



# **ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

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PERMANENT MISSION OF ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
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## **STATEMENT**

BY

**H.E. Dr. The Hon. Ralph Gonsalves**

Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

To

**THE HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**NEW YORK  
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Mr. President:

The world is paying especial attention to the United Nations at this critical juncture in its sixty-year history. We cannot afford to fail the six billion inhabitants of planet Earth. It cannot be business as usual. Tired diplomatic postures and ritual incantations are not what these challenging times demand. Neither an arrogant triumphalism nor a learned helplessness will do. Let us be truly focused on the strategic issues at hand and work together to uplift our human civilization, materially, in spirit, and in peaceful solidarity. Let not the humbug of vanity, lodged in personal, institutional or national spaces, encumber us in our collective quest for a better world.

As my country sees it, this High-Level Plenary Meeting is required to work urgently and diligently on a three-fold agenda:

First, to advance in practical terms the development agenda around the Millennium Development Goals, and beyond them to a sustainable condition resting upon the principles of solidarity,

complementarity, equity, and humanity's ennoblement.

Secondly, to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the management of fundamental global economic, security, social and political issues touching and concerning mankind.

And thirdly, to redress appropriately the systemic problems in international trade, international finance, money and technology transfers, financing for development, and global decision making, in such a manner as to reflect the apt, time-honoured principles of justice, equity, democracy, transparency, accountability and inclusiveness.

It is surely unacceptable for so many of the world's richest nations to make repeated pledges of increased official development assistance and then break them routinely, with impunity. These rich countries are failing woefully to meet their own solemnly declared targets of ODA amounting to 0.7 per cent of GDP. Further, the ODA is often delivered in a one-sided and discretionary way as distinct from a juridically-based manner which

can be, and frequently is, insulting to the dignity of the donors and the recipients alike. Moreover, the assistance winds its way to the recipient country at a snail's pace, and through labyrinthine procedures, which evince a certain parsimony, and even cruelty. It is a fact, too, that in the Caribbean Community, ODA has fallen sharply even though some one-third of the region still lives in poverty.

At the same time, those developing countries which fail and/or refuse to embrace an active constitutionalism, day-to-day democratic practices, good governance, internationally-accepted norms of political behaviour, and political hygiene, have little right to complain about the donor's indifference to them. Everyone must get his or her act together and come to the table with clean hands.

It is evident that, principally due to the unequal and unfair system of international trade, the dominant neo-liberal economic arrangements globally, the damning neglect of poor countries by many rich ones, the ravages of nature, and poor governance in

many developing countries, progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals has been significantly retarded. This awful state of affairs demands appropriate action all around. Excellent ideas for progress exist but their implementation awaits more frustratingly distant days. At this meeting, the appropriate lead must be taken. It is the central obligation of our times. It is a great cause and great causes have never been won by doubtful men and women.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is well on the way towards achieving the central MDGs. Indeed, several of them have been accomplished and surpassed.

Yet, St. Vincent and the Grenadines remains extremely vulnerable due to its small size, limited resources, the insufficiency of its economic diversification, the huge dependence on exports and the awesome impact of natural disasters. This vulnerability is currently being further stretched by the threat to our banana industry as a consequence of the changing market regime and altered market conditions in Europe and by the massive increase

in the price of oil internationally. I call on the United Nations and its member-states to heed the plight of the poor banana farmers and workers in the Caribbean. Specifically, I urge the Latin American countries, the European Union, the United States of America and the African Caribbean and Pacific group to work together towards a negotiated settlement of this most important issue.

I am obliged to applaud President Hugo Chavez of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for his timely PETROCARIBE Initiative on the export of oil and associated energy products on very favourable terms to the Caribbean. This is an excellent example of South-South co-operation and good neighbourliness.

Mr. President, the international community has an obligation to assist the Caribbean Community, especially the poorer and more vulnerable countries like St. Vincent and the Grenadines in meeting the following six challenges, namely:-

I) The appropriate and efficacious interfacing with the

globalised economy;

II) Achieving faster economic growth with social equity;

III) Reducing the level of government indebtedness;

IV) Transforming the private sector into a more dynamic and entrepreneurial entity;

V) Developing a more efficient and resourceful public sector;  
and

VI) Creating a single market economy in the region so as to promote growth and competitiveness

Mr. President, while we are pleased to have an outcome document for this Summit, we are profoundly disappointed that there has been a derailing of satisfactory arrangements previously agreed upon by this Organisation over the past months for achieving a more secure world, free from want, free from fear, and freedom to live in dignity. There has been insufficient boldness in the admirable quest to reform the structure of the United Nations system.