



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

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1. At the outset, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines wishes to thank the organizers of this event for their invitation. We also take this opportunity to reaffirm our solidarity with the people and government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, under the leadership of its legitimate President, Nicholas Maduro.
2. Today's '*High-level Side Event*' emerges against an undeniable truth – the COVID-19 pandemic is wreaking havoc across the globe and it is sparing no country in its onslaught. The region of Latin America, recently declared as the new epicenter of the pandemic and where countries have been grappling with structural inequalities of a lopsided international system in which unbalanced global development undermines resilience and accentuates vulnerabilities;

must unite, redouble its efforts and leave no stone unturned, to frontally tackle this deadly pandemic.

3. Accordingly, my delegation is disappointed that today's event was convened with a special focus on Venezuela. It would have been more appropriate to have a candid discussion on tackling the COVID-19 in the region of Latin America – the new epicenter. More importantly, data from the World Health Organization reveals that Venezuela is not amongst the leading countries of COVID-19 in the region.
4. Undoubtedly, Venezuela, like so many countries throughout the world, is facing humanitarian challenges, which are further complicated by the pandemic. We therefore do not believe that a jaundiced approach is necessary, especially since the Government and Opposition have already demonstrated their willingness to unite in combatting the pandemic, by agreeing to allow financial contributions in humanitarian aid, to be delivered to Venezuela apolitically through the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).
5. Whilst we recognize the laudable efforts between the Government and Opposition in casting aside political and ideological differences to combat the

pandemic, we believe that the international community should be more responsible in accompanying these efforts. In this respect, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates that the humanitarian situation in Venezuela cannot be divorced from the illegal unilateral, extraterritorial and coercive sanctions imposed on this sister Caribbean nation. On one hand, there are repeated calls to address the humanitarian situation in Venezuela, yet on the other, a deafening silence reverberates when there is a call to lift the illegal unilateral sanctions.

6. As we commend the Venezuelan Government and people in their efforts in responding to the complexities of the COVID-19, as well as the concomitant migratory challenges. We also renew our call for the lifting of the economic blockade to alleviate the suffering of Venezuelans. We reiterate our support for the calls of Secretary General Guterres and High Commissioner Bachelet, for the lifting of unilateral sanctions, and the cessation of hostilities, in order to save lives, protect health personnel and reduce the transmission of the disease in the country. We remain steadfast in our view that economic asphyxiation will only create undue hardships and exacerbate the already great suffering of the people of Venezuela, and by extension Latin America.

7. Finally, we encourage all well-intentioned actors, interested in supporting the people of Latin America, to refrain from politicizing humanitarian response. The international community, now more than ever, needs to be more united, cooperative and robust to address in a systematic manner, the health, socioeconomic, political, and security risks associated with COVID-19.
8. 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.
9. I thank you.

Question:

How has the imposition of unilateral economic sanctions affected countries' abilities to respond to the pandemic?