

Delegation from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Position Paper for the General Assembly Second Committee

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly (GA) Second Committee will discuss the following topics: Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development and Disaster Risk Reduction. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) and a Member of the United Nations, is strongly committed to actively find solutions for a better future.

I. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines recognises the potential of ICTs to achieve the *Sustainable Development Goals*, through enabling economic development and investment. ICTs are an effective tool to reduce poverty, extend health services, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, expand educational opportunities and improve the overall wellbeing of Vincentians, the people of the Caribbean, the people of SIDS and the citizens of our world. As stated in the *Mid-term Review of the Samoa Pathway* 100 percent of the population in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is covered by at least a 3G mobile network. Nevertheless, SIDS face additional challenges regarding high communication cost, with the mobile broadband prepaid price topping more than 5 percent of the GNI. St Vincent and the Grenadines emphasises that broadband networks are essential for higher-level services, such as telemedicine, online learning, climate monitoring and advanced e-government services. Therefore, affordable broadband is essential to achieve higher economic impacts.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has located the *Sustainable Development Goals*, as outlined in GA resolution 70/1 (2015) entitled “*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*”, at the centre of its national development strategies. Therefore, in its *National Economic and Social Development Plan (2013-2025)* it has aligned the countries development objectives with the related SDGs. In line with objective 1.7 “*to develop the international telecommunication services sector*” and the related SDGs 4,9,16,17 the initiative “*One laptop per child*” was launched. The initiative, funded by the World Bank, provides every secondary student with a laptop. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as a SIDS, highly appreciates the International Telecommunications Unions (ITU) efforts to mainstream the needs of SIDS in all its activities, programs and projects to achieve its commitments under the *Samoa Pathway* (2014). Furthermore, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines welcomes the *Alliance for Affordable Internet Initiative (A4AI)*. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines supports the adoption of GA Resolution 76/189 (2021), 75/202 (2020) and ECOSOS Resolution 28 (2021). Additionally, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as a strong advocate of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, emphasises the important role of the ITU and the *World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)* for the achievement of the SDGs. Highlighting the need for cooperation between the public and private sector, NGOs, CSOs, the media and especially incorporating the youth, the *CARCIP Regional Broadband Project* was launched in 2018. It is a public private partnership with Digicel OECP and it is funded by the World Bank and the Caribbean Regional Communications Infrastructure Program (CARCIP). Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) *digital transformation project* is part of the CARICOM Single ICT Space, which harmonises ICT policies, legislation, regulations, technical standards, networks and services across the region. Empowering women and girls in ICT is a priority. Hence, in 2021 the International Day for Girls in ICT was celebrated for the 5th time. Furthermore, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has enacted a “Zero Hunger Trust Fund”, targeted against food insecurity and unemployment through empowering youth with Skill Training and Apprenticeships in computer repair and graphic design. In cooperation with the Republic of China (Taiwan), the *Intelligent Bus Management and Monitoring System Project* was successfully completed in 2021. It is aimed at leveraging ICTs to improve the transportation sector, enhance citizen’s security and consolidate current and previous ICT initiatives.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is serious and committed to achieve all of the SDGs by the year 2030. In order to accomplish our goal, international, public and private cooperation, sustainable financial support and ongoing investments in ICTs is of utmost importance. Therefore, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines calls upon all developed countries to support SIDS in the development of affordable access to broadband and ICTs and to leave no one behind. Nevertheless, sustainable development also involve the protection of the environment, as SIDS are disproportionately affected by climate change and environmental catastrophes, it is of utmost importance to consider environmental effects while funding infrastructure projects. Acknowledging the immense e-waste that is produced, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines proposes an *International E-Waste Awareness Day*, in cooperation with the ITU, the UNESCO, UDPP and the WSIS. The project would first of all raise awareness about

the issue in developed countries and could include a campaign to donate old ICT hardware to improve their life cycle. Moreover, the initiative could encourage already existing projects such as the Zero Hunger Trust Fund Initiative in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to incorporate up cycling and repairing workshops into their program. Thereby, the digital inclusion could be improved through reducing financial barriers in developing states and furthermore fighting unemployment and food insecurity. Addressing the affordability of ICTs, inclusive planning is of the utmost importance for SIDS. Additionally, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines proposes to expand the *One Laptop per Child Initiative* to other Member States, especially taking into account the still ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to leave no one behind. To finance this initiative the cooperation of UN bodies, the World Bank and the private sector such as big tech-corporations such as Google, Microsoft and Alibaba is needed.

II. Disaster Risk Reduction

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), which is heavily affected by floods, landslides, hurricanes, coastal floods, droughts, coastal erosion, storms, thunderstorms and volcanic eruptions. On the 9th of April 2021, La Soufrière erupted for the first time in over 40 years. The eruption displaced more than 13,300 people and almost all population was indirectly affected by ash fall, water restrictions and loss of income, but fortunately and due to good planning nobody was killed. Nevertheless, President Ralf Gonsalvez stated that “the humanitarian relief for the prolonged period is going to be huge”. Moreover, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as well as other Caribbean Island States were strongly affected by hurricane Elsa. SIDS are the most vulnerable to climate change, while contributing the least to the emissions that cause it. Therefore, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines calls upon all Member States to support the short-term relief as well as the long-term reconstruction.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines considers the *Paris Agreement (2015)* of the utmost importance. Furthermore, the *Sendai Declaration and Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, which centres climate change as a root cause for disaster risk is strongly supported, as SIDS are the most effected by climate change, as the last hurricane season has proved. In 1991 the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) was established to coordinate the immediate response to any disaster affecting a CARICOM Member State, which aids in determining the role and responsibility of relevant actors. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines puts special emphasis on GA Resolution 74/219 (2019), which drew attention to the role of women and people with disabilities in the development and implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies, as they face disproportionate risk during disasters. Following the resolution the Ministry of National Mobilisation and the National Emergency Management Organisation (NEMO), together with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and CREWS Caribbean, started to increase gender considerations with special emphasis on vulnerable groups in Early Warning Systems (EWS). The La Soufrière volcano eruption showed the benefits of good planning and preparation, as women and children under five were prioritised during and after the eruption. Education and Awareness is put at the centre, as a greater understanding of hazards and risks among the local officials, stakeholders and the public is more likely to direct action. Hence, a more accessible *Family Emergency Disaster Plan* was designed to remove potential barriers in understanding emergency procedures and preventive measurements. Furthermore, ICTs can effectively be implemented in risk disaster mitigation. Therefore, NEMO has launched the myHAZ-VCT app, which is a citizen science platform for sharing observations of natural hazards and environmental phenomena and collecting crucial data. Furthermore, the *Regional Disaster Vulnerability Reduction Project (RDVRP)* was implemented in 2013 to reduce the vulnerability to natural hazards and climate change impacts in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines stresses the need for multilateral cooperation in mitigating disaster risks. Therefore, we call on all Member States, UN bodies, the private sector, CSOs and NGOs to unite in their strength in helping SIDS, especially the Caribbean Islands with the immediate relief and the longterm reconstruction of infrastructure to become more climate-resilient. Furthermore, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines urges all Member States to uphold their commitments of the Paris Agreement. In line with the rise of biological hazards and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, water availability should be a main concern, as it is crucial for the purpose of sanitisation. As a strong advocate of the empowerment of youth, girls and women, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is proposing an initiative, in cooperation with UN Woman and Plan International, to especially teach young girls how to swim and how to behave in case of an emergency, taking into account that gender roles often stop women from learning important coping strategies that could be life-saving in times of disaster. In line with the *Sendai Framework* gender should be mainstreamed along the developing and implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies as well as early warning systems to create a truly inclusive system. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is looking forward to multilaterally find solutions in how we can build back better and leave no one behind.