



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

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Statement

by

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Permanent Representative

Open VTC on Peace Operations and Human Rights

Security Council

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Thank you Madam President,

At the outset, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines thanks the briefers for their remarks, and we commend the German presidency for convening this important discussion.

Madam President,

Peace operations are some of the most effective tools at the disposal of our United Nations system to mitigate against the effects of violent conflict, promote stability, and lay the foundation for lasting peace and security. In pursuing these noble ends, peace operations provide key political functions in which conflict-affected states are reconfigured and social norms are realigned, as new institutions are built and the authority of the state is re-established. In this regard, the integration of human rights components within peace operations fosters a structural shift in which rule-of-law provisions, social norms, and political cultures that maximize the rights and privileges of all civilians become embedded in the post-conflict status quo. In this regard we welcome the selfless sacrifices that all peacekeepers make in committing to this honourable purpose.

While freedom remains universal in character, it is crucial that human rights components are not universalized in a manner that disregards local cultures and traditions, and thereby undermines host-countries' capacities to curate the delicate seeds of peace. Indeed, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Human rights components must be designed and integrated into peace operations in such a way that local customs and values are safeguarded, while the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of *all* states are respected. To this end, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines welcomes the ongoing reforms to peacekeeping operations under the Secretary-General's A4P initiative, which brings nationally-led political solutions to the forefront of our efforts to maintain international peace and security.

Our delegation emphasizes the critical role of regional and sub-regional organizations in our quest for lasting peace. The engagement and leadership of the African Union (AU) on peace initiatives across the African continent is a pertinent example of how a regionalized focus may

strengthen protections for rights and freedoms by accentuating the contextual realities of conflicts, improving community-engagement, facilitating constructive dialogue, and building trust amongst stakeholders in accordance with the aspirations of the African Union community's Agenda 2063.

Madam President,

We call upon the international community to renew its efforts to strengthen the capacities of *all* states, in line with national priorities and in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This remains the primary blueprint for inclusive people-centred growth and development, upon which greater freedoms can be made readily available to all, while the root causes of conflicts are comprehensively addressed.

In addressing root causes, it must be noted that abuses committed by *all* parties must be accounted for, and adequate restitution provided to victims and survivors. We have seen instances in the past where peacekeepers themselves have committed human rights violations against the very civilians they are mandated to protect. In Haiti, acts of sexual exploitation and abuse of women and children, and other forms of violence committed against Haitian citizens, have left deep-rooted traumas and a general distrust of the UN's engagement in the country, further magnifying a perception of illegitimacy borne out of the peace operation's role in initiating the deadliest epidemic in the country's history. Haiti still grapples with the remnants of these protection failures today.

Madam President, the quest for freedom and justice has always been, and continues to remain, a cornerstone on which our global civilization is advanced. Our delegation therefore considers it a moral imperative for all actors in the international community to promote political inclusion, social welfare, economic participation, and protection under the law for all persons, without discrimination of any kind. These are key pillars upon which lasting peace and prosperity is rendered, and peace operations play a critical role in assisting conflict-affected states to mend their social fabric and implement these fundamental safeguards.

I thank you.