



**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. Sir Louis Straker

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs

**Open VTC - Maintenance of International Peace and Security: The
Humanitarian Effects of Environmental Degradation and Peace and Security**

Security Council

September 17th, 2020

New York

Check against delivery

Thank you Mr. President,

At the outset, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines commends you for convening this important discussion, and we thank the briefers for their pointed and sobering remarks.

The scale of human suffering wrought by Climate Change and its attendant hazards demand the firm political will and decisive collective action to urgently and comprehensively address this crisis. Millions have been displaced as a result of drought, desertification, floods, coastal and river erosion, and other environmental hazards. Millions more suffer due to acute food and health insecurity, fractured social contracts, and painful cycles of violence initiated by competition over increasingly-scarce resources. With the livelihoods of approximately 2.5 billion people globally depending on agriculture, the secondary effects of environmental degradation, such as reduced land fertility and biodiversity loss, threaten even further suffering.

Across the Sahel region, the Lake Chad Basin, and numerous countries including Haiti and Afghanistan, environmental degradation produces significant humanitarian, socioeconomic, political, and security implications. Inequalities are heightened, development is undermined, and scarce financial resources are diverted toward adaptation and mitigation at great opportunity costs for affected populations. Moreover, the increased presence of risk multipliers, such as hate speech and disinformation, serves to further compound the already challenging situation as intercommunal tensions are aroused, political polarization is fomented, and trust in public institutions is eroded thereby impairing governance capacities.

To effectively address these multidimensional challenges, an integrated and coherent approach that leverages the technical capacities of all UN organs and specialized agencies, within their respective mandates, is needed. The three international conventions touching and concerning biodiversity, desertification and land degradation, and climate change are a composite and integrated whole for which Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates its unwavering support. Climate Change and environmental degradation are inextricably linked, and both have dire consequences for peace and security in many contexts. We therefore reiterate the importance of incorporating the humanitarian and security concerns of Climate Change and environmental degradation in all mandated reports of situations on the Security Council's agenda.

Additionally, we call for the delivery of capacity-building initiatives to improve land tenure and strengthen environmental governance as a means of building resilience in environmentally vulnerable and conflict-affected countries. Developed countries must also honor finance pledges for climate adaptation and mitigation at a minimum. Moreover, we reiterate that all states must commit to the terms of the Paris Agreement and to take the actions necessary to keep temperature rise at 1.5° Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Without this necessary action, environmental degradation and ecological destruction would continue globally.

We also reiterate our concerns over the SAFER oil tanker, which represents a looming environmental disaster that will worsen the humanitarian suffering of the Yemeni people. An explosion of the tanker could cost lives, and an oil spill will destroy the marine environment and those livelihoods that depend on it. Urgent action on this issue is therefore needed.

Mr. President, conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding activities must be informed by a holistic, longer-term approach to be effective. We must therefore work diligently, as an international community, to integrate environmentally-sensitive strategies across the peace-security-development and humanitarian nexus. This is the surest pathway to better protect those most affected by the effects of environmental degradation and to safeguard the biophysical environment on which all life depends.

I Thank You.