



**ADDRESS TO THE NATION ON
ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES' ELECTION TO THE
UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL**

by

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

(Taped on June 13, 2019 for broadcast)

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Fellow Vincentians, ladies and gentlemen.

On Friday June 07, 2019, St. Vincent and the Grenadines was elected by the United Nations General Assembly to serve as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the two-year period January 01, 2020 to December 31, 2021. Of the 193-member-states of the UN General Assembly, St. Vincent and the Grenadines secured 185 votes, its competitor El Salvador 6 votes; there were two abstentions. Never in the 74-year history of the United Nations has such a country as small as St. Vincent and the Grenadines has been elected to the Security Council, the 15-member institution responsible for the oversight of international peace and security. Our election to the Security Council has been truly historic.

Vincentians, at home and abroad, the people of the Caribbean and Latin America, the citizens of the small island developing states, and the peace-loving peoples of the world, rejoice in celebrating our remarkable victory. What many of our friends and allies, indeed many of our own people, initially considered to be a pipe-dream, a fool's errand, has been magnificently achieved.

Our campaign for a seat on the United Nations Security Council began over ten years ago. St. Vincent and the Grenadines then lodged its name for the seat to represent the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean States for the 2020-2021 period. This quest was not a partisan one for the Unity Labour Party (ULP) or a personal one for me; it was for St. Vincent and the Grenadines! After all, we were not assured that the ULP would win the general elections of 2010 and 2015 or that I would still be Prime Minister in June 2019 when the relevant elections at the United Nations General Assembly came around. Our government knew that as a Small Island Developing State in the Caribbean, we had a particular bundle of ideas to contribute at the highest levels of the august body known as the United Nations so as to contribute further in a meaningful way to

international peace, security, and prosperity for all nations. Of especial interest to us has been the security consequences of a most debilitating climate change which has been enveloping our planet, Earth. Personally, I had no doubt ten years ago that St. Vincent and the Grenadines stood a good chance of being elected to the Security Council; and as the years went by, I became quite sure. I knew that this quest was a great cause; and great causes have never been won by doubtful men and women! I had no doubt!

Thus, day-by-day, with God's grace and by dint of hard and smart work over the past ten years, our government carefully and diligently presented its ideas to the regional and global communities and conducted itself with maturity and aplomb in all regional, hemispheric, and global bodies to which St. Vincent and the Grenadines belongs. So, we crafted our speeches and government publications in thoughtful and innovative ways, brimful with mature analyses and workable prescriptions. In aiding this collective governmental effort, I personally authored and caused to be published seven books in the last nine years; Luke Browne authored and published one; and so, too, did Camillo recently in the week's

prior to our country's election to the Security Council. Camillo's book on globalisation, climate change, and small state exceptionalism was, specifically, part and parcel of our final campaign efforts.

Meanwhile, our government provided mature and focused leadership on many critical issues in regional, hemispheric, and global institutions. Further, when we were accorded responsible positions at the United Nations, for example, as Chair of the 5th Committee on Administration and Finance and currently as the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), we performed our tasks with excellence. Moreover, our Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our diplomats served us exceedingly well. Thus, in the process, our small nation endeared itself to the comity of nations as a serious, mature, thoughtful, and engaging partner.

Accordingly, as we made the final push in our campaign all our efforts resonated with the overwhelming majority of countries worldwide. Our tagline: "*Friends of All — We Strive for a Better World*" touched the hearts and minds of hardened diplomats across the world. Our nation's motto "*Peace and Justice*" was appreciated. Our

symbol of Peace, our National Bird, our Parrot, the Amazona Guildingi, splendid in appearance, adorned our nation's campaign literature. We had little or no money to spend on our campaign; but we had an overflowing of ideas, solid work, creative diplomacy, and mature, committed leadership. In the end, these attributes mattered most.

In the campaign literature for the candidacy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the Security Council, we sketched our approach in the following words:

“We are a people who have confronted all past and present challenges — from invading forces to encroaching seas — with an indomitable spirit of verve and optimism. We believe that, whatever the future brings, our faith will see us through. A faith in God, in ourselves, and in the principles that bind us together as a nation and as a Caribbean civilisation. We approach our multi-lateral engagements with a similar spirit”.

In our campaign literature, St. Vincent and the Grenadines embraced the fundamental precepts of the Charter of the United Nations including the equality of states; non-intervention and non-interference in another state's internal affairs; the peaceful settlement of disputes; a state's right to self-defence; and the Security Council's obligation to intervene in particular egregious circumstances. St. Vincent and the Grenadines emphasised that small size is no impediment to an impactful contribution on the world stage. We extolled the unique perspectives of a Small Island Developing State; we emphasised a focus on Africa; we insisted that inclusive, sustainable development is essential to peace and security; and we emphatically linked climate change to security issues globally.

Within this overall framework, in support of our candidacy to the Security Council, St. Vincent and the Grenadines presented a summary of our international agenda for corrective action as follows:

1. Tackling terrorism (whether state-sponsored or not);

2. Stemming the spread of weapons of mass destruction;
3. Dealing seriously with human trafficking;
4. Taking a stand against the trafficking in harmful, illegal drugs and small arms;
5. Treating appropriately with refugees;
6. Doing all that it takes to stop violence against women and children;
7. Continuing our war against diseases, inclusive of non-communicable disease;
8. Addressing Climate Change comprehensively;
9. Tackling the scarcity of food and water and other resources;

10. Righting historical wrongs through our decolonisation efforts and our quest for reparatory justice for native genocide and African slavery; and

11. Offering a sustained commitment to improving the working methods of the United Nations Security Council to make it a more legitimate, representative, and effective body.

In January 01, 2020, St. Vincent and the Grenadines will sit with 14 other members of the Security, five of which are the Permanent Members with veto powers, namely, the United States of America, the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the Republic of France. The nine other non-permanent members, in addition to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, on January 01, 2020, will be: Belgium, Dominican Republic, Germany, Indonesia, South Africa, Niger, Tunisia, Vietnam, and Estonia. Of these, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, is, by far, the smallest in territorial area, population, and size of the economy.

Understandably, the overwhelming majority of Vincentians instinctively exuded pride and joy from the moment of our nation's election to the Security Council. They followed the proceedings live at the UN General Assembly and were ecstatic at our small country's arrival on the big stage globally. Immediately, our people recognized the possibilities which arise for St. Vincent and the Grenadines, our hemisphere, our world. Pride and joy have an immediacy; they emerge from our very beings; they do not await calculating reflection. Central to our tasks ahead is to ensure a continuation of this pride and joy, demonstrated in practical works at the Security Council and elsewhere.

Our triumph at the UN General Assembly is, among other things, an inspiration for our young people to set meaningful goals and work assiduously to achieve them. It is a reaffirmation of our oft-stated principle that although we are not better than anyone, no one is better than us. We can all achieve a better world together.

I humbly request of all churches to engage their respective congregations in thanksgiving and in prayerful consideration for the further upliftment of our nation and the world.

As I conclude, I reiterate our country's thanks to CARICOM and the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean States for endorsing the candidacy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We thank also all countries in all regions of the world which voted so overwhelmingly for St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I reach out, too, to the great people of El Salvador and its government in our continuing efforts to strengthen further the unity of Latin America and the Caribbean. The setback of El Salvador is episodic. We can all advance together. So, we have work to do together in the interest of peace, security, and prosperity.

Thank you!