

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Permanent Mission of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations

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Statement

By

Dr. the Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves

Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

At the

Post 2015 Summit

25th September, 2015 New York

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Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathered together at this special assemblage of world leaders to adopt a comprehensive, far-reaching, and people-centred set of universal and transformative goals and targets known collectively as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to take humanity further along the journey of a the global developmental quest, fashioned fifteen (15) years ago, as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We have before us today seventeen (17) SDGs, identified separately, but bound tightly in an integrated whole, to realise the mighty ambition to make lives far better, and sustainably so, for <u>all</u> of us who occupy Mother Earth, especially those who have had to endure the pain and anguish of indigence, poverty, vulnerability, and marginalisation.

We have arrived at the SDGs after much stock-taking and reflection in our conversation on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Solid, and in many cases, spectacular, progress has been made on targets embedded in the MDGs. Still, as always much more remains to be done; and time is not on the side of the almost one billion persons, globally, who currently live in extreme poverty. It is a damning indictment of our world civilisation that one in five persons in its developing regions lives on less than US \$1.25 per day! [We must thus make haste, and sustainably so, to lift these our fellow brothers, sisters, and our neighbours in this global village, out of indigence and poverty, and to end hunger.]

Fundamentally, faith and reason have brought us together to adopt the SDGs and to build upon the achievements of the MDGs to end poverty, promote prosperity and well-being for all, protect the environment, and address climate change. [But faith is not an abstraction; and reason is not a fanciful construct. All the major world religions correctly advise that faith is made perfect with works, made complete with deeds. And reason must always be grounded in the

real conditions of life and living. Always, too, we must apply our hearts to wisdom.]

Making Mother Earth a much better place for all of us to live means that our deeds must match our words; I acknowledge that the world is a complicated place awash with contradictions; and that humankind is not perfect. Still, it is surely unacceptable for our global economy to be designed and elaborated, in practical ways, to condemn nearly a billion persons living in abject poverty. Clearly, the current model of a perverse and environmentally-destructive, global capitalism needs to undergo fundamental restructuring, for the SDGs are to be accomplished. And, they will not be achieved, too, if there is failure in SDG Number 17 which mandates a revitalisation of the global partnership for sustainable development. [Centrally, this revitalisation of the global partnership demands that the richer countries retreat from considerations of a jaundiced self-interest and a myopic, counter-productive narrow-mindedness, and embrace a meaningful solidarity in every material particular with developing countries. To begin with, true solidarity is manifested not in doling out "leftovers", but in genuinely sharing what you have. I applaud and thank those few countries which have met the internationally-agreed target of Official Development Assistance.]

My country St. Vincent and the Grenadines, like all Small Island Developing States (SIDS), has an especial vulnerability to the deleterious effects of climate change. The poor globally suffer most from the maddening acceleration of global warming. For us in St. Vincent, it represents an existential issue of survival; yet we contribute nought to this threatening danger.

[Mr. President, the global conversation on the Post 2015 Development Agenda must necessarily involve, too, the legacy of underdevelopment devolved from centuries of colonialism and imperial suzerainty, which historic wrong which must be righted. In the Caribbean, our reasonable, non-confrontational quest for reparations for native genocide and African slavery to put right, to correct, to **3 | Page**

ameliorate this legacy of underdevelopment, has to be part of this global development dialogue and the revitalisation of the partnership for development.

Over the past fifteen years, St. Vincent and the Grenadines has made immense progress in the attainment of the MDGs touching and concerning the eradication of extreme poverty, achieving universal primary education (and universal secondary education), promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, and ensuring environmental sustainability. We commit to consolidating and building upon these accomplishments and pursuing, in a focussed way, the Sustainable Development Goals over the next fifteen (15) years with the help of our global partners.

It is true that the challenging global times in which we live make the achievement of the SDGs a difficult exercise. But our world civilisation must rise to this awesome challenge. Failure will result in an apocalypse, too horrendous to contemplate. We are at the cross roads of an historic and unprecedented opportunity to do far better for all humanity, but especially for the poor. Let us resolve to do so. Let not our hands be idle; let not our faith waver; and let not our combined reason desert us. Let us simply shape a better future, together, with love!

Thank you!