

STATEMENT

BY

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SAINT VINCENT AND **THE** GRENADINES

AT
THE MAURITIUS INTERNATIONAL MEETING

For the 10-year Review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the
Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished Heads of State, colleague Ministers, Diplomats, delegates. St. Vincent and the Grenadines [SVG] joins other SIDS delegation in thanking and congratulating Mauritius for its warm hospitality and excellent hosting of this most important SIDS conference.

The sustainable development of SIDS such as SVG depends on the committed cooperation of several partners, especially our development partners.

As we gather here today to review the implementation of the BPOA. After a decade we recognize that there have been some achievements, but much is yet to be accomplished and meanwhile new challenges have emerged. Globalization while promising some benefits also has impacted negatively on important issues such as trade. SVG for example depended on the export of Bananas as its major foreign exchange earner up to the 1990's when we enjoyed preferential market access but this has been changing with dire consequences.

The Banana industry has made a tremendous contribution to our national development, in particular to our rural development. It contributed to infrastructural development, to the education of our people, to healthcare and in general to the livelihood of our people. This is the way of life that is threatened by the changes in the WTO trading rules. We are being told to be creative and to diversify but the latter especially is no simple tasks. The critical issue for us is to at least sustain the levels of socioeconomic development we have achieved and to work towards improvement.

Among the important expectations of this process, is the mobilization of resources to assist Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Today, we seek, and very shortly we expect to receive commitments from our benefactors through practical and pragmatic actions to further implement these objectives.

Mr. Chairman, as our economies become more engulfed by globalization, we are confronted with other new and re-emerging issues in the fields of health-care such as SARS and HIV/AIDS, need for renewable sources of energy, information technologies and security. For example, the resources now required to ensure international security compete very strongly for those required in the areas of our economy which are most in need of assistance, such as basic health and education, sustainable employment and poverty reduction.

Mr. Chairman, no one can be in a better position to know the needs of small island developing states than its citizenry. However, the enhanced support of the international community is also essential if our small developing states are to effectively implement the initiatives needed for our further development. Promises of Official Development Assistance (ODA) must be replaced with practical generous assistance. Problem-specific technologies associated with freshwater, energy, information, climate change, and coping with manmade disasters must become available. These are not usually indigenous and are often very costly, therefore consideration must be given to facilitate their transfer and to make them affordable to SIDS such as SVG.

Meanwhile SVG has demonstrated the political will to meet the challenges of the BPOA. Through good governance and the use of our own limited resources, programs for education, health-care, poverty reduction, and environmental preservation have been funded.

Mr. Chairman our own efforts quite often produce developmental indicators that put us in a category that suggests that we are much better off than we really are, and consequently treated as less deserving of development assistance.

Mr. Chairman in a way we feel that we are being penalized for our creativity and successes. We call on the international community to recognize the need for continuing support for our sustained social and economic development and for reviewing of the graduating criteria of SIDS.

Mr. Chairman, if the past did not provide us with sufficient need to seek sustainable technologies to cope with natural disasters, the wrath brought on by the South Asian Tsunami of December 26, 2004 provides timely evidence of such need. St Vincent and the Grenadines joins with our other SIDS to express our sincerest sympathies to those who suffered lost of their loved ones and properties in this horrific disaster.

We note the heavy emphasis on environmental conservation in this review of the BPOA. SVG as a small multi-island State not only faces the usual threats of hurricanes, sea level rise with consequent coastal, marine and land degradation. We also are home to one of

the world's active land based volcanoes and neighbor to one that is submarine. Activity in either can produce tsunami type disasters as recently experienced in the Indian Ocean.

Finally **Mr. Chairman**, if we are to be guided by past conferences and international meetings similar to this undertaking, we and our partners need to coordinate, advocate, mobilize and prepare follow-up and monitoring mechanisms at the highest levels of government both regionally and internationally to ensure the timely and appropriate follow-up to the implementation of the outcome we seek for the sustained development of our small and developing states.

Mr. Chairman, our islands may be small but our stakes are big. If our concerns are not addressed now, most certainly, their subsequent consequences will spill over into those countries that now possess the ability to assist, but are tardy to do so. We need urgent assistance to help to put in place infrastructural and organizational mechanisms to mitigate the effects of these environmental and at times man made disasters and to consolidate our achievements.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.