



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

685 3rd Ave., Suite 1108, New York, NY 10017 • Tel: (212) 599-0950 • Fax: (212) 599-1020 •

svgmission@gmail.com | <http://svg-un.org>

Statement

by

H.E. Hon. Dr. Ralph E. Gonsalves

Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

United Nations Summit on Biodiversity

Leadership Dialogue 2: Harnessing science, technology and innovation,
capacity building, access and benefit-sharing, financing and partnerships
for biodiversity

September 30th, 2020
New York

Check against delivery

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We meet today against a worrying backdrop of global biodiversity challenges and failures, a deepening climate crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our world is badly wounded. The only salve is multilateral cooperation – sharing best practices, taking action at home and being good neighbors to one another in this global village. Global partnerships including those between governments, the private sector and civil society are absolutely vital.

In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, we have found ways to promote major industries, and to protect biodiversity simultaneously. For instance, in 2018, we installed a Coral Reef Early Warning System in the Tobago Cays. This site was chosen based on its value to the tourism sector and the richness of the marine biodiversity.

In 2018, a decision was taken to work with businesses and consumers to reduce demand for single use plastics, and accelerate communications on the value of ecosystems, thereby reducing biodiversity loss and optimizing the economic benefits. In addition, we have banned the hitherto ubiquitous Styrofoam containers, often used for food.

We are employing much better ways to regulate the disposal of grey water from coastal businesses, and effluent from yachts and other pleasure craft. We plan to protect further our reefs by restricting the types of sunscreen used by swimmers, divers and beachgoers. And we are taking comprehensive action that will slow beach degradation and protect our coastal assets. Coastal river defences are being put in place; but it is all very costly for a vulnerable Small Island Developing State like ours.

I take this opportunity to commend Vincentians, both individuals and businesses, for the actions they are taking to protect our rich biodiversity and our environment as a whole. From the initiative by All Island Recycling to place garbage bins on almost every corner in our capital, to the Ashton Multipurpose Cooperative, a small enterprise working to conserve the marine and coastal ecosystems in Union Island. So, too, I thank our international partners for working with us to foster even better cooperation and partnerships. But still, as always, much more needs to be done.

Excellencies,

Collectively, the world is lagging way behind in achieving the goals of the three Rio Conventions on climate change, desertification and biodiversity - integral parts of a composite whole on which our very survival depends. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into focus the dangers of destroying biodiversity as well as underscoring our dependency on each other. Let us build back, not just build back better, but to build back optimally and enduringly for all of humanity's sake.

A high level representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will co-chair this Leaders' Dialogue.

Thank you.