



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

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Statement

by

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High-level Briefing: “Protection of humanitarian space”

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Thank you Mr. President, Excellencies

We wish to recognise the participation of distinguished Foreign Ministers and to thank the briefers for their thorough remarks.

Attacks against humanitarian workers and the infrastructure needed to sustain aid delivery have risen dramatically since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Heightened and extended volatility in conflict affected countries and regions has also led to an exponential increase the need for humanitarian assistance. Collectively, we have advocated for the preservation and expansion of humanitarian access in light of the adverse effects of multiple crises on civilian populations, increased displacement and the intensification of violence against humanitarian workers.

OCHA estimates that over 235 million persons globally are in need of humanitarian assistance in 2021. In conflict settings, last year saw a widespread increase in instability, resulting from the compounding effects of the health crisis, contracting economies and climate-related security risks. Accompanying this rapidly eroding humanitarian context is the increased incidence of fatal and non-fatal violence against humanitarian workers; the overwhelming majority of which is committed against national staff.

Mr. President,

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines takes this opportunity to make the following recommendations as we urgently seek to improve the safety of humanitarian workers and to preserve and increase humanitarian space to meet the growing needs of civilians in affected countries and regions.

1. Regarding insights drawn from humanitarian workers and their experience of brokering access with diverse and dispersed non-state armed groups, they note that moral and legal obligation is simply not enough to secure adherence to international humanitarian law. In practice, there is no one size fits all to negotiating access. Context specific, pragmatic arrangements become necessary. Whether through multi-agency negotiations with parties to conflict or more formal peace agreements, the principles, protocols and ground rules must emerge through collective decision-making.
2. Secondly, national counterterrorism legislation and policies must avoid criminalizing critical actions undertaken by humanitarian organisations and workers. Similarly, sanctions and counterterrorism measures, set out in various Security Council resolutions, must not restrict the ability of humanitarian workers to undertake relief efforts. In fact, there is greater need for more systematic monitoring and reporting on the impact of sanctions regimes on humanitarian actions. Efforts to systematize reporting can be undertaken by the Secretariat. Humanitarian impact and risk assessments should precede the establishment and renewal of all sanctions regimes.
3. We also wish to add that notwithstanding the existing capacity challenges at the national level, states must be supported in their efforts to improve accountability mechanisms to end impunity for violence against civilians and humanitarian workers, in keeping with UNSCR 2175 (2014) and 2286 (2016).
4. Finally, adequate resourcing is needed to protect humanitarian space. This includes ensuring sustainable financing for security efforts to protect civilians

and humanitarian staff. Humanitarian organizations must be able to access funding to support training for context analyses, negotiation skills, and improved communication equipment. Donors should ensure that their funding agreements provide scope for adequate and ongoing risk assessment and management, as a means through which to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers.

In closing, I wish to point to the huge debt of collective gratitude owed to humanitarian staff. Increasingly, they provided the only source of psycho-social support for women and children surviving sexual violence, critical food and water supplies for civilians on the brink of starvation and offer health services to increased numbers of displaced persons. We mourn the loss of those killed in service of civilians. In honour of their memory and sacrifice, we have an enormous responsibility to engage in decisive actions that protect and support all persons providing critical relief in conflict settings.