**SVG and Small States Exceptionalism**

**by**

**Unity Labour Party**

***“Small size is no impediment to impactful contributions at the world stage.”***

Prime Minister, Dr Ralph. E. Gonsalves

**Introduction**

Recently, the Prime Minister delivered a sterling and eloquent speech at the 73rd United Nations General Assembly on Friday 28th of September. His speech touched on various issues affecting small island developing states across the globe, including St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Issues such as man-made climate change, achieving sustainable development goals such as eradicating hunger and poverty and war against chronic non-communicable diseases, all of which are close to our hearts here in SVG as we see the impacts of all these issues around us.

Additionally, SVG’s quest in becoming a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, which is a body that is responsible for ensuring global peace, stability and security was not only mentioned but supported by many throughout the entire Caribbean and Latin American region. It is because of the statesmanship and leadership qualities displayed by Dr Ralph Gonsalves that St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a virtually “two by four country”, with no natural resources such as oil or gold or silver, has displayed small state exceptionalism at the world stage. In the Caribbean, and particularly among CARICOM member-states, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, is regarded as an influential country, principled in its approach to issues of socio-economic development and foreign relations.

**Small State Exceptionalism**

The idea of the nation-state evolved after the treaty of Westphalia in 1648, where the state as a unit was the most powerful actor in international relations and diplomacy. This idea though grew as a result of multilateralism, and other global institution remains similar to nation-states, despite their economic size or military prowess, has the same vote and rights in global forums and institutions. Small State exceptionalism, a new and growing concept, used and coined by our magnificent Prime Minister, is one that ties into the idea that though small as a nation state, we too should have a place on the global stage in influencing decisions at that level.

After all, SVG is not a nation that is alienated from actions of other nation states. That was evident through the 2013 December floods that resulted in the loss of twelve citizens because of manmade climate change, and also issues about corresponding banking and effects of global economic and financial crisis 2008. These issues are not a consequence of actions by small island developing states, but by and large, the actions of large economies deemed as developed states such as the United States, United Kingdom and China.

It is for this reason, SVG and the ULP administration cannot do as the New Democratic Party would wish and sit idly by, consuming itself with the famous utterance by Former Opposition Leader, Mr Eustace “what would America say”, in considering our foreign policy position and actions, because we have to seek a foreign policy position in the best interest of all Vincentians. This is why the Prime Minister has strategically placed SVG further on the map through speaking vocally on issues such as man-made climate change, sustainable development goals, which include poverty and hunger reduction and corresponding banking.

In recent years, St. Vincent and the Grenadines has demonstrated that small size does not impede impactful contributions on the world stage. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has played a leadership role in the UN’s post-Financial Crisis response; in the revitalization of the General Assembly; in Security Council Reform; in advancing the Law of the Sea; in Small Arms control; in ambitious measures to combat Climate Change; and in the global response to Non-Communicable Diseases. Most recently, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines chaired the Administrative and Budgetary Committee of the United Nations and currently serves as the President of the Economic and Social Council.

Hence, with SVG’s current quest in seeking to become a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, this will enable us not only to bring a small island developing state perspective to matters of global peace, security and stability, but it will also symbolize that though small island states may be limited in resources with small topography and population, we have a big voice and also matter, that it should not limit our vision and having a global voice being an important actor on the global stage. It relates to the idea that we are better than no one, but surely no one is better than us. What a proud moment it will be to be for all Vincentians.

**Conclusion**

Therefore, in conclusion, no government in the history of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has commanded the respect of many world leaders and nations across the world that is currently happening under the Unity Labour Party. This is because of strong, proven leadership, with intellect and a smart capable team with bright ideas and vision. It is no wonder that Brazil, the largest Latin American state that is economically powerful has unequivocally thrown its support behind SVG to become a non-permanent member state of the Security Council along with the entire CARICOM body.

Do you possibly think the NDP and Dr Friday can command such respect? The NDP in the first place does not think a small country like SVG should take up leadership roles on international issues and institutions. They see it traditionally as a place for “larger and more economically and militarily powerful states”, which is outmoded thinking.

These are changing times, and therefore only the ULP is best fit to govern in these changing times with ideas and visions fit for the future, not yesterday as the NDP sees it. NDP has no real plans nor ideas. Mr Eustace said to “Ask Ralph” when comes to plans for the future development of the country while Dr Friday still has no real authentic idea of the vision of his own.

This is why SVG will move forward believing in Small States exceptionalism, and we will move forward without the NDP.