



# **ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

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

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## **UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (63<sup>rd</sup> Session)**

### **Statement**

By

**H.E. Camillo M. Gonsalves**

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

on the

**“Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo  
imposed by the United States of America against Cuba”  
(Resolution A/63/L.4)**

29<sup>th</sup> October, 2008  
New York

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Mr. President,

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines associates itself with the statements made on behalf of CARICOM, and the Non-Aligned Movement.

2008 marks the 17<sup>th</sup> consecutive year that the United Nations is considering this resolution. Seventeen years ago, this resolution seemed to be an apt postscript to a troubling chapter in world history. The Berlin Wall had come down two years earlier, the U.S.S.R. had disbanded, and the so-called Iron Curtain had been lifted. The Cold War logic of dividing the world into competing spheres and separating ideological foe from friend by blockades, walls and embargos was giving way to a realisation that every nation is closely interconnected, and a commitment to link our societies and markets together through globalisation, trade, and tighter coordination. Regional cooperation and integration flourished and accelerated, in the EU, the AU, NAFTA, ASEAN, MERCOSUR and CARICOM, to name but a few.

Today, 17 years later, globalisation – for better and for worse – has taken hold, and the world recognizes the fundamental interconnectedness of our markets, our economies, our commercial interests, and, indeed, our peoples. We are all one global village, with a singular mission of eliminating artificial barriers between and among one another.

The developments of the last 17 years therefore beg the question: Why is Cuba still the subject of a Cold War embargo, when the Cold War itself has long since ended? Seldom has a more ill-conceived, illogical and illegal measure been applied so punitively, and for so long, to a people so wholly undeserving of such punishment.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines wishes to take this opportunity to extend its most profound and heartfelt gratitude to the people of Cuba, who have graduated over 200 Vincentian university students and who are currently playing host to 150 more, and whose surgeons performed operations on over 3,000 patients who required the care of ophthalmologists. Quite literally, they brought sight to the blind. We would like to thank Cuba for her doctors, who bring medical care and expertise to rural areas of our country; and to her engineers and architects and workers, who are currently assisting us in the construction of a hospital and an international airport. As far wealthier nations and institutions have looked askance of our developmental struggles, and offered only dubious prescriptions, platitudes and trite clichés, the Cuban people have rolled up their sleeves and given freely of themselves in a manner that has touched the hearts and souls of the Vincentian people.

Mr. President,

The United States of America has the sovereign right to trade with whom it chooses, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines would not presume to advise any State in regard to its bilateral trading arrangements. However, the extraterritorial application of domestic law is a violation of our Charter, and a contravention of the underpinnings of our modern notions of global trade and international relations. It does violence to the rights of self-determination and sovereign equality. Further, the Member States of CARICOM – all staunch friends of the United States – also suffer from this Embargo, because it affects Cuba's considerable potential, as the largest and most populous Caribbean island, to act as an economic engine for the region, and engenders unnecessary tension in our peaceful waters.

The economic fate of Cuba and the wider Caribbean cannot be subject to the whims of any local pressure groups, no matter their relative influence. Domestic considerations cannot outweigh the inalienable rights of over 11 million Cubans, or create exceptions to the bedrock principles of our international community, and our market systems.

The specific ideological divides that drove this Embargo no longer apply. Today, Western Europe is buying oil piped from Russia and shipped from Iran. The United States is one of China's largest trading partners, and the capitals of unfettered *laissez-faire* capitalism are now embracing nationalisations and other massive state interventions in their free markets. The old lines have so blurred as to become meaningless. As an ideological tool, the Embargo is a relic of a bygone era.

Mr. President,

This Embargo has not blockaded Cuban culture, whose undeniable power has enriched the shores of South Florida and the world. This Embargo has not contained Cuba's peerless athletic brilliance, which thrills the world in countless competitive fora. This Embargo has not thwarted Cuba's standing in the marketplace of ideas, where it competes on equal persuasive footing with others. And this Embargo has not curtailed the Cuban generosity of body and spirit, to which the poor and struggling peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean can eloquently attest. It has only caused the unnecessary suffering of a proud and noble people, who are nonetheless neither bowed nor broken by what is an increasingly indefensible act.

Indeed, there is troubling anecdotal evidence that ideological zealots and washed up terrorists seek to exploit the existence of this Embargo to suit their own nefarious designs. Cuba, the victim of modern terrorism as far back as 1976's Air Cubana bombing; and the United States, cruelly attacked as recently as September 11, 2001; have common cause in the fight against terrorism, and both have heroic patriots standing guard, at home and abroad, to protect their nations against this savagery. As a world united in the war on terrorism, the Embargo cannot stand as a flickering flame to which the moths of barbarism are drawn.

Mr. President,

José Martí, the apostle of Cuban independence, once said:

*Like stones rolling down hills, fair ideas reach their objectives despite all obstacles and barriers. It may be possible to speed or hinder them, but impossible to stop them.*

The necessity of ending this Embargo is a fair idea, whose time has come. It has been hindered by 17 years of obstacles thus far, but its inexorable path to fruition is undeniable. Let us dally no longer in the dusty corners of historical recriminations. Let us instead agree, collectively, that it is time to change, to move on with our globalised, multilateral, multicultural, multipolar experiment, to look to the future with hope, and to correct this historical travesty.

I thank you.