



SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Opening Statement

By

H.E. Cenio Lewis

High Commissioner of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Kingdom

before the

Human Rights Council

Thirty-Third Session

21 September, 2016

Geneva, Switzerland

Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen,
Good morning to everyone.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is pleased to return to the Human Rights Council during its thirty-third session for the adoption of our Universal Periodic Review outcome report. Earlier this year in May 2016, my country's delegation to the Twenty-fifth Session of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group presented our national report to the Human Rights Council. We provided an update on the human rights record and accomplishments of our people and successive governments since our first period of review in 2011.

During the interactive dialogue segment of our review, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines received a total of 128 Recommendations. These Recommendations are contained in the Document, reference A/HRC/33/5/Add.1. In response to the Recommendations (I hope the distinguished delegates have been supplied with a copy of the response to the Recommendations), it will be seen that the Government of Saint Vincent and the

Grenadines has accepted seventy-five (75) of the Recommendations while fifty-three (53) are noted.

Mr. President,

With respect to Recommendations on the ratification of international human rights instruments, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has already ratified and acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Their Families. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines notes Recommendations 80.1 through to 80.22 (excluding 80.13 and 80.18 which have been accepted) and will continue to work towards completing ratification and or accession to other major international instruments related to human rights which it considers as an ongoing process

In terms of co-operation with other international mechanisms, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines recently established a National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-Up, responsible for

preparing all national human rights treaty body reports as well as the monitoring and follow-up of Recommendations. The National Mechanism on Reporting and Follow-up will review and expedite compliance with our outstanding treaty obligations, and enhance our country's co-operation with international mechanisms.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines accepts Recommendations to continue to seek needed technical assistance to enable it to meet its various human rights commitments. We accept to continue efforts to harmonize our national legislation with international human rights standards. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines accepts to take appropriate steps to facilitate the adoption of legislation on gender equality and amend national legislation to grant women equal rights to men in regard to citizenship to their foreign spouse.

Mr. President,

As I address you this morning, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for

Human Rights, is currently engaged in a capacity-building workshop for members of the National Mechanism on Reporting and Follow-up, public sector workers and representatives from civil society to build their capacity to prepare United Nations Human Rights treaty body reports. The development of a draft human rights implementation plan is one of the objectives envisaged from the week long capacity-building workshop. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is indeed pleased that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights listened to the call for offers of additional technical and capacity-building support made by my colleagues during previous sessions of the Human Rights Council. Additionally, I wish to reiterate and echo the sentiments expressed by my predecessors for continued capacity-building support in this regard.

As mentioned during the interactive segment of our Universal Periodic Review, the Government has progressively sought to improve human rights by strengthening its national institutional and legislative legal framework. This is an all-inclusive approach. Despite our limited staffs, and a myriad of other proposed forward-thinking legislation to encourage and foster

national development and address urgent and pressing challenges, we enacted three new pieces of legislation, namely, the Domestic Violence Act of 2015, the Child Care and Adoption Act of 2010 and the Status of Children Act 2011, aimed at strengthening the domestic legal human rights framework. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is also pleased to inform that in recognition of the continuing threats to children worldwide, particularly as it relates to threats via the Internet, the Government passed the Cybercrimes Act in August 2016. It addresses a number of issues affecting children which occur over the Internet. In an effort to protect children from sexual exploitation, offences under the Cybercrimes Act, particularly as it relates to child pornography, carry severe penalties.

The Government accepts Recommendations on human rights education and training for those responsible for the protection of the rights of women and children and pledges to continue its ongoing efforts in this area.

As a Small Island Developing State, we, more than most and particularly in recent years, have been ravaged by the impacts of

climate change. The burden from the impacts of climate change can roll back decades of development gains. We, therefore, accept Recommendations to promote strategies for the mitigation of climate change and to disseminate such information through schools and other educational means.

Mr. President,

My delegation wishes, as delegations to the previous Universal Periodic Review of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have done, to reiterate that the Constitution of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines expressly guarantees the protection of the right to life, personal liberty, freedom of conscience, expression, association and movement. It further provides protection from slavery, inhuman treatment, deprivation of property, arbitrary search or entry, discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, place of origin, political opinions, color or creed and secures protection of the law, including the right to a fair hearing and presumption of innocence.

Mr. President,

I think at this juncture I will pause to allow member States to make their contributions towards this outcome process.

Thank you.