



SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Statement by H.E. Camillo M. Gonsalves,

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**At the Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the
Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to
Colonial Countries and Peoples**

General Assembly, United Nations, NY

9th June, 2008

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines wishes to associate itself fully with the Statement delivered by the Commonwealth of Dominica on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is a sister Caribbean nation whose post-colonial life is only 29 years old. We therefore share both a geographic kinship and an instinctive abhorrence of alien domination and controls imposed on a people without their explicit consent and acceptance.

No one can seriously discount the distinct cultural and national uniqueness of the Puerto Rican identity. The unique peoples of Puerto Rico, occupying this distinct geographical space, and possessed of a singular and self-assured national

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consciousness, must not be denied the right so succinctly enunciated by General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) of 14th December 1960:

“All peoples have the right to self determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”

We have heard eloquent and passionate testimony today of the inability of the Puerto Rican people to freely determine their status vis-à-vis the United States of America. Stripped of polemics and politics, this inability forms the legitimate core of an international issue that is properly before this body and the United Nations.

Puerto Ricans may be in favour of independence, statehood, autonomy, or a continuation of the status quo – in many ways, this is a decision that is within the exclusive province of the people of Puerto Rico. This Committee need only consider their right to make this decision, and their ability to freely debate and implement matters related to their national development.

The invective and blame leveled at the United States of America today may or may not be accurate, and it may or may not represent widely-held views of the majority of Puerto Ricans. This Committee is ill-equipped to divine the breadth and depth of the constituencies that today’s speakers purport to represent. What seems beyond debate, however, are two immediate responsibilities of the United States.

First, the United States has a responsibility to follow-through with the logical consequences of its decision to end bombings and military exercises in Vieques Island. Specifically, the responsibility for safe, effective and environmentally friendly clean-up lies with the party that created the danger and devastation.

Second, the United States bears a responsibility to expedite the process by which the people of Puerto Rico exercise their right to self-determination in a manner that respects the human rights of every Puerto Rican, regardless of political alignment.

The progress of this Committee over the past decades – if it can be called progress – has been incremental at best. Nonetheless, new geopolitical realities may herald a new window of opportunity for the right to self-determination in Puerto Rico.

Mr. Chairman,

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines supports the consensus adoption of this Resolution and its request that the United Nations General Assembly consider the question of Puerto Rico in all its aspects; and thanks all of the Puerto Rican patriots who have spoken today. I have no doubt that, given the opportunity, you shall responsibly exercise your right to self determination in a manner that redounds to the benefit of all of your countrymen and countrywomen.

I thank you.