



**STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON THE  
OCCASION OF IT'S SPECIAL SITTING ON JUNE  
12, 2019, FOR THE VISIT OF HIS EXCELLENCY  
NANA ADDO DANKWA AKUFO-ADDO,  
PRESIDENT OF GHANA**

**by**

**Dr. The Hon. Ralph E. Gonsalves  
Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines**

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Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I reiterate the welcome of our highly esteemed guest, my dear friend, His Excellency Nano Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, the President of Ghana. I have been advised that this an historic first for an African Head of State to be addressing our Parliament. Certainly it is a first for a President of Ghana. We are most grateful to His Excellency.

Your Excellency, our Caribbean, of which St. Vincent and the Grenadines is part, represents a core component of the African diaspora which has been declared by the African Union to be the sixth region of Africa, a nexus forged by history and the contemporary realities of the global political economy.

This year, 2019, is the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the capture, enslavement and forced transportation of African bodies by Europeans to the Western Hemisphere, to Virginia, from the territory which is now the independent Republic of Ghana. Between the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an estimated 25 million Africans were torn from their homeland for the so-called New World in the service of European mercantile and industrial capitalism, colonialism, and an inhuman racist hegemony. This monumental crime against humanity, African enslavement, undoubtedly underdeveloped Africa and the Caribbean. The consequential legacy of underdevelopment persists for which we in Africa, and the African Diaspora, including the Caribbean, justly demand reparations, a repairing of this awful legacy.

In the case of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the highly structured enslavement of African bodies came relatively late, much later than the enslavement, for example, in the American

colonies, in Barbados, St. Kitts, and Jamaica. The records show that between 1764 and the end of the British slave trade in 1808, 62,176 enslaved Africans departed for St. Vincent and the Grenadines; 55,562 of them arrived; the horrific number of 6,614 or some 11 percent, perished across the Middle Passage. Today, the descendants of our African forbears constitute the vast majority of our country's population which, through the fever of history, has evolved as a metaphoric symphony, an integrated whole with occasional dissonance, embracing the songs of the indigenous Callinago and Garifuna, the rhythm of Africa, the melody of Europe, the chords of Asia, and the home-grown lyrics of the Caribbean itself.

The Government of Ghana has proclaimed 2019 — the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of enslaved Ghanaians in the Americas — as “the Year of Return” to contrast with the enforced passage through “the door of no-return” at the forts constructed by Europeans in Ghana to facilitate enslavement. I urge all persons of our Caribbean origin to support practically “the Year of Return”. In any event, in

emancipating ourselves from mental slavery, we must return in our minds and hearts to uplift further ourselves, our African nexus, and humanity.

Your Excellency, our history pre-disposes us to a deepening bond with each other. The contemporary realities of the political economy of a dominant, globalized monopoly capitalism induce African and Caribbean peoples to work closer with each other in our own strategic interests. Challenges and opportunities abound. It is against this compelling backdrop that I have proposed the establishment of a Permanent ABCD Commission of Africa, Brazil, the Caribbean, and the Diaspora of Africans. This ABCD Commission will embrace the 54 member-states of the African Union, with their abundant resources and 1.4 billion people; Brazil, the ninth largest economy in the world with 220 million persons of whom 110 million are of African descent, the largest such grouping in the Diaspora; the 24 countries of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) which are washed by the Caribbean Sea including all nations of the Caribbean and resource-laden

countries such as Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela — the ACS contains a population of 240 million; and the rest of the African Diaspora, especially in North America and Europe, numbering a least 70 million. In all therefore, the ABCD Commission will cover a population of nearly 2 billion with huge resources on our lands, in our seas, and in our collective lives, living, and production. This is undoubtedly a great cause; great causes have never been won by doubtful men and women. I am certainly not doubtful.

Your Excellency, I am sure that you are well aware of a heroic group of nationals of our Caribbean, including our St. Vincent and the Grenadines, who have been the carriers and promoters of an especial sense and sensibility of Africa. I refer to the Rastafarian community whose spiritualism and embrace of the eternal Emperor Haile Selassie Rastafari of Ethiopia, the teachings of the Right Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey of Jamaica, and the redeeming grace of Africa, have caused them to endure as representatives of Africa when others with colonised minds in our hemisphere have shunned Africa. So, on this your visit, your

Excellency, I hail up our Rastafari brothers and sisters for their role in helping to keep Africa alive in our collective consciousness. A few months ago, on my visit to Ghana, outside the historic Elmina Castle, a Rastafari brother from Sharpes, here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, came to meet me. He lives with his family in Ghana.

Similarly, we acknowledge the vital role played by generations of Caribbean people in the linkages of our anti-colonial struggles in the Caribbean with those of Africa. A sample of political activists, intellectuals, and leaders from our region necessarily includes Sylvester Williams, Marcus Garvey, George Padmore, CLR James, Arthur Lewis, Walter Rodney, Eric Williams, Michael Manley, Fidel Castro, Hugo Chavez, Forbes Burnham, and in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, important Africanist like Sheriff Lewis, Oscar Allen, Alfie Roberts, Caspar London, Spirit Cottle and Renwick Rose.

Importantly, we recall the heroic Cuban combatants of our Caribbean who selflessly shed their blood to defend Angola's

independence and to shake the seeming omnipotence of apartheid South Africa at its defeat in the battle of Cuito Cuanavale which presaged the liberation of South Africa and the freeing of its leader Nelson Mandela from prison.

In St. Vincent and the Grenadines today, several citizens of Ghana work and study among us in peace and security.

Your Excellency, our two countries are deeply committed to representative democracy, the rule of law, peace, and justice in our domestic political spheres. In the architecture of international relations, we share the bedrock principles and practices of multilateralism, peace, global security, and prosperity. We subscribe to the fundamental precepts of the Charter of the United Nations as the foundation stones of international law. We strive together for a better world in numerous multi-lateral institutions including the United Nations and its specialised agencies, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the UN Framework on Climate Change, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Africa Caribbean Pacific

Grouping, and the Group of 77 and China. Ghana and St. Vincent and the Grenadines work closely together in international fora. We thank Ghana for its strong support for St. Vincent and the Grenadines in its recent election to the United Nations Security Council as a non-permanent member for the years 2020 – 2021 — the smallest nation ever to be elected to membership of this pivotal global institution.

For its part, my government since March 2001 has been seeking assiduously to strengthen its relations with the African Union. Among other things, Your Excellency, I have addressed the African Union on three occasions in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Libya. Your presence in our Parliament today, Mr. President, is a magnificent gift to our Caribbean civilisation and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

I am absolutely certain that His Excellency's official visit to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, following upon my visit to your great country in November 2018, will further cement the unbreakable

ties of friendship between our two countries. As our concluding Communique will indicate, our tasks become more urgent, our collective endeavours more pressing.

As I close I necessarily must remember the enormous, continuing positive impact the Father of Ghana's Independence, the iconic Kwame Nkrumah, has had on our understanding of the strengths and possibilities of our Caribbean and Africa, acting in unison. He remains a valuable guide. Your, Your Excellency, is a more than worthy successor to a long line of distinguished patriots and leaders of Africa and Ghana. I reiterate our gratitude for your presence.

Long live the bonds of friendship between Ghana and St. Vincent and the Grenadines!

Thank you! I am obliged!