

May 31st 2019

Onwards to the United Nations Security Council

Introduction

By June 5th, 2019, St. Vincent and the Grenadines will know whether or not its bid to become a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) would be successful. The Security Council is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations and is charged with ensuring international peace and security in the world, among other things.

The Security Council also has the responsibility for accepting new members to the United Nations, and to make changes to the charter of the UN. It is the only body of the United Nations which has the authority to issue binding resolutions to member states.

The council consists of fifteen members, five of which are permanent (P5: United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, France, and the Republic of China) and ten non-permanent members (E10) elected every two years, with five being replaced every year. Non-permanent seats on the Council are allocated by regions, of which there are 5; Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Western Europe and Others Group. In the case of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, our country will represent the GRULAC group, the Group of Latin America, and the Caribbean.

The Process

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines began the process to become a non-permanent member of the UNSC when we officially lodged our candidacy for the 2020-2021 term back in 2010. This seemingly early submission of our candidacy, some 10 years prior to our intended period of membership was a clear and calculated move on the part of the government to give us the time needed to conduct a focused multi-faceted campaign.

During the period 2010 to now, leading up to the very crucial vote, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has shown leadership at the United Nations at various levels and have consistently increased our profile in preparation for life on the Security Council and beyond.

Since we officially lodged our candidacy under the leadership of then Permanent Representative Ambassador Camillo Gonsalves, it was clear that going forward the eyes of the United Nations and by extension the world, would be on this tiny Small Island Developing State, vying to be the smallest ever to sit on the Security Council. This created an opportunity for us to bring leadership to various United Nations processes and show that our country can and does add value to this international body.

The current Permanent Representative Ambassador I.Rhonda King, built on the work of former Ambassador Camillo Gonsalves and was entrusted with the Chairmanship of the Fifth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) for its 71st session. Since then, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was able to successfully pilot a resolution through the General Assembly for the recognition of World Technology and Innovation Day, a day now celebrated yearly on the United Nations calendar. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, through our Permanent Representative served as Vice President to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations for the 2017-18 period and is currently serving as the President of ECOSOC which would end in July this year 2019.

On June 7, 2019, the members of the United Nations General Assembly would through formal balloting, cast their votes that would determine whether Saint Vincent and the Grenadines makes history as the smallest nation ever to sit on the security council.

This is necessary, even though as the CARICOM and GRULAC endorsed candidate, we are unopposed to fill the single seat allotted to our regional grouping. To be confirmed as candidate through the voting process, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines must obtain two thirds of the members present and voting, which means that we must get at least 129 votes if all members of the United Nations are present and voting on that day. We are confident that we would be able to get the votes necessary, but we are not taking anything for granted, as such our engagement continues, with the most recent being the meetings with the Arab League and the African Union by Prime Minister, Dr. Hon Ralph Gonsalves, over the May 25-26, 2019 weekend.

What does this mean for SVG

It is widely accepted that the United Nations Security Council is the most prestigious organ of the United Nations, and because of the matters the Council is responsible for, the voices of those countries occupying the seats at any given time, be they permanent or temporary, are brought into sharp global focus.

To sit on such a prestigious body, will no doubt put the eyes of the world on Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as we would continue to espouse those fundamental

principles of the United Nations Charter that we have always held dear, and encourage their continued observance by all nations, great and small.

As a Small Island Developing State, we can be the voice of those like us, and champion causes that are existential, including climate change and its impact on our security apparatuses, border security for small island states with great seascapes to patrol and sustainable development among priority areas.

Our commitment to multilateralism, rule of law and the principle of non-interference and non-intervention, would represent a central tenet of our engagement on the UNSC. While questions may arise about the cost of being on the Security Council relative to the benefits, and whether the resources couldn't be used elsewhere, the benefits for such a small island, while intangible, would in fact far outweigh the costs of being able to have our positions heard at the level of the UNSC. This is an opportunity which countries spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to have, and in many cases fail, in spite of their hefty expenditure.

Conclusion

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines can be proud of its record and its reputation at the United Nations and can understandably be confident about our chances at securing the votes necessary to secure a non-permanent seat on the Security Council.

We have already shown our small island exceptionalism on various committees and councils. We now have an opportunity to take on the responsibilities that come with sitting on the Security Council. We take the lead from Prime Minister Gonsalves, and express confidence that after the votes are counted on June 7, 2019, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines would be one of the five nations elected to the United Nations Security Council for the period 2020-21.