



**Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **“Africa, Advancement and Engagement:” SVG Concludes Productive Week at United Nations General Assembly**

28 September, 2008: Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves and Foreign Minister Sir Louis Straker returned to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on Sunday after concluding an intense and productive week of diplomatic activity in New York. Under the theme of “Africa, Advancement and Engagement,” the Vincentian delegation focused on Africa, held meetings centered on advancement and development of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and engaged a number of world leaders. The week included speeches to the United Nations, bilateral meetings with representatives of over 12 countries, and encounters with the private sector and the Diaspora.

#### **United Nations**

Prime Minister Gonsalves addressed the United Nations General Debate on Friday. The Prime Minister’s speech was very well received, and dealt with a number of important topics including the genocide in Darfur, climate change, rising food prices, the financial crisis in global markets, hemispheric tensions, financing for development, illegal small arms, Taiwan, and the role of the United Nations in peace and prosperity. The speech was broadcast on local radio in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Prime Minister also spoke at two other United Nations events. He addressed a High-Level meeting on Africa’s Development Needs and a second meeting on meeting the Millennium Development Goals devoted to eradicating Hunger and Poverty. In total, the Prime Minister made an unprecedented three speeches at the United Nations in the space of five days. The active engagement at the United Nations helped to raise Saint Vincent and the Grenadines international profile.

Another high-profile United Nations event was Prime Minister Gonsalves’ co-chairing of a Roundtable on Africa’s Development Needs. UN Secretary General set aside an entire day to discuss African development, and the centerpiece of this day was a set of roundtable discussions with world leaders. Each of the four roundtables had 2 co-chairs – one from the African continent, and one from another part of the world. Prime Minister Gonsalves, who co-chaired

with President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, was therefore one of only four non-Africans to be honoured with a co-chairing assignment.

### **Bilateral Diplomacy**

The Vincentian Delegation was heavily engaged in bilateral diplomacy, holding one-on-one meetings with an unprecedented 12 heads of state, ministers and other representatives. Prime Minister Gonsalves led discussions with the Presidents of Austria, Ghana, Iran, the Philippines, Portugal Turkey and Uganda. The Prime Minister also met with the First Vice President and Foreign Minister of Cuba, and the Private Secretary of the Queen of England.

Sir Louis Straker met bilaterally with the Deputy Foreign Minister of Canada, and the Foreign Ministers of Bulgaria and the Dominican Republic.

Discussions with the various ministers and heads of state centered on scholarships for Vincentian students, cultural exchanges, and developmental assistance, including the Argyle International Airport.

### **Diplomatic Relations**

The Foreign Minister returns to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with instruments formalising diplomatic relations with three countries: The Dominican Republic, Djibouti and Senegal. The new diplomatic relations represent a continuation the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines foreign policy thrust to expand its presence worldwide.

### **Other Meetings**

In addition to official United Nations duties, the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines delegation remained busy with a host of other important diplomatic and political meetings.

Prime Minister Gonsalves met with the Prime Ministers of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and the foreign ministers of the remaining CARICOM countries in a caucus to discuss matters of mutual interest. Prime Minister Gonsalves also attended and addressed a Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting. Additionally, Prime Minister Gonsalves spoke at an Editorial Board meeting of the *Carib News* newspaper, and answered questions from the board.

Foreign Minister Straker, attended a meeting with United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, along with other CARICOM foreign ministers. Additionally, the Sir Louis attended a Commonwealth Foreign Ministers meeting and a meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Group of 77 (G-77). The Foreign Minister also held discussions with officials from the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO).

Mrs. Eloise Gonsalves was also busy, attending a symposium with US First Lady Laura Bush on advancing Global Literacy. Mrs. Gonsalves also attended the United Nations World Focus on Autism Event, which was moderated by CNN Chief International Correspondent Christiane Amanpour.

Ambassador Gonsalves attended a meeting of the CARICOM Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR).

## **Diaspora Engagement**

The Prime Minister also made a priority of interacting with Vincentians in the Diaspora. He hosted a well-attended reception at the Metropolitan Club of Manhattan, which was graced by hundreds of New York based Vincentians, Prime Minister Denzil Douglas of Saint Kitts and Nevis, the Taiwanese Ambassador, and other diplomatic representatives.

Prime Minister Gonsalves also traveled to Brooklyn to meet with Vincentians at the Red Bress bar and nightclub. The standing-room only crowd was so large that it spilled out onto the sidewalk and streets. Prime Minister Gonsalves addressed the crowd and answered questions from the audience. The event was broadcast on radio in New York and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

## **Advancement Through The Private Sector**

Prime Minister Gonsalves held three meetings with private companies, all aimed at spurring investment and development in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. PM Gonsalves traveled to the construction site of 700 foot tunnel being constructed under New York's Harlem River. Prime Minister Gonsalves met with Area Manager Robert Stier of Kiewit Construction Company, which is constructing the tunnel for the ConEdison Electrical Company. The Prime Minister discussed the proposed tunnel under Cane Garden Point, and invited Kiewit to visit St. Vincent to evaluate the site and offer technical advice.

Prime Minister Gonsalves also met with former New York Governor George Pataki and members of the Pataki-Cahill Group, which specialises in renewable energy projects, offshore financial investment, and project financing. Additionally, the PM met with representatives of GoodWorks International, LLC, a company focused on development projects in Africa and the Caribbean. The Prime Minister and Ambassador La Celia Prince discussed a number of projects with GoodWorks, including the Argyle International Airport. The PM also met with officials from *One Caribbean* Radio Station.

## **Social Events**

The Vincentian delegation was invited to a number of receptions, dinners and other social events during the week at the United Nations General Assembly. Among the events attended were a reception hosted by President George Bush and his wife Laura; a reception hosted by United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon; and receptions hosted by Austria, Turkey, Ghana, the Netherlands and Singapore.

Prime Minister Gonsalves also held a luncheon for the staff of the Permanent Mission to the United Nations and members of the SVG Consulate in New York.

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The Vincentian Delegation comprised of Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves and Mrs. Eloise Gonsalves, Foreign Minister Sir Louis Straker, Ambassador to the United States and OAS La Celia Prince, Permanent Representative to the United Nations Camillo Gonsalves, Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Lennox Daniel, and Minister-Counselor in the Permanent Mission to the United Nations Nedra Miguel.

## **SUMMARY of VINCENTIAN DELEGATION'S WEEK IN NEW YORK**

### **Meetings With Heads of State, Ministers and Representatives**

<b>Austria</b> – President Heinz Fischer (PM)	<b>Turkey</b> – President Abdullah Gül (PM)
<b>Cuba</b> – First Vice President Jose Machado Ventura and Foreign Minister Filipe Perez Roque (PM)	<b>Uganda</b> – President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni (PM)
<b>Ghana</b> – President John Kofi Agyekum Kufuor (PM)	<b>United Kingdom</b> – Private Secretary of Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom, The Rt. Honourable Christopher Geidt (PM)
<b>Iran</b> – President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (PM, FM)	<b>Canada</b> – Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Leonard Edwards (FM)
<b>Philippines</b> – President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (PM)	<b>Bulgaria</b> – Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivaylo Kalfin (FM)
<b>Portugal</b> – President Anibal Antonio Cavaco Silva (PM)	<b>Dominican Republic</b> – Minister of Foreign Affairs Carlos Morales Troncoso (FM)
<b>Senegal</b> – President Abdoulaye Wade (PM)	<b>United States</b> – Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (FM – with CARICOM Foreign Ministers)

### **Speeches & Meetings**

UN General Debate Speech (PM)	Editorial Board Meeting – <i>Carib News</i> (PM)
Africa's Development Needs Speech (PM)	Meeting of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers (FM)
Millennium Development Goals Speech (PM)	Meeting of G-77 Foreign Ministers (FM)
Co-Chair Roundtable on Africa's Development Needs (PM)	Meeting with Officials from CTBTO (FM)
Meeting of CARICOM Heads/Foreign Ministers	Meeting of CARICOM COFCOR
Meeting of Commonwealth Heads (PM)	

### **Formal Diplomatic Relations**

Dominican Republic	Djibouti
Senegal	

### **Private Sector Meetings**

Kewit Construction Company	Pataki-Cahill Group
GoodWorks International	One Caribbean Radio

### **Diaspora Events**

Reception (Metropolitan Club)	Informal Gathering (Red Bress Bar/Club)
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(PM) – Attended by Prime Minister  
 (FM) – Attended by Foreign Minister