

**October 7<sup>th</sup> 2022**

**SVG'S FOREIGN POLICY:  
ADDRESSING GLOBAL ISSUES, ENGAGING OUR DIASPORA**

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**Introduction**

Over the last two weeks, the progressive and proactive foreign policy of the government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been on display for all to see. One of the reasons that SVG's global reputation has seen such dramatic improvement over the last 20 years, is that our well-thought-out foreign policy that has allowed us to increase our multi-lateral engagements in organisations such as the Organisation of American States, the Commonwealth and the United Nations. Our country has for the last 21 years provided serious leadership at the regional level; the OECS and CARICOM, on a number of issues including regional travel, reparations, and climate change among others. Our principled and consistent approach to addressing matters as they arise have caused many nations, including the larger and more powerful in the international system to take notice whenever our positions are presented. Unlike those who burden themselves with the weight of only considering "what would America say", our government lead by Comrade Ralph, believes that our country can be "friends of all" in our goal for a better world. Our bold approach in outlining our positions, even though they cause significant unease among some of our traditional allies, has established SVG as a country whose voice cannot be ignored.

The last two weeks of overseas engagement by Comrade Ralph, placed focus on two planks of our country's foreign policy: our multi-lateral diplomacy conducted at the United Nations, and the further strengthening of the relationship with our diaspora. Based on reports by our personnel assigned to our UN Mission, UK High Commission as well as independent media, the Prime Minister's overseas mission was extremely successful in every aspect. The wide coverage given to his address at the 77<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly by international media; the high attendance to his book launch by colleague heads of governments and other thought leaders; the packed hall at the Friends of Crown Heights in Brooklyn, New York and the ceremony organised by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David on our PM's behalf, all bear testimony to the success of this latest mission by Comrade Ralph.

## **High Level Week at the UN**

Anticipation is always high, whenever our country's Prime Minister attends the United Nations General Assembly, and this year was no different, after a two-year absence of in-person debate because of the Covid-19 pandemic. During the week, Comrade Ralph engaged in a number of activities including: bi-lateral meetings, panel discussions and the launch of his latest book, "A Time of Repair, Beyond Covid, Volcanic Eruption, Hurricane Elsa and Global Turmoil: Fresh Hope for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines". This event took the form of a discussion between Comrade Ralph and Sir Hilary Beckles and had an audience that included heads of states and governments and other country representatives and thought leaders. It is indeed remarkable that Comrade Ralph, as full-time Prime Minister of this country has been able to author 10 publications covering a range of topics in the last 12 years, more than any other leader in the region.

The highlight of the high-level week, however was the delivery of the address to the Assembly by PM Gonsalves on Saturday 24th September 2022. This address captured the attention of those in the hall, and those watching on television including local, regional and international journalists. One such journalist from the "Associated Press" commented on Prime Minister Gonsalves' address in this way "In an ocean of speakers from around the world - from the driest of the dry, all the way to downright bitter and angry - the prime minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines stood out Saturday with his use of metaphors and imagery". Our Prime Minister made this country proud as he addressed a number of very pressing issues, from climate change, ongoing conflicts, peace and security, respect for international law and economic challenges faced by small states. His address was indicative of a leader who possesses a total grasp of the issues and our country's principled position in addressing them. Our comrade delivered with his usual confident, no-nonsense style that epitomised the notion, "we aren't better than anybody, but nobody is better than us".

## **Engaging the Diaspora**

The other aspect of the PM's mission, involved a number of engagements with Vincentians in the diaspora, a practice developed over the years of his leadership of this country that has served the strengthening of the bonds with our diaspora. There was a well-attended town hall meeting at in Brooklyn, New York and the Comrade took the opportunity to present SVG's Foreign Minister, the Hon Keisal Peters, and the new Consul General to the USA, Rondy Mc Intosh to the large crowd. Comrade Ralph gave a detailed report on what is happening in SVG and outlined the government's plans for development at home, and the role of the diaspora in the further development of SVG. A similar activity was held at the office of SVG's High Commission in London where again a packed hall turned out to listen and interact with the Prime Minister. The final event was with the

37 Vincentian students who are currently pursuing studies at the University of Wales Trinity St. David when Prime Minister made his promised visit to that institution. This visit was special for another reason, as Comrade Ralph was conferred an honorary doctorate from the university in recognition of his visionary leadership, his strong voice for his country on a global stage, and for being a passionate advocate for sustainable development, prosperity, peace, and security.

The leadership of the ULP in government, continues to show how a well-thought-out, principled and consistent policy, can offer many benefits to our country. The strengthening of the links between this country and our diaspora through effective representation is reflected in the many areas of cooperation that exists, especially in times of disasters. On the global stage, our growing influence bolstered by the improved image of SVG, is evident in the increased level of bilateral engagements that our country is involved in. We continue to show that a small country can have a voice, and that voice can be used effectively as we continue to be friends of all, and strive for a better world.