



## MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, COMMERCE AND TRADE

# PRESS RELEASE

TEHRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, 31 July 2008: – Minister of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Trade, the Honourable Sir Louis H. Straker departed Iran today after successfully participating in the 15<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement (“NAM”). It was the Hon. Minister Straker’s second visit to a NAM Meeting in Iran, following the September 2007 Ministerial Meeting on Human Rights and Cultural Diversity. On his recently-concluded trip, Sir Louis was accompanied by H.E. Camillo M. Gonsalves, Permanent Representative of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations.

While in Iran, the Vincentian delegation held substantive talks with **H.E. Manouchehr Mottaki**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran; **Ahmad Sobhani**, Director General of the Department of the Americas within the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; **Dr. Tahereh Nazari**, Advisor to the Foreign Minister and Director General for Women’s International Affairs and Human Rights; and Ambassador **Abdolmajid Mozafari**, Iranian Ambassador to Cuba. Sir Louis also met with Iran’s Vice Minister with Responsibility for the Americas and Iran’s Ambassador to Ecuador.

### **Bilateral Meetings with the Iranian Government**

Sir Louis held a number of meetings with representatives of the Iranian Government, culminating in a meeting with Foreign Minister Mottaki. Minister Mottaki explained that Iran was actively exploring new ways and methods of expanding bilateral relations with developing States, and was approaching these new relations in a systemic, region-by-region manner. After improved relations with Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa, the Iranian Government was now focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Iranian Foreign Minister expressed an interest in establishing, strengthening and deepening bilateral ties with St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Sir Louis, for his part, welcomed Iran's expressions of friendship and offers of support. To that end, the Ministers agreed to the following:

1. The **establishment of formal diplomatic relations** between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.
2. The **establishment of a USD \$7 million line of credit** available directly to St. Vincent of the Grenadines for developmental projects. Two million dollars of this amount will be made available shortly, after a review of the details by the Ministries of Finance and Legal Affairs, while the remaining \$5 million will be available 12 months thereafter.
3. An agreement in principle for the **reciprocal Visa waivers for holders of Diplomatic and Official passports** traveling between the two countries. Upon the execution of a formal agreement, holders of Diplomatic and Official passports will be allowed to visit each other's country for up to three months without a Visa.
4. The designation of Iran's Ambassador to Cuba as **non-resident Ambassador to St. Vincent and the Grenadines**. Arrangements will be made for a formal presentation of credentials in this regard.
5. The **establishment of greater trade and investment ties**, including exploration of the possibility of exporting Vincentian agricultural products to Iran, and the export of Iranian goods to St. Vincent and the Grenadines.
6. Support for the construction of the **Argyle International Airport**. In this regard, the following was agreed: (a) that Iran will promptly explore ways in which it can offer support to the construction of the International Airport at Argyle; (b) that Iran and St. Vincent and the Grenadines will exchange expert delegations to share information and examine the most efficacious modalities for possible assistance; and (c) that the Iranian Minister of Roads, Transport and Civil Aviation shall be charged with studying the Argyle International Airport project and suggesting avenues of assistance and cooperation.

The Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs also pointed out that it was engaged in “Tractor Diplomacy” through the distribution of heavy-duty agricultural equipment that it manufactured in South America. He called on officials in the Vincentian Ministry of Agriculture to determine whether the available models of tractors will be useful in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Foreign Minister Mottaki also extended an invitation to the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr. the Hon. Ralph E. Gonsalves, to make an official visit to Iran to further cement ties between the two countries. Sir Louis thanked Minister Mottaki for the invitation and promised to promptly communicate the invitation to Prime Minister Gonsalves.

Additionally, the foreign ministers discussed a number of matters of mutual interest, including international trade and commerce, cultural and interpersonal interaction, foreign policy and further cooperation within international bodies. Both ministers thanked each other for their interest in making these first steps toward deeper bilateral relations.

The Vincentian delegation also met with Dr. Tahereh Nazari, Advisor to the Foreign Minister and Director General for Women’s International Affairs and Human Rights. Dr. Nazari expressed her gratitude that St. Vincent and the Grenadines was making its second visit to Iran in less than a year, and hoped that many more Vincentians would visit her country. She opined that the best way to overcome cultural misunderstandings and mistrust would be to increase the interaction and communication between the two countries. Dr. Nazari and the Vincentian delegation held extensive discussions on matters of human rights, women’s rights, cooperation in international fora and the role of religion in Iran.

### **15<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement**

St. Vincent and the Grenadines was one of six CARICOM countries attending the 15<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Haiti, Jamaica and Suriname also attended). All 14 independent CARICOM States are members of the NAM.

The NAM Conference was held to discuss a number of social, political and economic matters, including, but not limited to: United Nations reform, terrorism, Angola, The Sudan, Iraq, the Belize/Guatemala and Venezuela/Guyana territorial disputes, the economic embargo against Cuba, food security, South-South cooperation, illiteracy, drug trafficking, HIV/AIDS, advancement of women, information technology and the consideration of the Caribbean Sea as a

special area within the context of sustainable development. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines participated in the negotiation and adoption of various outcome documents, including a 102-page final document that summarized the areas of agreement within the NAM membership. The NAM also issued statements/declarations on the situation in Zimbabwe, the situation in Palestine, and Iran's right to pursue and develop atomic energy for peaceful purposes. (These and other official NAM documents are available online at: <http://nam.mfa.gov.ir>).

Sir Louis addressed the General Debate of the NAM plenary. In his well-received speech, Hon. Minister Straker challenged the NAM to “reinvent and re-imagine ourselves as both the world's conscience and its primary developmental forum.” Sir Louis also stressed the value of the Movement for creating the necessary “developmental and ideological space that St. Vincent and the Grenadines requires.”

Further, the Hon. Foreign Minister stressed that “St. Vincent and the Grenadines, in the strict sense of the word, is quintessentially non-aligned. Our dynamic foreign policy is rooted in both principle and pragmatism, and beholden not to any nation, but to the interests, needs and desires of our citizens.”

The Hon. Minister Straker also held discussions with the Foreign Ministers of Haiti and Jamaica, and the delegations of Ethiopia, Nigeria and the Philippines.

### **The Islamic Republic of Iran**

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a State of 69 million people. It has a land area of 636,372 square miles, making it the 18<sup>th</sup> largest and 18<sup>th</sup> most populous state in the world. Iran's 2007 GDP of \$753 billion (PPP) currently ranks 18<sup>th</sup> internationally (Iran's nominal GDP is \$294b, ranking it 29<sup>th</sup>). Iran is a leading exporter of crude oil, producing over 4 million barrels per day. As OPEC's second-largest exporter, Iran ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in natural gas reserves and 3<sup>rd</sup> in oil reserves. Iran's primary trading partners include China, Germany, South Korea, Russia, UAE, Italy and France. One Iranian merchant marine ship is currently registered in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Iran has 129 airports with paved runways, including 28 with runways lengths between 8,000 and 10,000 feet and 40 with runways in excess of 10,000 feet.