



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

Statement

By

H.E. Camillo M. Gonsalves

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

At the

**6th Informal Meeting of the Plenary on the Intergovernmental
Negotiations on the Question of Equitable Representation on and
Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Related Matters**

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Mr. Chairman, thank you for convening this meeting and for focusing today's negotiations on a single subject, that of "Categories of Membership." I will attempt to limit my brief intervention to this subject, narrowly defined, and leave other matters discussed yesterday for future negotiating sessions.

However, we feel it apt to begin by citing a popular quotation from *Romeo and Juliet*, where Shakespeare writes, "what's in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet." It seems, Mr. Chairman, that we have given the OEWG a new name, but the odor emanating from this conference room yesterday was all too familiar. Our 15-year old habits are proving to be stubbornly resilient, and we have again fallen into the rut of reading statements and rehashing well-worn positions. There is very little that we heard yesterday that had not been said – in the same manner and by the same Members – in previous OEWG meetings. Mr. Chairman, our inertia and predictability are not due to lack of effort on your part, as we recognise and appreciate the attempts you have made to lend focus and structure to this session. However, it is our belief that nothing less than a comprehensive text can provide the impetus to move us from our current routine to a genuine and substantive negotiation process. Accordingly, we urge you again to prepare such a text to serve as the basis of our negotiations going forward.

Mr. Chairman, Article 23 of our Charter delineates two categories of membership, that of Permanent and non-permanent. The five Permanent Members are specifically named in the Charter. Tellingly, even some of those specific names in our Charter refer to countries that no longer exist within our Membership, which is itself emblematic of the fact that the Security Council is not reflective of contemporary realities. The relative powers of the Permanent Members are more properly the subject of our negotiations on the veto and working methods, and need not be discussed today.

Article 23 goes on to state that the 10 non-permanent members are to be elected, and instructs us to pay due regard to "equitable geographical distribution." In practice, the consideration of equitable geographic distribution has taken the form of allocating the non-permanent seats among the five recognized regional groups in the UN.

Mr. Chairman, we have heard near unanimity in support of increasing the number of non-permanent seats, so there is no need to advance many arguments here, other than to say that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines also supports the expansion of this category.

However, in addition to expanding the *category* of non-permanent seats, we believe that it is critical to also expand the Charter's guidance as to their allocation. Instead of simply paying due regard to equitable *geographical* distribution; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines proposes that due regard should instead be paid to distribution reflective of geography, vulnerability and developmental status. This would free at least some new seats from the strictures of the existing 5-region paradigm, and allow for seats allocated along other lines, as some suggested yesterday. Whether these seats become island seats, small state seats (however defined), OIC seats or what have you, is a subject for the representational phase of our negotiations, and need not be specifically addressed now.

Mr. Chairman, St. Vincent & the Grenadines also believes strongly that expansion of the permanent membership is a critical and indispensable component of any Security Council reform.

First, it seems incongruous to suggest that, while it was necessary to allocate 5 permanent seats in 1946, when the UN had a mere 55 members, no further expansion is necessary today, despite a more than 3-fold increase in membership.

Second, we recognize that existing permanent members are, for practical purposes, entrenched, and unlikely to vote for their own obsolescence, or to stand down and offer themselves for reelection to the Council. Therefore, we begin our negotiations with the reality of five occupied permanent seats grandfathered into the reform process, which have greater powers and tenures than the remaining membership. These grandfathered members do not, by any stretch of the imagination, represent a balanced or representative cross sample of our membership's economies, powers, influence, geographies, sizes, ethnicities, cultures, vulnerabilities, or developmental statuses.

Any reform that purports to be equitable and representative cannot leave untouched the permanent membership. Given the immovability of the current 5, the only realistic reform option, in our view, is to expand the permanent membership in such a way as to both increase its representational legitimacy and more evenly distribute the power of permanence across a wider cross-section of states. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, like over 130 other States, had no input in the selection of the current P5. To deny ourselves a say now, would be to continue to condemn ourselves to serfdom in a feudal UN system.

We therefore enthusiastically support expansion in both categories. Indeed, we consider expansion in both categories to be inextricably linked, and reject any attempt to expand only one category. The actual size of the expansion – and, by extension, the specific names of new permanent members – are the subjects of separate negotiating sessions.

Finally, Mr. Chair, I would note that, mere hours into our very first negotiating session, some States are throwing up their hands, claiming no progress, and advocating an interim approach. We think that such an approach is premature, at best. We have not come this far to begin with half-measures. Nor will the creation of additional levels of non-permanence address many of the glaring deficits that have given momentum to the current reform effort.

To our mind, the creation of a new category of non-permanent membership serves only to further diminish the relevance of the existing category of 2-year elected seats. The current non-permanent seats would be demoted from a 2nd class to a 3rd class category, while the dominance of the Permanent 5 would remain unchallenged and unadulterated. Creation of a new 2nd class category, to supplant the existing second-class category, is merely reform for the sake of reform, and a path of least resistance with dubious logical underpinnings, beyond expedience.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines rejects such an approach. We must begin with the premise of comprehensive reform, unshackled from cynicism or the limits of self-doubt.

Thank you.