



ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Permanent Mission of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations

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Statement

By

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At the

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Negotiations on the Question of Equitable Representation on and
Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Related Matters**

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Mr. Chairman, thank you for convening this meeting. We also note your March 20th circulation of an excerpt of document A/61/47, which discussed the question of regional representation. At the outset, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines aligns itself fully with the statement made by Jamaica on behalf of the 14 Member States of the Caribbean Community.

Mr. Chairman, you will recall paragraph 153 of the World Summit Outcome document, which states that the primary *raison d'état* of early Security Council reform is to “make it more broadly representative.” The question of regional representation falls squarely within this goal.

As such, the first question that confronts us is what exactly is meant by the term “regional representation.” Is it, as some have posited, simply a synonym for “equitable geographical distribution,” the phrase found in Article 23(1) of the Charter? Or does it represent a more fundamental reexamination of democratic governance within the Council? Our instinct is that conceptually, it means the latter; but that pragmatically, it will more closely resemble small adjustments to existing paradigms.

Logic suggests that the terms were intended to have different meanings, or the Membership would have simply used the Charter’s preexisting language, rather than create a new term of art. Further, since we already have “geographical distribution” enshrined in the Charter, there would be no need for “regional representation” to be a key issue. We would simply have discussed the expansion or reallocation of geographic seats in our negotiations on the size of an enlarged Council. At the most literal level, the words “distribution” and “representation” have very distinct meanings, as, to a lesser extent, do the words “regional” and “geographical.”

Additionally, non-permanent seats today, while geographically distributed, are hardly representative of a region, because they are often elected by voters beyond their own region. If, for example, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines votes for a Western European State in a Council election, how can that State be said to represent the WEOG region, when it was elected on the basis of votes from GRULAC, African, Asian and Eastern European States? Indeed, it is theoretically possible for a State to be elected to the Council without a single favourable vote from a member of its own geographic group. Further, many of the UN’s geographic groupings often encompass a number of distinct and viable regions.

Mr. Chairman, the concept of representation is not monolithic, and each of us may have different ideas about what is meant by the word. At least three distinct types of representation are easily identifiable: First, the idea of *delegation* suggests that a group simply authorizes a single member to represent their collective views. As permanent representatives of our various States, we are all delegated representatives. However, as delegates, we have to constantly check with the delegating authority for instructions, and are subject to recall. Second, there is the concept of *resemblance*, which suggests that the governing authority must resemble the demographic makeup of the governed. Third, the most conservative concept would be that representatives, once chosen, must be trusted to use their independent judgment in a way that will benefit the wider body. This *trustee* model of representation is well explained by Edmund Burke, the 18th century Irish statesman, who said famously in his letter to the voters of Bristol:

You choose a member indeed; but when you have chosen him, he is not a member of Bristol, but a member of Parliament. Your representative owes you, not his industry only,

*but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serves you, if he sacrifices to your opinion. . .
. His decisions favour the interests of Britain, not only those of Bristol.*

Each of these three concepts have differing practical implications on the composition of the Security Council and global governance, and none of them, by themselves, represent a perfect fit. A purely *delegated* ideal of Council representation would ignore the real disagreements that exist within geographic blocs, and would impose on some blocs an organizational structure that does not currently exist. My delegation, for one, is loath to take a position, which, by its very nature, will interfere with the roles and internal decision-making structures of other groups. With the notable exception of Africa, I have not heard the representatives of the five geographic groupings rushing to express a willingness – or even an ability – to put in place the mechanisms necessary to facilitate a maximalist interpretation of regional representation. Africa should not be penalized solely on the basis of its evolved internal political arrangements, but neither should any other group be expected to mimic them.

Similarly, a model that simply asks us to repose trust in unaccountable, relatively homogeneous, Council members will further delegitimize the body and exacerbate its current credibility crisis.

These factors impose upon us a practical reality: While the *meaning* of the two terms may differ, the *vehicle* with which we will achieve greater regional representation remains, for the time being, our accepted concept of equitable geographic distribution.

Our challenge, therefore, is to seek ways in which to increase the representation of regions and groups in such a way as to maximize the diversity and democracy of the Council within the confines and organizational tolerances of what the wider UN system. A reformed Council must look like the wider membership, while simultaneously balancing the *control* of delegation with some measure of *confidence* in the judgment of the elected representative.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines sees at least two possible, and practical, ways in which to increase the representational nature of the Council. First, and most logical, is to expand both permanent and non-permanent categories, as has been well discussed and widely supported. Clearly, the eminently reasonable demands of Africa must be accommodated, as well as those of emerging powers that represent a greater developmental diversity or a more accurate reflection of modern realities than the existing Council.

A second complementary measure, as proposed by my brother from Jamaica, would be to create a mechanism that ensures the presence of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) among the membership of the Security Council. We have heard a great deal of support voiced for such a proposition in recent weeks, and rightly so. SIDS form a well-defined, cohesive group of States with a number of unifying characteristics, challenges and vulnerabilities. The UN's 37 SIDS – as identified by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS – represent almost one fifth of the membership of this body. We are a far flung collective, who are linked by neither ideology nor civilization, but nonetheless have more in common with each other than with some of the larger developed States within our own respective geographic blocs. Issues unique to SIDS are increasingly prevalent and demanding of attention and consideration at all levels of the UN system

However, in the entire history of the Security Council, SIDS have only served 13 terms as non-permanent members,¹ and 29 of 37 SIDS – or 78% – have never had the opportunity to contribute as Council Members. Indeed, of the 74 States that have never been part of the Security Council, 39% are SIDS. The last SIDS served on the Council 7 years ago. Over 60% of the times that the Council has met, it has done so without the perspective, experience and principle of a single Small Island Developing State – an absence totaling 41 years of Council meetings.

The fact that we have served demonstrates our capacity so to do, despite economic and military constraints. The fact that our service has been so infrequent, on the other hand, suggests the need to address deficiencies in the structure of the Council, and in the opportunities available to SIDS.

A non-permanent seat – or seats – which would rotate among SIDS of the various geographic groupings, would easily solve this deficiency. Such a mechanism is relatively easy to establish, although it would necessitate amending the Charter to contemplate criteria beyond mere contribution and geographic distribution, as my delegation suggested in our March 5th intervention on Categories of Membership. Distribution based on geography, vulnerability and developmental status – instead of simply geography – would justify the presence of SIDS.

Additionally, permit me to make a brief comment on the very correct observation made by the distinguished representatives of the Netherlands and Japan, among others, regarding the primacy of contribution over distribution as a criterion for Council selection. The existing language of the Charter does indeed indicate that geographical distribution is a secondary consideration, even if, in practice, it has been elevated to a co-equal or superior factor. However, the Charter's exclusive focus on "**contribution** . . . to the **maintenance** of international peace and security" suggests a purely quantitative assessment that favours large, rich, states with military power. It also reflects an outmoded approach to the peacebuilding and peacekeeping. This, in turn, engenders a lack of diverse perspectives in the Council. The Caribbean region, for example, is relatively small, poor, and has a negligible military presence. Yet we have maintained intra-regional peace, our diverse ethnic backgrounds coexist peacefully, and we increasingly cooperate in areas of security and stability. We are a region of diverse languages, political cultures and philosophies, yet we maintain close fraternal bonds. The Security Council may rightly wonder how we manage to do this, but our unique and successful peacebuilding perspectives are lost if the sole focus is on "contributions" in the financial/military sense. Our qualitative contributions must be taken into account in the Charter. The inherent anti-regional biases in the existing criteria run counter to our current effort to democratise and add equitable balance, especially vis-à-vis small and developing States

To sum up, Mr. Chairman, we view a principled and pragmatic regional representation as encompassing the following five points: (1) the expansion of both permanent and non-permanent categories of membership; (2) the presence of members of each of the Five Geographic regions of the UN among the permanent membership, along with of emerging and modern powers from other regions; (3) the acknowledgement that the existing five region paradigm is insufficiently precise to capture certain groupings of States whose peculiar characteristics, vulnerabilities and developmental statuses are not currently reflected in the Council, but have direct bearing on its

¹ Cape Verde 1992-93; Cuba 1949-50, 1956-57, 1990-91; Guinea-Bissau 1996-97; Guyana 1975-76, 1982-83; Jamaica 1979-80, 2000-01; Mauritius 1977-78, 2001-02; Singapore 2001-02; Trinidad and Tobago 1985-86

work; (4) the establishment of a rotating, non-permanent SIDS presence that would guarantee at all times the presence of at least one of the UN's 37 SIDS on the Council; and (5) the amendment of the Charter to allow for non-permanent members that rotate among the existing regional groups, and to deemphasize selection criteria that represent a built-in bias in favour of the large, industrial, developed, military powers of the North.

Today, the Council is neither geographically balanced nor regionally representative. We can and must correct the former, which will go a long way to addressing the latter.

Thank you.