



STATEMENT

BY

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH E. GONSALVES
PRIME MINISTER OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE
GRENADINES**

AT

**THE HIGH-LEVEL EVENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE
CONVENED BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE
UNITED NATIONS**

**THEMATIC PLENARY IV- FINACING
FINANCING THE RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE-INVESTING IN TOMORROW**

62nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Monday, 24 September 2007, New York

Please check against delivery



Mr. Co-Chairs:

The timing of this high-level exchange is fortuitous as we prepare for Bali. I commend the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his initiative in attempting to marshal the attention of the world on the issue of climate change and global warming. To the peoples of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the wider Caribbean and the African continent, this issue is of the utmost urgency. The insincerely protracted scientific debate has long since been resolved, and we know both the causes and effects of global warming. The scientific community can continue to busy itself with discussions of degree and degrees, but the UN must act now, and act decisively.

And it is becoming more and more apparent that the effects of climate change will impact most severely those already facing social and economic hardship: our farmers who utilise lands bordering the sea, communities already existing in poverty and those suffering from the ravages of HIV/AIDS and other diseases. As usual, the underprivileged in society and those with the softest voices will suffer most.

The developed world has been starkly warned that its vaunted increases in development aid to Africa will be entirely consumed by the costs associated with climate change on the continent. Issues of food security, drought, flooding, disease and migration are being exacerbated by the callous refusal of the world's polluting nations to effectively address their destructive addiction to fossil fuels and irresponsible environmental practices.

But the bunt of the climate change fallout is not limited to Africa. In 2001, The Third Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned:

"The impacts of climate change will fall disproportionately upon developing countries and the poor persons within all countries, and thereby exacerbate inequities in health status and access to adequate food, clean water, and other resources. Populations in developing countries are generally exposed to relatively high risks

of adverse impacts from climate change. In addition, poverty and other factors create conditions of low adaptive capacity in most developing countries."

I remind this gathering that, 15 years ago, the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change recognised that global warming would have special impact on small island states, countries with low-lying coastal areas, and countries with areas prone to natural disasters. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, for example, the overwhelming majority of our hard-won infrastructural developments, by way of geographic necessity, lie mere inches above sea level, and perilously close to the coastline. Through absolutely no fault of our own, the physical manifestations of our emerging modern, post-colonial state can be obliterated by inexorably rising sea levels. The Caribbean's vital banana industry, already buffeted by the winds of iniquitous globalization, has been repeatedly devastated in recent years by increasingly intense hurricanes, which have placed a pivotal economic sector on life support.

In the 15 years since the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the nine years since the drafting of the Kyoto Protocol, and the endless obfuscations and obstructions since then, precious little has been done to arrest climate change or adequately equip developing states for its fallout. Instead, the world's largest polluters dither endlessly while ice caps melt, oceans warm and rise, hurricanes intensify, and the most vulnerable states pay for the collective environmental sins of developed world.

The solutions to the climate change problem are multifaceted, but an indispensable component must be the creation of a Climate Change Fund for African, Caribbean and Pacific states. This Fund would put flesh on the skeletal commitments of the Convention on Climate Change, which compelled developed countries to provide additional financial resources to assist the developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of global warming. The Fund should be both a source of disaster relief and of the technological and infrastructural support needed to adapt to climate change. The developed member states of the UN can no longer afford view the increasingly frequent and intense natural disasters as individual events, capable of narrow prescriptive solutions and subject to the vagaries of donor fatigue. They must live up to their obligations, both legal and moral, to assist the developing world in dealing with the changes that were born in the smoke-belching factories and car-clogged highways of the polluters.

I thank you Sirs.

New York
24 September 2007