

March 5, 2009, UNITED NATIONS (NEW YORK): – Saint Vincent and the Grenadines today proposed an amendment to the [United Nations Charter](#) that would allow greater membership opportunities for representatives of Small Island Developing States ([SIDS](#)) and other cross-regional groups.

Speaking at the Sixth Informal Plenary of intergovernmental negotiations on Security Reform, which was devoted to discussing "Categories of Membership," Ambassador Camillo Gonsalves suggested that the UN Charter should consider wider criteria for designating non-permanent membership on the Security Council.

" [Article 23](#) [of the UN Charter states] that the 10 non-permanent members are to be elected, and instructs us to pay due regard to 'equitable geographical distribution,'" said Ambassador Gonsalves. "In practice, the consideration of equitable geographic distribution has taken the form of allocating the non-permanent seats among the five recognized regional groups in the UN."

"However, in addition to expanding the *category* of non-permanent seats, we believe that it is critical to also expand the Charter's guidance as to their allocation," he said. "Instead of simply paying due regard to equitable *geographical* distribution; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines proposes that due regard should instead be paid to distribution reflective of geography, vulnerability and developmental status. This would free at least some new seats from the strictures of the existing 5-region paradigm, and allow for seats allocated along other lines."

Ambassador Gonsalves suggested that allocating seats along developmental, geographical and vulnerability criteria would allow for potential seats devoted to [SIDS](#), the [Organisation of the Islamic Conference](#) or other groups not strictly contained within any single region. However, Ambassador Gonsalves deferred specific consideration of these new non-permanent seats, stating that such discussions were more appropriate when the intergovernmental negotiations centered on representational matters.

The Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Ambassador also joined the majority of States speaking

in the negotiations to voice his country's support for expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership. Recognising that the existing Permanent Members (China, France, Russia, UK and USA) were essentially embedded in the Council, Ambassador Gonsalves stated that expansion of the permanent membership was an "indispensable" component of reform.

"Any reform that purports to be equitable and representative cannot leave untouched the permanent membership," he said. "Given the immovability of the current 5, the only realistic reform option, in our view, is to expand the permanent membership in such a way as to both increase its representational legitimacy and more evenly distribute the power of permanence across a wider cross-section of states."

Ambassador Gonsalves also rejected the so-called "interim approach," which would create a new class of non-permanent seats with longer tenures and different membership criteria than existing seats, while leaving the Permanent Membership untouched. Calling such an approach "premature" after only one negotiating session, Ambassador Gonsalves stated "we have not come this far to begin with half-measures. . . the creation of additional levels of non-permanence [will not] address many of the glaring deficits that have given momentum to the current reform effort."

"To our mind, the creation of a new category of non-permanent membership serves only to further diminish the relevance of the existing category of 2-year elected seats," said the Ambassador. "The current non-permanent seats would be demoted from a 2nd class to a 3rd class category, while the dominance of the Permanent 5 would remain unchallenged and unadulterated. Creation of a new 2nd class category, to supplant the existing second-class category, is merely reform for the sake of reform, and a path of least resistance with dubious logical underpinnings, beyond expedience."

Ambassador Gonsalves' most recent statement marks the ninth 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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