, to address sensibly, the requisite fresh imperatives in these, our most challenging, times.

Thank you!