



**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. Mr. Camillo Gonsalves
Minister of Finance and Economic Planning
Of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Maritime Security

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Check against delivery

Thank you, Mr. President,

At the outset, permit me to commend the Republic of India for convening today's open debate, and I thank the briefers for their insightful remarks. I would also more personally like to thank his excellency Prime Minister Modi for his public solidarity and support with our Prime Minister, the Prime Minister of St. Vincent, and the Grenadines who was recently victim of - as he termed it and correctly - a ghastly attack. I would like to inform Prime Minister Modi we are warmed by his solidarity and that our Prime Minister is well on the way on returning to his duties.

As a small island developing state whose material existence and continued prosperity is inextricably linked with the oceanic resources that define and circumscribe our archipelago, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines attaches great significance to this discussion. Indeed in our subregion over 120% of our territorial space is marine space.

Mr. President,

More than three billion people, globally, depend on the oceans for their livelihoods. It is imperative that the social, economic, environmental, and security considerations pertaining to our seascapes are taken fully into account. A range of interrelated maritime security risks threaten life, living, and production in both

maritime and landlocked states. And we have heard them in full throughout this discussion, including:

- piracy and armed robbery;
- the illegal trade of arms, ammunition, narcotics and other contraband;
- irregular migration and human trafficking;
- illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; and,
- deliberate damage to marine ecosystems.

These challenges can only be solved through comprehensive multilateral approaches that systematically address the peace and security, developmental, and humanitarian concerns of all states. Only then would a prosperous future for all nations - including our small island developing states who rely so much on our oceans - be assured.

The destructive forces of Climate Change, which pose existential risks to low-lying coastal countries - *such as those interspersed across our Caribbean Community (CARICOM)* - further accentuates these challenges. The international community's efforts to enhance maritime security will prove inadequate until meaningful action is taken to arrest global warming which jeopardises the social fabric of states everywhere and turns our marine environment into yet another threat to security on land.

Mr. President,

Recent escalations in the Gulf of Oman bring even closer into focus the need for all states to work together within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to ensure freedom of navigation and innocent passage. Certainly, each country is duty-bound to safeguard its coastal resources, defend its maritime borders, and protect its citizens and interests from seaborne threats. However, these actions must ***always*** comply with international law and give full respect to the sacrosanct principles of state sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines commends the recently signed memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the African Union (AU) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission to reinforce joint efforts to address maritime safety. So too do we commend Kenya for its leadership of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, and the Indian Ocean Commission for its support to this important Group. These multilateral mechanisms are crucial to the international efforts to strengthen maritime security.

We in CARICOM have taken tremendous strides to enhance maritime security by improving our surveillance and intelligence-gathering capacities, modernising law enforcement and criminal justice sectors, and upgrading and harmonising regulations for travel and trade. Through multilateral initiatives such as the Regional Security System (RSS), the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) and the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI)

Commission, my country has worked to advance the maintenance of peace and security at our shorelines and beyond and throughout the “Zone of Peace” that is circumnavigated by the Caribbean seas.

Our delegation emphasises the importance of information-sharing to help address increasingly sophisticated networks of transnational organised crime which undermine maritime security and threaten international peace. In this regard, we hail the invaluable role of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in promoting intergovernmental coordination and providing capacity-building assistance through the Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP). Further development support is required to help strengthen the institutional arrangements that govern our marine resources.

Mr. President, the plethora of security challenges that envelop maritime nations, particularly small island developing states, demand a firm recommitment by the international community to enhance our multilateral cooperation. This is the crucial prerequisite in the pursuit of peace, security and development, for all nations and peoples - especially to those of us who so heavily depend on the oceans for life and living in this precarious period of climate change.

I Thank You.