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**ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION**

**PLENARY**

**Agenda Item 8: Statements by delegations of Member States**

**STATEMENT BY SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

(Presented by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

President of the Assembly  
President of the ICAO Council  
Secretary-General of ICAO  
Distinguished Heads of Delegations and Observers  
Ladies and Gentlemen

**Introduction**

It is indeed an honour to be a part of the 41st Session of the ICAO Assembly to witness the election of the first female to this office.

Madame President, let me take this opportunity to extend congratulations to you on behalf of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on your election as President of the 41st Session of the ICAO Assembly.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines would also like to take this opportunity to express gratitude to ICAO for their sound leadership throughout COVID-19 Pandemic which was and still is a very challenging period for the Aviation Industry.

**COVID-19**

St. Vincent and the Grenadines, just like our brother and sisters in the global community was impacted by the COVID- 19 Pandemic and the fact that we have joined here for this Assembly in person is a testimony to our resilience and strength. Even though St. Vincent and the Grenadines did not close its borders, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the aviation industry and we have experienced the effects of this pandemic in every sector of our economy. With aviation being the main gateway to tourism in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the reduction of flights contributed to the decrease in tourism which is a vital contributor to our GDP.

## **Volcanic Eruption**

On 9th April of 2021, 42 years after the last eruption and amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic, the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines were impacted by the eruption of the La Soufriere Volcano. The northern part of the island sustained the most damage and persons had to be relocated as the area was not habitable.

The financial impact and the disruption of livelihood were truly devastating to our people. The assistance of our counterparts once again showed that together we can overcome any challenges placed before us. Out of the ashes we rise.

## **Climate Change**

For the longevity of aviation, not just within St. Vincent and the Grenadines, but also globally, addressing key environmental issues are essential in making aviation a sustainable sector. Commencing January 2023, St. Vincent and the Grenadines has volunteered to participate in the pilot phase of CORSIA and we look forward to putting measures in place to mitigate the effects of aviation on climate change.

With respect to climate change, it is an established fact that all States are vulnerable. As recent as this current Hurricane season, Canada and some areas of the United States of America (USA) were impacted by Hurricanes. This is not the only occasion that the United States is impacted by adverse weather phenomena; many of us may remember Hurricane Katrina and the damages it caused in New Orleans. And as we speak, the State of Florida in the United States of America is under threat of being impacted by Hurricane Ian.

In the past, such weather phenomena affected Small Island States. Presently, this situation has changed however, in spite of the change, small island states continue to be the most vulnerable.

More is therefore required to combat climate change in the interest of all States. St. Vincent and the Grenadines finds it imperative to reiterate the call for all States to take appropriate and effective actions in the interest of protecting the environment.

This can only be done by a change in our respective attitude towards climate change. In this regard, it is important and critical that all States take the necessary actions towards protecting the environment. Hurricanes are just one issue. There is also the threat caused by rising sea levels which threatens the very existence of our States.

An appeal is therefore being made for this august body, the ICAO to support the work of the United Nations, particularly to the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) in its efforts to combat climate change.

## **Future**

We are all faced with very common challenges: the rising cost of fuel, issues relating to food security and supply chain issues as well as the effects of climate change. Madame President there is no better time than here and now for us to be come together with one common goal of Reconnecting the World.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected a growth of 5% in the GDP of St Vincent and the Grenadines for 2022. It is predicted that this would increase to 6% in 2023. For 2023, it is also anticipated that there would be an increase in air traffic into St. Vincent and the Grenadines as airlines have expressed interest in operating more frequently as well as new carriers exploring their options to service our destination.

Significant progress was achieved with the support of ICAO under its No Country Left Behind Initiative and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, a small Island Developing State has benefitted from this. We continue to receive invaluable support from ICAO through the Strengthening of the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority and through the iPACKs' which supports the States' aviation response, recovery, and resilience efforts during COVID-19. We look forward to other training opportunities that can be offered to us.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will continue to support the efforts and initiatives of ICAO. We look forward to our continued collaboration to ensure the aviation sector exceeds its pre-covid numbers as we improve aviation safety and security while taking efficiency and sustainability into consideration.

Aviation transcends national borders and **Reconnecting the World** is a very powerful and fitting theme. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines recognises the countries that make a meaningful contribution towards aviation despite the challenges and looks forward to a time when **all** countries regardless of affiliations or political alliances can be a part of the ICAO in an effort to advance the Aviation sectors throughout the world. May we leave **no** country behind!

On behalf of the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, we wish these meetings every success!

Thank you very much.

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