



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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Minister of Foreign Affairs

At the

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on the Follow-up to the Programme of Action
of the International Conference on Population and Development

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Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines adds its voice to the chorus of those that seek to reaffirm the International Conference on Population and Development's (ICPD) 1994 *Programme of Action*, and to those that wish to continue applying those critical principles and prescriptions to current global realities. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines also notes the effort of the Secretary General in his February 2014 *Report*, which proposes a framework of actions to advance the ICPD's seminal *Programme* beyond 2014.

The principles of the ICPD *Programme of Action* played a key role in informing the Millennium Development Goals, and so too must they help to shape the post 2015 development dialogue. The ICPD *Programme of Action* was, above all, a people-centred vision, which placed human beings – their right to development, their equality and their basic needs – at the starting point of the development roadmap. This spirit of people-centred progress is, we believe, integral to any successful and sustainable development initiative.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has made tremendous strides in the 20 years since the 1994 *Programme of Action*. We are particularly proud of our advances in the areas of universal secondary education, housing, elder care, maternal health, and primary health care, generally. Along with our sister Caribbean islands, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has made progress in the fight against non communicable diseases and the continued, coordinated effort to control and reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS among our populations.

Our national investment in gender equality is also bearing fruit. Today, girls in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines outperform boys in secondary and tertiary education, and many other professional pursuits. We continue to work, in collaboration with civil society and development partners, to shift outmoded attitudes and practices regarding the role of women, and to translate formal, legal safeguards into tangible, on-the-ground progress.

Mr. President,

In that regard, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines voices its alarm and outrage regarding the global rise of militant terrorist groups and insurgents that commit unspeakable acts of mass violence against women and seek to enforce a brutal and indefensible social order that victimises women and girls. These groups undermine the real progress made in many countries whose governments have endorsed the *Programme of Action*.

Mr. President,

The Secretary General's *Report* highlights the deplorable chasm of income inequality that continues to impede sustainable development within and among states. Less than one per cent of the global population holds over 40% of its wealth. Over two-thirds of the world's population must collectively make do with a paltry 3% of global wealth. Any hope for sustainable development must address this deep and growing divide between a plutocratic minority and the rest of the world's population. It is this divide that is at the root of many of the manifestations of instability and injustice we continue to confront across the globe.

Similarly, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines recognises the mountains of data that establish relationships between reproductive decisions and criteria such as wealth, educational achievement, employment status, life expectancy, the quality of prenatal and perinatal services, and cultural or religious practice, to name a few. To reduce this discussion on population and development to a debate on contraceptive options and reproductive rights is to recklessly ignore the myriad, interconnected developmental factors that contribute to this important issue.

Mr. President,

In reaffirming the 1994 *Programme of Action*, let us also reinforce some of the important pillars upon which it was established. For example, the *Programme of Action* stated “*the international community should strive for the fulfilment of the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product for overall Official Development Assistance [ODA].*” Twenty years after that important call to action, Net ODA from developed countries languishes at 0.3% of gross national income, and only five countries in the world have met the 0.7% target. The Secretary General’s *Report*, while replete with references to “partnerships” and the “*increasingly complex aid environment,*” unfortunately makes no reference to this foundational, quantitative measure of the developed world’s commitment to development goals.

Additionally, as a Small Island Developing State, speaking in the International Year of Small Island Developing States, and in the immediate aftermath of a successful International Conference on Small Island Developing States, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines emphasizes the importance of considering and recognizing the specificities of Small Island States with small, often migratory populations, and a number of challenging vulnerabilities, in the context of the ICPD *Programme of Action*. Small Island States deserve and demand specific recognition and focused attention in the post 2014 application of the *Programme of Action*.

Mr. President,

Our global population has grown by 1.6 billion people in the 20 years since the adoption of the *Programme of Action*. Despite many laudable achievements in the application and implementation of the ICPD vision and other developmental blueprints, a number of practical and systemic challenges remain. New problems also confront both developed and developing nations, and require urgent, collaborative response. However, while the development recipe has changed, addressing poverty, inequality and international cooperation remain essential ingredients to our shared success.

I thank you.

