

February 10<sup>th</sup> 2023

## **PEOPLE-CENTRED AND SOLUTION ORIENTED GOVERNANCE**

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### Introduction

Comrade Ralph recently launched his latest publication “A Time of Repair, Beyond Covid, Volcanic Eruptions and Hurricane Elsa, Fresh Hope for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines”, at an event held at the Methodist Church Hall on January 19, 2023. The event took the form of a discussion between the author Comrade Ralph and Prof Richard Byron-Cox, who explored the various themes presented in the book with additional insights offered by our Comrade. It was a beautiful and insightful mix of humor, history, and politics, interwoven in a manner that was easy on the attendees to follow. The reflection on the local book launch is being used to set the context for this week’s article that examines briefly the very ambitious agenda of this government for the 2023 calendar and beyond. The contents of the book offer an examination of the policy direction of the Unity Labour Party since taking office in 2001 and the impact those policies have had on our national development. This view is appreciated by Senior Economic Advisor to the Government of Grenada, Dr Kari Grenade, who in offering a review of the Comrade’s book said, “the author, while acknowledging SVG’s development challenges and limitations, focuses on solutions that are non-theoretical, but pragmatic, logical, workable and importantly people-centred, which are relevant for other Caribbean economies”. The sentiments by Dr Grenade are in no way dissimilar to those of Professor Hilary Beckles, Professor Byron-Cox and many other learned individuals who have read the book and arrived at the conclusion that it can serve as a blueprint for Small Island Developing States in their quest for sustainable development. This year, 2023, our ULP government has mapped out a very ambitious agenda encompassing major local development projects as well as the continued expansion of elements of its pragmatic and principled foreign policy. This agenda is at the very heart of our government’s efforts at transforming our nation through the construction of a modern, competitive, many-sided, post-colonial economy, that is at once, local, national, regional, and global.

### People-Centred and Focused Domestic Agenda

Following the passing of Budget 2023, it was clear to all that significant work would be done this year at a blistering pace in several sectors to achieve the determined timelines. On January 19, 2023, the Ministry of Finance launched its ON-SITE (Offering National Support for Internship Training and Employment) program, the first initiative aimed at providing opportunities for our young people that will complement the existing YES and SET programs. Unlike the existing programs, ON-SITE involves a partnership with the private sector with companies hosting interns for a 6-month period of training and professional development.

In the area of construction, the government will oversee the largest construction boom ever in this country, with the continuation and acceleration of several in-progress projects as well as the start of new projects. The modern port in Kingstown will continue and enter a new phase of construction, the Holiday Inn Hotel at Diamond and the building that will temporarily house the parliament should be complete this year. New projects that are expected to begin this year include the Marriot Hotel in Mount Wynne, the Acute Referral Hospital at Arnos Vale, the modern parliament, and halls of justice. The schools' rehabilitation and repair program that also includes the construction of a new school that will replace the damaged Sandy Bay Secondary School will continue in the face of sharply increasing prices globally.

With the proclamation by the Minister of Finance that Budget 2023 is a "roads budget", the government has immediately begun the work on a number of roads across the country. The funding acquired from our friends from the Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) will facilitate the smooth and continuous work on our roads, expected to be ongoing over 2023 and 2024 to bring our road network to above satisfactory levels. This focused work on construction, repairing and upgrading facilities and the expansive road repair program will undoubtedly create hundreds of jobs in the country and help to drive economic growth over this year.

### Continued Momentum in External Affairs

Over the last 6 years, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been very active with our foreign policy, providing leadership among SIDS in several areas of multi-lateral engagements. Over the period, SVG has among other accomplishments, chaired the Finance and Budgetary (5<sup>TH</sup>) Committee of the United Nations, served as Vice President and then President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as well as serve as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Following our country's successful stint as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, our work continues as part of the overall strategy of continuing our work in the various organisations in which we hold membership. Our work within the UN continues with our recent election to serve on the 31 member Peace Building Commission (PBC), an intergovernmental advisory body that supports peace efforts in conflict-affected countries and is a key addition to the capacity of the International Community in the broad peace agenda. This new mandate will require that we lean on the experience gained while serving on the UNSC, during which period SVG had a one-year stint on the PBC. Most recently, our principled and consistent foreign policy has been rewarded with another significant milestone, with our election to serve as the Pro Tempore President of the Community of States of Latin America and the Caribbean. This latest achievement through unanimous support from the member states of the community confers on SVG the distinction of being first in CARICOM to be elected to this position. Our work in regional and international organisations

has gained the attention of members states and they continue to look to SVG increasingly for leadership as we bring our perspective to bare on negotiations, and we stand ready to answer that call.

Our government is not daunted by this very ambitious agenda set out for 2023 and is confident that we will be able to successfully implement this agenda for the benefit for Vincentians. Our focused and people-centred approach that protected lives and livelihoods, while containing economic scars during the pandemic is guaranteed to continue as our government builds on the gains of the last year.