



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

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Statement

by

H.E. Hon Dr. Ralph E Gonsalves

Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs

**“Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Upholding Multilateralism
and the United Nations-centered International System”**

Security Council

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Thank you Mr. President,

I thank the preceding speakers for their remarks; and commend China for convening this important debate. As a small country whose continued peaceful existence depends on the norms and principles of international law, and the multilateral system in which these tenets are enveloped, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines places particular emphasis on today's discussion. This fundamental principle is applicable for all states - large and small in every part of the world. Commandist, bullying or threatening behaviour by any state in relation to another is antithetical to this precept and portends dangerous consequences for all.

Last September, we commemorated the 75th anniversary of this treasured institution. We celebrated, too, the many successes and achievements realised in our collective quest for peace and prosperity. Yet, there is still much more to be done and to be ever more focussed, creative and relevant in these complex and challenging times.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the reality that a renewed multilateralism remains an urgent moral, political and existential imperative, under-girded by the UN Charter principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence.

Amidst the severe health, socioeconomic, political, and security implications of COVID-19, states are required to contend with:

- the ever-intensifying hazards of Climate Change,
- the continued spread of terrorism and organised crime,
- increased hunger and acute food insecurity,
- political polarisation, disinformation and hate speech,
- the escalation of ethnic and intercommunal tensions,
- and in far too many contexts, conflict and mass human displacement.

These contemporary challenges are inextricably inter-connected. And they will not be successfully addressed by any short-sighted unilateral or military means. To the extent that many of these issues stretch across borders, and more easily overwhelm the limited capacities of vulnerable states, effective and coordinated multilateral action is an essential condition for *any* sustainable solution. Only a comprehensive whole-of-system approach would suffice in addressing the peace and security, development, and humanitarian concerns of affected states.

Mr. President,

In the face of vast but continually expanding peace and security challenges experienced globally, we *must* move quickly in a fresh direction. Bold and innovative steps are needed to alleviate human suffering, especially in conflict-affected settings. Capacity-building

and development assistance should be scaled up, and national ownership over peace and political processes strengthened. Practical, inclusive, people-centered, and climate-sensitive solutions ought to be developed and implemented in line with national needs and priorities, and in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is necessary and desirable that all states must work together, constructively and within the framework of international law - with the support and assistance of the United Nations and relevant regional and sub-regional organisations - to achieve this vision of a more peaceful and prosperous world. When disputes do occur, they ought to be settled amicably and equitably through dialogue, diplomacy, mediation, and other participatory approaches, rather than through unilateral or coercive means. There can be no substitute for trust and mutual respect. Any deviation from these universally accepted norms, *wheresoever and by whomsoever committed*, severely undermines the ideals of multilateralism embodied in the UN Charter. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains committed to these guiding principles.

To conclude, Mr. President, let us all be reminded of our forebears' vision of unity and solidarity as they fashioned this United Nations system. As we seek to confront the unique and complex challenges of the 21st Century, including a sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic which has already destroyed far too many lives and

livelihoods, the extant circumstances demand the presence of a renewed and effective multilateralism steeped in the virtues of inclusivity, equality and justice, and guided by the principles of international law. We cannot remain separated by narrow interests or be divided in purpose. We must work in comity even more, together, urgently and resolutely, to realise peace, security and development for all of humanity. I Thank You.