

March 16, 2009, UNITED NATIONS (NEW YORK): – Saint Vincent and the Grenadines today offered a nuanced and detailed suggestion to curtail the Security Council's veto power and make it more diffuse.

Speaking at the Seventh Informal Plenary of intergovernmental negotiations on Security Reform, which was devoted to discussing "The Question of the Veto," Ambassador Camillo Gonsalves began with the premise that the Security Council veto is "undemocratic on its face" and "should be abolished."

However, Ambassador Gonsalves conceded that, due to political and legal realities, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' "desire to abolish the veto is currently an unattainable dream." Instead, the Vincentian envoy suggested that the "principled and pragmatic solution" was "to accept, however reluctantly, the continuation of the veto in some form, but to seek that its use be formally restricted, made more transparent, more diffuse, and more subject to the democratic imperatives that drive our reform effort generally."

Ambassador Gonsalves supported measures previously [proposed](#) by Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Singapore and Switzerland to forbid the use of the veto in cases of genocide and crimes against humanity. He also echoed their suggestion that every use of the veto should be formally explained to the General Assembly, so as to increase the transparency of its use.

The Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Ambassador further suggested that the inclusion of a veto override provision, modeled on that of [Section 7 of the United States Constitution](#). He suggested that such a "democratising ideal" would "further subject [the Veto's] use to democratic imperatives."

Additionally, Ambassador Gonsalves insisted that the power of the veto should be extended to new Permanent Members of the Security Council. "It is not at all contradictory to call for the abolition of the veto on one hand, and its extension to new permanent members on the other," he said. "The root of our objection to the veto is its undemocratic nature and its concentration of too much power in the hands of too few. Diffusion of this power to additional players reduces both its deleterious impact and the current undemocratic imbalances. Indeed, it is fair to say that a prerequisite for the continuation of the veto should be the expansion of the

permanent membership, with full veto rights. Today, no member of the African or GRULAC geographic blocs has the power of the veto. This is an untenable and unjust situation that must be redressed, either by abolition of the veto in its entirety or its extension to all new permanent members."

The Vincentian Ambassador also cautioned against approaching reform of the Veto, and Security Council reform generally, from a position of fear that any meaningful reform would itself be vetoed by existing permanent Members of the Council. "We cannot be afraid to seek meaningful reform out of fear of a veto from the [Permanent Five] at the point of ratification," he said. "This is the very essence of what is wrong with the veto to begin with - its chilling effect on real progress and real reform that is counter to the will of the General Assembly. If any of us had any questions about the use and effectiveness of the hidden veto, we need only listen to speaker after speaker today, who first condemned the veto in uncompromising terms, before quickly tempering our reforms with "reality" in the face of an assumed veto from some member of the P5."

"If our reform efforts are to be governed by learned helplessness, or constrained by fear of an ultimate veto, then we should stop being coy and trying to divine the tea leaves of what is acceptable to the P5," he continued. "Instead, we could simply ask them politely to reform themselves, or to tell us explicitly what reforms we should attempt to enact. That would save us all hours of haggling."

Ambassador Gonsalves' most recent statement marks the tenth Vincentian intervention on the issue since April 2008. Ambassador Gonsalves also discussed the issue extensively in a November 19, 2008 Statement on the Report of the Security Council (

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