



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

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Statement

by

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Deputy Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
to the United Nations

**Open VTC – “High-level Open VTC on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence:
Turning commitments into compliance”**

United Nations Security Council

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New York

Please check against delivery

Thank you Mr. President,

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines welcomes the participation of all distinguished Foreign Ministers. We thank Germany for hosting this meeting, as well as the Dominican Republic for their role as Co-Chairs (with Germany) of the IEG on Women, Peace and Security. We are particularly grateful for the insightful briefings from SRSG Pramila Patten; UNHCR Special Envoy, Angelina Jolie; representative of the NGO Working group on Women, Peace and Security, Khin Ohmar; and Executive President of the AFJC, Nadia Carine Fornel-Poutou.

Mr. President,

We begin by honouring the lives of *ALL* victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. We begin by recognising their full humanity and paying heartfelt tribute to them for sharing their stories, captured in reports to the Security Council and other institutions at the local, national, regional, and international levels. We honour the countless untold stories of gendered violence in conflict, mainly against women and girls, but also against boys and men. The desires and solutions that emerge from the telling of these stories should serve as the primary point of departure for addressing the root causes of such violence.

Mr. President,

We are well aware that conflict-related sexual violence is produced and maintained in a context of insecurity, and asymmetries of power that are historical, structural, institutionalised and systemic. Against the backdrop of persistent underdevelopment in conflict-affected countries, gender justice – critical to the elimination of all forms of gendered violence – requires the implementation of comprehensive strategies that ensure the social, economic, and political participation of women and girls, *at all levels*, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As outlined in resolution 2467, and in other fora, including the Peace and Security Council of the African Union during its 862nd session last year, we must transform a widespread “culture of impunity into a culture of justice and accountability through consistent and effective prosecution” and by “fostering national ownership and leadership of holistic, sustainable, as well as victim and survivor-centered responses.” We welcome the recently established Global Survivors Fund, in this regard. Responses must privilege the knowledge of diverse victims and survivors in their recovery, in judicial and other reparatory mechanisms, and in decision-making bodies. Local customs, traditions and expertise should also be prioritised to develop institutional mechanisms that deliver justice and enhance accountability. These actions must be pursued alongside wider structural transformation to eliminate *ALL* gendered inequalities, locally, nationally and globally, while respecting the fundamental norms of sovereignty and political independence.

While the production of national guidance documents, action plans and operational tools; as well as the ongoing work to create and operationalise gender-responsive mission mandates, are all encouraging, progress remains frustratingly slow. As we mark milestone anniversaries of our United Nations, the Beijing Platform for Action and the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), urgent progress is needed. This requires the consistent application of critical gender and political economy analyses within the peacekeeping and peacebuilding work of the Council, to produce gender-responsive mandates that assist conflict-affected countries in reconfiguring their social, economic, and political landscapes, to comprehensively address the challenges of sexual and gender-based violence.

Excellencies,

In closing, we join those who caution against divesting critical healthcare and social funding, as a robust global response to the COVID-19 pandemic is necessary. COVID-19 responses must include focused funding to ensure healthcare support for victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, amid reports of escalating violence, increased displacement, and a general intensification of protection challenges, that disproportionately affect women and girls. We reaffirm that ending sexual and gender-based violence demands both the cessation of conflict and the elimination of gendered inequality, globally.

I thank you.