



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

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**Statement**

by

**H.E. I Rhonda King**

Permanent Representative

**Open VTC - Pandemics and Security**

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Thank you Mr. President,

I begin by thanking our briefers for their purposeful remarks and I commend the German presidency for convening this very timely discussion. The current pandemic has laid bare the critical weakness of a lopsided international system in which unbalanced global development undermines resilience and accentuates vulnerabilities, especially in the Global South. For conflict-affected states, the complex and interrelated challenges of reducing hostilities, building and maintaining peace, and promoting social and economic development are made most urgent, while the key ingredient for a sustainable recovery is the unity and solidarity of the international community.

Mr President,

As we have witnessed with COVID-19, public health emergencies are easily transfigured into international crises as they are fuelled by and implicate upon travel, trade, and other globalized tools that keep our societies in motion. To stifle the pandemic, these very structures are often the first to be suspended thereby exacerbating vulnerabilities not only in conflict-affected countries, but also for vulnerable groups elsewhere. A pertinent example is the thousands of seafarers that remain stranded aboard cruise ships and cargo vessels where they ply their

trade, marooned as a result of border closures and immigration restrictions aimed at curbing the pandemic, but also due to owners and operators of maritime vessels who seek to abscond from their legal obligations towards them.

As supply chains are interrupted, the delivery of life-saving humanitarian aid is delayed, food insecurity is further exacerbated, and social tensions are deepened along ethnic, communal, and political lines as the social contract in conflict-affected communities is gradually unravelled. More urgently, as competition over natural resources intensify against the global backdrop of climate-induced shortages, painful cycles of violence are instigated that impact upon, and *are further impacted by*, the public health emergency.

The interconnecting and overlapping health, socioeconomic, political, and security risks associated with pandemics necessitate an integrated and coordinated strategy that brings the entire international community together to address each dimension of the crisis in a systematic manner. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reaffirms its support of the World Health Organization's key coordinating role which ensures effective epidemic preparedness, prevention and response within the framework of the International Health Regulations (2005).

In the midst of a pandemic, while we cast our collective gaze toward health cooperation, the peacebuilding initiatives that prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict *must* be preserved and strengthened. More pressingly, we must adapt international public policy on several fronts to build capacities, ensure that inequalities are reduced, and create pathways for peace and justice that are accessible by all in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To this end, our delegation welcomes the ongoing thrust to streamline peacekeeping operations under the Secretary-General's A4P initiative, which brings political solutions to the forefront of our efforts to maintain international peace and security.

In closing, Mr President, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates its support for the Secretary-General's calls for a global ceasefire and, in this vein, we welcome the unanimous adoption of Resolution 2532, which, if upheld, will give vulnerable states the time and space to mend their social fabric. We congratulate France and Tunisia for their tireless efforts in bringing us to this unanimous adoption. We also advocate for the waiving of sanctions, unilateral or otherwise, that may undermine efforts to respond to the urgent health, socioeconomic, political, and security challenges precipitated by the pandemic. While the most dangerous pathogens move with stealth, we must work assiduously to rebuild the social contracts upon which resilience is built. I thank you.