



# ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Permanent Mission of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations

800 2nd Ave., Ste. 400G, New York, NY 10017 • Tel: (212) 599-0950 • Fax: (212) 599-1020 • [www.svg-un.org](http://www.svg-un.org)

## Statement

By

**Dr. the Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves**

Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations

At the

**General Debate  
of the 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

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Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am pleased to add my voice to the unanimous acclaim of His Excellency Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser as President of the General Assembly for this our 66<sup>th</sup> Session. As a skillful and seasoned diplomat, you played an integral role in establishing the State of Qatar as a central and crucial actor in international diplomacy. I have no doubt that you will approach your new responsibilities with similar dedication, evenhandedness and compassion.

Mr. President,

In recent months the winds of change have encircled the globe, reaching and reshaping the unlikely corners of our planet, for good and for ill. Those winds have swept the nation of South Sudan into these hallowed halls as a welcome and esteemed new member of our global family. They are blowing away the flimsy impediments to Palestinian statehood, and breathing fresh air into stagnant negotiating processes. The winds of change have howled across the sands of the Middle East and North Africa, reshaping long-held geopolitical assumptions.

The grim economic storm clouds that formed ominously on our global horizon three years ago have yet to dissipate, and, indeed, seem to be multiplying. Natural disasters, Climate change, and the accompanying non-metaphorical winds of hurricanes and tropical storms have buffeted my multi-island nation and my region yet again, upending our fragile economies and causing painful developmental setbacks.

The United Nations finds itself in the eye of these increasingly turbulent geopolitical and socioeconomic storms. The role that we collectively play in response to these howling gales will determine the contours of the post-crisis world and the relevance of this institution in that world. Will the international community shield the vulnerable from these winds? Will we harness their power for positive change? Or will we become little more than unnecessary weather forecasters, watching and warning about which way the winds blow, but never acting in the benefit of our peoples' humanization?

Mr. President,

You have wisely selected "*the role of mediation in the settlement of disputes*" as the theme of this General Debate. This theme could not be more apt and timely. Too often, the difficult work of mediation, negotiation and peaceful dispute resolution is prematurely abandoned in the search for a 'quick fix' of militarism, brinkmanship or ill-advised unilateral action. The very drafters of hard-fought Security Council resolutions often cast aside the letter and spirit of these documents before their ink has dried; and the frenzied pursuit of a military solution to every dispute is sometimes sickeningly palpable. All too frequently, the loudest champions of expensive and unnecessary military action are those leaders of military powers who seek to shore up sagging local political fortunes with bullets, bombs and the bodies of faceless foreigners in far away lands. History has never been kind to such nakedly political crusades, and they who have sowed the wind have invariably reaped the whirlwind of their bloody campaigns long after the triumphalist glow has faded. Neo-colonialist and imperialist adventures, however disguised, will never triumph before the bar of history over a people's right to self-determination and the inalienable embrace of their sovereignty.

More than a theme, "*the role of mediation in the settlement of disputes*" should become a firm resolution of this year's General Assembly, embodying an international commitment to exhaust peaceful methods of dispute resolution, to narrowly define military interventions, and to strictly adhere to Security Council mandates for such action. Such a resolution will mark the beginning of a break with the vicious, yet oft-repeated cycle of unilateral interventionism and its unfortunate long-term consequences to the local victims and the international community. Historic errors ought never to be repeated; tragedy ought not to become clothed anew as farce. This is the honest perspective of a small nation which holds no brief for any protagonist. Our interest lies solely in humanity's quest for peace, justice and the dignity of people everywhere

Mr. President,

The ongoing global economic and financial crisis is a devastating storm that has shown no signs of abating. Economies the world over remain in peril, and none is immune from the widening and deepening fallout of this systemic crisis of ill-regulated financial institutions and the movement of capital.

The effects of the international global and financial meltdown are now being felt well beyond the bottom lines of multinational corporations. The macroeconomic and developmental consequences of this economic tornado are now painfully apparent, as is the terrible impact on the lives of individuals. The economic crisis has spurred rising global unemployment, poverty, and has engendered a feeling of hopelessness especially among the youth. The continuing fallout of the economic upheaval can be felt in the streets of cities around the world, and is a major contributor to the global unrest that has pitted disgruntled youth and others in violent opposition to government forces from Tottenham to Tripoli. Social unrest beckons elsewhere in dozens of countries where neither the socio-economic condition nor the political institutions can much longer contain the enormous pressures.

Well into our third year of the international economic crisis, we can now declare that the tepid and timid responses of wealthy developed nations have failed to heal the global economy. The uncoordinated lurches from stimulus to austerity and back typify the confusion of the self-appointed premier fora of our international economic cooperation. The recovery that they prematurely declared was false and fleeting, and their counsel of patience and predictions of long-term recovery are of cold comfort to the suffering peoples of those countries that did not contribute to the crisis.

In small, vulnerable, and highly-indebted middle income economies such as ours, the economic debacle threatens to have debilitating and ongoing consequences. We cannot afford to wait for the promise of incremental or cyclical upticks in the global economy. Small states need the fiscal and policy space to creatively spur development in ways that comply not with the checklists of discredited economic theorists, but with real-world particularities and people-centered policies. International Financial Institutions have yet to grasp sufficiently this simple fact.

The General Assembly must reassert its role in the response to the international economic crisis. In the early days of the global economic deterioration, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines played a leading role in the United Nations Conference on the World Economic and Financial Crisis and its Impact on Development. Under your leadership, Mr. President, the Assembly must now meaningfully follow-up on the unfulfilled recommendations and mechanisms spelled out in that Conference. Our Caribbean region has a vested interest in this most urgent of matters.

Mr. President,

This year, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was the subject of a UN resolution that called upon the international community to provide assistance in the wake of Hurricane Tomas, which caused millions of dollars of damage in our region. While we are extremely grateful to the many countries that contributed generously to the emergency response, our national and regional recovery is far from complete. In light of your welcome call to focus on disaster prevention and response during this Session, Mr. President, I remind the community of our continuing recovery efforts, and the continuing vulnerability of Small Island Developing States during this active and ongoing 2011 Atlantic Hurricane Season.

Mr. President,

I remain baffled by the intransigence of major emitters and developed nations that refuse to shoulder the burden for arresting climate changes that are linked to the excesses of their own wasteful policies. As Hurricanes Irene and Katia crept northward to typically untouched cities in the United States and the United Kingdom, we in the Caribbean felt saddened at the extensive damage and tragic loss of life, which is an annual occurrence in our region. We can only hope that our now-common experiences can engender a level of solidarity and constructive engagement that will lead to binding and meaningful emissions reductions and the fulfillment of commitments on adaptation financing for vulnerable Small Island Developing States. Time is running out on the very existence of many countries in the face of rising oceans and increasingly intense

storms. Our generation will be judged by our response to this global threat, and, to date, we have been woefully inadequate and selfishly myopic in that regard. Our dance with global disaster must end this year at the next climate change conference in South Africa.

Mr. President,

I am heartened that you have decided to place special emphasis on “sustainable development and global prosperity” during this Session of the General Assembly.

But the citizens of the world, and indeed, many of its governments, have lost faith in endless self-important summits that produce little in the way of tangible results. The archives of the United Nations are filled with grandiloquent declarations and outcome documents from summits whose commitments were forgotten even before delegates boarded the planes to return home from their exotic locales.

Next year, the issue of development returns to Latin America for the Rio+20 Conference in Brazil. Rio+20 will take place one decade after Mexico’s heralded Monterrey Consensus, in which developed countries committed themselves to the target of devoting 0.7% of their gross national income (GNI) as Official Development Assistance (ODA) to developing countries. Today, even accepting the liberal definitions and creative accounting used by some states to measure development assistance, developing countries are only contributing .32% of their GNI to ODA – less than half of the Monterrey target.

A decade after Monterrey, it is my profound regret to observe that my dreams for that conference – and the dreams of billions of the world’s poor – must now necessarily be deferred to Rio de Janeiro. And as our dreams are constantly left unfulfilled, I am reminded of the poetic inquiry of Langston Hughes, who asked:

*What happens to a dream deferred?*

*Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore—  
And then run?*

*Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over—  
like a syrupy sweet?*

*Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.*

*Or does it explode?*

Recent events in the streets of major cities may have answered Langston Hughes’ queries. But as we approach yet another development summit, we must accept two inescapable truths: First, that promises made must be promises kept. Developing countries must be able to rely on the commitments made by their wealthy partners, if we are to effectively implement our development strategies.

Second, while talk is cheap, development is not. Infrastructure, education, health, and security cost money, and the road to a deformed developmental hell is paved with the good intentions of well meaning, but unfunded, policies and programmes. We cannot continue to pretend that meaningful global development is possible without the commitment of new resources in addition to the realization of previously unfulfilled commitments. The international community has been appropriately generous in times of humanitarian crisis and often profligate in pursuit of military objectives. However, those crises and wars are often rooted in underdevelopment, and a dollar of preventative assistance is infinitely cheaper than the cures.

In that regard, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has partnered with a number of friendly and cooperative countries, in the North and South, to further our own national development in the fields of infrastructure, education, health, agriculture and sports. We sincerely thank them for their continuing solidarity and friendship.

Mr. President,

As the winds of change encircle the planet, the United Nations itself seems trapped in the doldrums of stasis and stagnation. The raging geopolitical squalls that have reshaped the world and continue to buffet our peoples and governments seem powerless against the UN's institutionalised and fossilised fortifications of the status quo. Even when compared with our outmoded global financial architecture, the United Nations seems singularly incapable of meaningful self-analysis and far-reaching reform.

It should be a source of alarm and international embarrassment that the composition United Nations Security Council is an ossified relic of World War II, seemingly immune to the modern realities of new countries and new global powers. It is an outrageous act of international irresponsibility that such an outmoded and increasingly illegitimate body is allowed to decisively insert itself into local and regional conflicts. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is adamant that the Security Council must be reformed, and that the reform be underpinned by the expansion of the Council in both permanent and non-permanent categories, with full regard to the legitimate aspirations of Africa and the necessary accommodations for Small Island Developing States, which have valuable and creative perspectives to peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

This year, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was honoured to serve as a co-facilitator of the Working Group for the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly. We are heartened, Mr. President to hear your stated commitment to building upon our work and enhancing the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the General Assembly.

Our modern and multifaceted global challenges require a nimble, responsive and action-oriented United Nations. A failure to adapt along these lines will relegate the UN to, at best, becoming a glorified continuing university seminar. If that is to be the case, let us hand out diplomas to our diplomats, send young students here to hone their debating skills, and seek out new modalities for actively solving our global and regional challenges.

Mr. President,

The International Year for People of African Descent, which was declared with much fanfare, is almost at an end. I am grateful to the United Nations, which has hosted a number of events to raise awareness of the challenges facing people of African descent and foster discussions on potential solutions to tackle these challenges.

Racial discrimination was justified and became itself the justification for a brutal, exploitative and dehumanising system of production that was perfected during the transatlantic slave trade and ingrained over the course of colonial domination. The structure of our modern world is still firmly rooted in a past of slavers and colonialist exploitation. Today, every single country of the world with a population of majority African descent is still trapped in the periphery of our global economic and developmental systems. The peoples of African descent remain disadvantaged, individually and systemically, by this entrenched and unyielding cycle of discrimination. Indeed, many of the wars that the UN struggles mightily to quell or avoid are rooted in the ignorant and avaricious cartography of European colonisers.

The people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have a long and proud history of resistance to slavery, bigotry and genocide, dating back to the heroic resistance of the Garifuna peoples against British aggression in the late 1700s. While we celebrate the noble heroism of the famous and the faceless who resisted racist colonial hegemony, we must continue to confront the legacy of this barbarism and continuing injustice. The wounds of this era are deep, the crimes against humanity are clear, and the necessity for apology and reparations are undeniable.

In the remaining months of this important year we must ramp-up efforts to confront the challenges facing the people of African descent, seek justice for historical and modern wrongs, and celebrate the rich and diverse African culture, in all of its glorious manifestations.

Mr. President,

This year, I cannot speak of peoples of African Descent without highlighting the enormous humanitarian challenges facing the peoples of the Horn of Africa and Haiti. The East African famine and its attendant refugee and security problems require urgent attention and massive response. We are not a civilized global society if we cannot address and banish the extreme poverty and starvation faced by the people of this region. Similarly, the situation faced by the citizens of our sister state of Haiti remains precarious. Now is the time for the international community to redouble, rather than reduce, the support and assistance given to the government and people of Haiti.

Mr. President,

The collective voices of the international community are rising to a crescendo in support of full Palestinian statehood. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines echoes the relevant portions of yesterday's Group of 77 Ministerial Declaration, which welcomed the State of Palestine's application for full membership in the United Nations. The State of Palestine has brought its case to this world assembly in keeping with the finest traditions of multilateralism, and we have no doubt that its action, and the solidarity of the international community, will resuscitate the moribund negotiating process between the Palestinian and Israeli states.

Correspondingly, we continue to believe that international solidarity and principle are the keys to finally ending the unjust and illegal embargo against our brothers and sisters in Cuba. There is no place in our modern world for this anachronistic relic of the Cold War.

Mr. President,

As I reflect on the sweeping geopolitical changes being wrought in our global village, I am compelled to raise the fact that there is no practical, legal or logical justification for UN's seeming indifference to the meaningful participation of Taiwan in our important work. Surely, in the context of an ever-expanding and inclusive UN, the 23 million citizens of Taiwan can at the very least be allowed to meaningfully participate in the specialized agencies of our organisation. Taiwan rightfully participates in the WTO and the World Health Assembly. The logic of Taiwan's participation in those bodies is compelling and equally applicable to other specialized agencies whose areas of focus know no political boundaries. Taiwan has proven itself to be a responsible global citizen, and a solid development partner in the fields of education, health, technology, agriculture and infrastructure. Amidst the howling winds of change that swirl around our international institutions, Taiwan's reasonable request is but a gentle breeze of inclusion and participation.

Mr. President,

You assume the Presidency amidst a cyclone of international turbulence and change. We may not be able to direct these winds, but we can and must adjust our sails to harness the energy and potential of this moment, while riding out the storms of uncertainty and upheaval. Former US President Abraham Lincoln once said, in a different context:

*The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew.*

Our stormy present requires similar resolve, creativity and action. Let us rise to the occasion, and fulfill the immense potential of this peaceful global assembly. Into these swirling winds of change, let us raise the flag of inclusiveness, equality, peace, justice and development, for all the peoples of the world to see.

I thank you.