

February 26<sup>th</sup> 2021

**ADDRESS BY PRIME MINISTER RALPH GONSALVES TO THE  
UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL**  
**Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Climate and Security**

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**Introduction**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines commends the United Kingdom for this opportunity to address climate-related security risks. We applaud your continued dedication and leadership in this matter, particularly ahead of COP26. I also thank the briefers for their insightful remarks on this vital subject.

As the primary organ for maintaining international peace and security, the Security Council has a responsibility to address the consequences of climate change in line with its mandate. Failure to tackle the debilitating impacts through the lens of peace and security means, in part, an abdication of our duty. As such, it is time for this Council to consider seriously a draft resolution on the matter and to map out a coherent approach, aiming for a working consensus.

We reaffirm that the UNFCCC is the primary body dealing with climate change; and the Paris Agreement is a major component of our rules-based international system. At the same time, we recognise that the UN Security Council has a role to play without encroaching on the work of the inclusive decision-making body of the UNFCCC. Similarly, we must engage with the Peacebuilding Commission and

the General Assembly to address, effectively, climate and security risks across the joiner of issues touching and concerning humanitarian support, sustainable development, health pandemics, peace and security.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates that the first step to prevent or contain climate-security risks is for the major, and historical, emitters to fulfil, and indeed exceed, the commitments made in the Paris Agreement. Global action must be accelerated to keep temperatures below 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, in line with our common but differentiated responsibilities. Indeed, we have, gathered around this virtual table, those who can have the most impact in preventing climate-fueled conflict by rationally and comprehensively reducing emissions and by upholding financial commitments towards adaptation measures, separate and apart from already-agreed Official Development Aid obligations.

Climate change is an existential challenge to us all but it continues to affect, disproportionately, the most vulnerable among us, including small islands and conflict-affected countries. As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), St. Vincent and the Grenadines knows all too well the impact of increasingly intense climatic shocks due to unique vulnerabilities and structural fragilities. In our Caribbean region, it has become distressingly commonplace for an entire year's GDP to be washed away by a hurricane overnight, even as we are hindered by a lack of a sufficient access, on favourable terms, to the global financial architecture. Our fellow-islanders in low-lying states are faced with a clear and present existential threat which poses significant concerns for sovereignty and, by extension, international peace. We stand in solidarity with conflict-affected countries where climate change exacerbates food insecurity and humanitarian crises, stokes conflicts over resources, fans the flames of political turmoil, and creates significant socio-economic challenges.

Our sister island, Haiti, is among the most susceptible to the impacts of increasingly intense and frequent climatic hazards. These natural disasters hit Haiti hard, partly due to the felling of its forests, the misuse and abuse of woodland resources, and the requirement to pay externally imposed debts. Another awful example is the Sahel: We will not see an end to the complex cycles of conflict without striking at the heart of the battle for dwindling resources amidst climate change and drought.

It is evident that among the major contemporary drivers of global insecurity is the bundle of issues arising from the impacts of climate change. No country escapes the consequences attendant thereto.

There are solutions to these man-made crises. In order to address effectively these complex situations, we must integrate climate perspectives into the Council's work. To this end, we support: Enhanced reporting by the Secretary General on the relevant issues, decision-making on the basis of climate-risk data; the appointment of a Special Envoy on Climate and Security; further training of UN personnel to deal with the security implications of climate change; and the incorporation of climate advisers in peacekeeping missions.

In crafting its mandates, the Security Council should also pay close attention to what the respective Governments of conflict-affected states outline as their principal climate-security challenges and approaches, including in their Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans. Further, the recent establishment of an Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security comprised of Security Council members is a promising development of which Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is proud to be a part.

It is time for the Security Council to rise to the extant challenges associated with climate-related security risks in this 76th year of the United Nations. Climate change has rendered obsolete the traditional approaches to managing conflicts. Today, the UN Charter, and the future of **all** humanity, demand more of us.

Thank you!