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Statement

by

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Open Debate - Pandemics and The Challenges of Sustaining Peace

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Thank you Mr President,

At the outset, I thank Secretary General Antonio Guterres, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon and Ms. Sarah Cliffe for their insightful remarks, and we commend the Indonesian presidency for convening this timely discussion.

These are extremely challenging times. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to claim lives and livelihoods as it tests our collective resolve - as nations, regions and as an international community. Supply chain disruptions and sharp declines in economic activities have exacerbated inequalities within and among countries, while prolonged lockdowns have produced disastrous implications for humanitarian operations, educational sectors and other social protections that are critical for sustaining peace.

For conflict-affected countries, the pandemic has accentuated security risks as delicate peace agreements have become increasingly fragile, while many warring parties, including armed groups, continue to disregard our shared calls for a global ceasefire as enunciated in resolution 2532. Under these tenuous circumstances, persons in vulnerable situations have been disproportionately affected by food shortages, high levels of

displacement, increases in sexual and gender-based violence, and other humanitarian and protection concerns that threaten to reverse the hard-won peacebuilding gains in countries affected by or emerging from conflict.

Amidst these immense challenges, the United Nations' Peacebuilding Architecture has played a crucial role to strengthen the institutional arrangements between Member States and International Financial Institutions in order to safeguard national development plans, reinforce social contracts, and bolster national ownership over peace processes. These institutional arrangements, geared towards strengthening partnerships and providing predictable and reliable financing, are critical for preventing conflict in many fragile contexts. In this regard, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines welcomes the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 and the critical work to building and sustaining peace financed through the Secretary General's Peacebuilding Fund. However, both remain significantly underfunded and we urge donor countries and the international private sector to renew their efforts to provide financial support to these essential institutional mechanisms, which provide a critical lifeline for many in precarious situations.

In order to ensure that conflict-affected countries are able to mend their social fabrics, advance political processes, strengthen institutions, restore

state authority, and provide justice and prosperity to all in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we encourage the international donor community to honor their overseas developmental assistance commitments and to explore additional pathways for providing debt-relief. We also echo the joint appeals of the UN Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the recent calls by the panel of Human Rights Special Rapporteurs for the discontinuation of all unilateral coercive measures that impede countries' abilities to address the pandemic. Sanctions create unnecessary suffering in vulnerable societies, and serve to undermine national ownership and global cooperation - the most basic tenets of sustaining peace.

Mr President,

While we continue to grapple with the peacebuilding implications of COVID-19, we must renew our efforts to protect the most vulnerable. Concurrently, we must also maintain a watchful eye on other menacing threats, such as climate change, that add further complexity to our 21st Century security landscape. As we look towards the intergovernmental phase of the 2020 review of the Peacebuilding Architecture, we must work to further strengthen the synergies across the UN system, including by exploring new modalities through the Economic and Social Council

(ECOSOC) for mobilizing comprehensive development responses to peacebuilding challenges at the national and regional levels. Only by strengthening and mainstreaming a cohesive and integrated approach across the peace, security and development nexus can we provide the inclusive, people-centered, and climate-informed solutions needed to sustain peace.

I conclude by echoing what the distinguished Honorable Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia said earlier today, “crises can also provide an opportunity for peace”. Let us not waste this opportunity.

I Thank You.