

CONSEJO PERMANENTE



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ACTA

DE LA SESIÓN PROTOCOLAR

CELEBRADA

EL 1 DE OCTUBRE DE 2001

En honor de la visita del excelentísimo doctor Ralph E. Gonsalves
Primer Ministro de San Vicente y las Granadinas

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CONSEJO PERMANENTE DE LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS

ACTA DE LA SESIÓN PROTOCOLAR CELEBRADA EL 1 DE OCTUBRE DE 2001

En la ciudad de Washington, a las diez y cuarenta de la mañana del 1 de octubre de 2001, celebró sesión protocolar el Consejo Permanente de la Organización de los Estados Americanos en honor de la visita del excelentísimo doctor Ralph E. Gonsalves, Primer Ministro de San Vicente y las Granadinas. Presidió la sesión el Embajador Swinburne A.S. Lestrade, Representante Permanente del Commonwealth de Dominica y Presidente del Consejo Permanente. Asistieron los siguientes miembros:

Embajador Ronalith Ivan Ochaeta Argueta, Representante Permanente de Guatemala y Vicepresidente del Consejo Permanente
Embajador Denis G. Antoine, Representante Permanente de Grenada
Embajadora Sonia Merlyn Johnny, Representante Permanente de Santa Lucía
Embajadora Laura Elena Núñez de Ponce, Representante Permanente de Honduras
Embajador Hernán R. Castro H., Representante Permanente de Costa Rica
Embajador Diego Abente Brun, Representante Permanente del Paraguay
Embajadora Margarita Escobar, Representante Permanente de El Salvador
Embajador Marcelo Ostria Trigo, Representante Permanente de Bolivia
Embajador Joshua Sears, Representante Permanente del Commonwealth de las Bahamas
Embajador Valter Pecly Moreira, Representante Permanente del Brasil
Embajador Esteban Tomic Errázuriz, Representante Permanente de Chile
Embajador Blasco Peñaherrera, Representante Permanente del Ecuador
Embajador Juan Enrique Fischer, Representante Permanente del Uruguay
Embajadora Lisa Shoman, Representante Permanente de Belice
Embajador Juan Manuel Castulovich, Representante Permanente de Panamá
Embajador Michael I. King, Representante Permanente de Barbados
Embajador Lombardo Martínez Cabezas, Representante Permanente de Nicaragua
Embajador Raúl Alberto Ricardes, Representante Permanente de la Argentina
Embajador Miguel Ruíz Cabañas, Representante Permanente de México
Embajador Humberto de la Calle Lombana, Representante Permanente de Colombia
Embajador Jorge Valero Briceño, Representante Permanente de Venezuela
Embajador Ellsworth I. A. John, Representante Permanente de San Vicente y las Granadinas
Embajador Izben C. Williams, Representante Permanente de Saint Kitts y Nevis
Embajador Ramón Quiñones, Representante Permanente de la República Dominicana
Embajador Roger Francisco Noriega, Representante Permanente de los Estados Unidos
Embajador Paul D. Durand, Representante Permanente del Canadá
Consejero Mackisack Logie, Representante Interino de Trinidad y Tobago
Ministra Delrose Montague, Representante Interina de Jamaica
Segundo Secretario Henry Leonard Mac-Donald, Representante Interino de Suriname
Ministro Antonio García Revilla, Representante Interino del Perú
Segundo Secretario Pierre Daniel Laviolette, Representante Alterno de Haití
Primera Secretaria Deborah Yaw, Representante Alternas de Guyana
Ministro Consejero Starret D. Greene, Representante Alternos de Antigua y Barbuda

También estuvieron presentes el Secretario General de la Organización, doctor César Gaviria, y el Secretario General Adjunto, Embajador Luigi R. Einaudi, Secretario del Consejo Permanente.

El PRESIDENTE: Will you please stand for the arrival of the distinguished Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

[El Primer Ministro de San Vicente y las Granadinas, acompañado por el Secretario General y la comitiva oficial, ingresa al salón.]

Please be seated.

I am pleased to call to order this protocolary meeting of the Permanent Council, convened in honor of Dr. The Honorable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Prime Minister, on behalf of the Permanent Council, I am honored to welcome you to this House of the Americas. This honor is all the more significant for me, since I am doing so on my first day as Chairman of the Permanent Council and during my first week as Permanent Representative of the Commonwealth of Dominica to the OAS.

PALABRAS DEL SECRETARIO GENERAL

El PRESIDENTE: I now give the floor to the Secretary General of the OAS, Dr. César Gaviria.

El SECRETARIO GENERAL: His Excellency Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Mrs. Gonsalves; Ambassador Swinburne Lestrade, Chairman of the Permanent Council and Permanent Representative of Dominica; Mr. Assistant Secretary General; ambassadors; distinguished guests ladies and gentlemen:

It is a privilege and honor for me to welcome today, on his first visit to the Organization of American States, the distinguished Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, His Excellency Ralph Gonsalves. Mr. Prime Minister, your presence here, six months after your election in March 2001, symbolizes the strong relations that exist between the people and Government of your country and this organization. We highly appreciate your visit and look forward to the further strengthening of your country's engagement in the objectives and activities of this organization.

We are also pleased to have your Permanent Representative to the Organization, Ambassador Ellsworth John, well known in the OAS. He did an outstanding job at the Organization's General Secretariat and is now Chairman of the very important Committee on Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities.

Mr. Prime Minister, we consider your presence at this very important and critical moment of history, so early in your administration, a clear and unequivocal demonstration of the commitment of all Caribbean nations to this organization. It marks the Caribbean Community's (CARICOM) firm stance regarding strengthening and defending democracy, human rights, freedom, and the rule of law in all our hemispheric communities.

This reminds me of the historic statement made by the then Chairman of CARICOM, His Excellency Prime Minister Owen Arthur of Barbados, during the recently held Third Summit of the Americas. Prime Minister Arthur stated that "our Caribbean has a vital contribution to make to the

creation of the community of the Americas.” Mr. Prime Minister, this organization and I share this view totally, and we will need your and your colleagues’ support in bringing this vision to reality.

Mr. Prime Minister, the United States, the Hemisphere, and the whole world have been shaken up by the tragic, horrible, and criminal acts of terrorists on September 11, 2001, in New York and Washington, D.C. We all have condemned these acts with the strongest expressions, as they go against all forms of respect for mankind. It is clear that there is no place for such horrifying and criminal violence in the world that we are trying to establish. The tragedies of September 11 are never to be forgotten. We have to transform our anger into sustained unity and alliances to counteract terrorism.

I wish to take this opportunity to express, once again, our heartfelt sympathy to those who have lost relatives, friends, and colleagues among the victims of the terrorist attacks. As you are aware, Mr. Prime Minister, several Caribbean nationals were among the victims. May I take this opportunity to convey to the Caribbean Community, through you, my deepest sympathy on this terrible loss. I would like to request that we all stand and observe a minute of silence in memory of these Caribbean nationals and all others who perished on September 11.

[El Consejo, de pie, observa un minuto de silencio.]

Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Chairman, we will have to deal with the impact of these terrorist attacks for a long time, and perhaps the world will never be the same again. The whole world—nations, organizations, the business community, individuals, multilateral organizations—will have to revisit current agendas and activities and determine, individually and collectively, how to contribute to preventing such horrible acts from happening again.

Just a couple of days ago, in this same Hall of the Americas, the Twenty-fourth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs took place to consider the terrorist attacks on the United States. The Hemisphere has declared its full solidarity with the Government and people of the United States. In the coming weeks and months, several proposals will be considered and several meetings of specialized agencies will convene to design a strong multilateral response. It is especially at these times that hemispheric unity and cooperation, in a spirit of solidarity, are needed in order to achieve the objectives that have been established in order to fight terrorism in all its manifestations. We look forward to an intensive engagement with CARICOM in the formulation of those measures.

Mr. Prime Minister, the terrorist attacks, an act of political aggression of the worst kind, will impact the social and economic life of several countries. Already we are experiencing the immediate effects on the airline and tourism industries in the United States and the Caribbean. Smaller economies, such as those in the Caribbean, have already been tackling some of the negative impacts of globalization. The Hemisphere has also recognized the financial, human, and institutional limitations of small states. Now, it is expected that these terrorist acts and their consequences will increase the pressure on your limited earning capacity, resulting in the closure of economic activities, the loss of jobs, and an increase in poverty. I believe that in our examination of the total impact, we will need to address these specific problems and needs and to determine, together with other institutions of the inter-American system, a balanced approach to assist these countries.

Mr. Prime Minister, in the past years, the integration movement in the Caribbean has been widened and deepened. We recognize CARICOM’s efforts to modernize its institutional framework;

to establish a Single Market and Economy supported by the Caribbean Court of Justice; as well as to develop a coordinated strategy and mechanisms for external economic negotiations, the Regional Negotiation Machinery (RNM). I believe that these are valuable lessons for our hemisphere.

The OAS remains committed to continue to work with CARICOM member states, to strengthen Caribbean economies, and to further improve living standards in the Caribbean. We also immediately acknowledge current challenges facing the Caribbean that need to be addressed with the assistance of the international community. I refer to the high rate of crime, the illegal trafficking in firearms, the high incidence of HIV/AIDS, and the effects of natural disasters.

Mr. Prime Minister, on two occasions hemispheric leaders have requested the modernization and restructuring of the inter-American system in line with the agreed agenda and Plan of Action of the Summit of the Americas process. We are in the process of implementing this mandate. The most recent Summit of the Americas in Quebec City resulted in a series of mandates and a more central role for the Organization in this process. I take this opportunity to congratulate CARICOM on its demonstrated capacity to participate in and contribute effectively to the formulation of new targets and objectives.

The hemispheric agenda is changing in focus and nature. This new dynamism will require an intensified and more meaningful relationship between this hemispheric body and the subregional entities. In this regard, we believe that the existing Agreement on Cooperation between the General Secretariat of the OAS and CARICOM should be revisited to include the scope and depth of the agenda of the Summit of the Americas.

Cooperation between the OAS and CARICOM has increased tremendously at the political level and has resulted in effective partnerships. The OAS was pleased to send electoral observation missions to several countries of the Caribbean. Our joint efforts in Haiti have proven to be effective. They have set in motion a sustained process of engagement between the OAS and CARICOM, on the one hand, and the Haitian Government and political parties on the other, to assist in the resolution of the political crisis in Haiti. I have had the pleasure of holding consultations with you and your colleague heads of government, most recently on Grand Bahama Island.

We regard CARICOM's efforts in Haiti as of critical importance. We are ready to continue our assistance if all involved parties in Haiti are ready to proceed in such a way that a definitive political arrangement can be agreed upon. We look forward to CARICOM's continued engagement in this process and to the guidance of CARICOM's leaders, not only to the OAS but also, especially in the circumstances of today, to the involved parties in Haiti.

Mr. Prime Minister, I am convinced that united and in solidarity, we can and will find the most appropriate solutions for the old and new challenges that we confront today. This is not only an obligation to the peoples of the Americas, but also to the generations to come.

Mr. Prime Minister, in your relatively short term in office, you have already demonstrated your innovative style of governance at the national level, as well as your engagement in hemispheric and international affairs. We take great pride in having you as our honored guest in this Hall of the Americas, and we look forward to your vision and guidance.

I thank you. [Aplausos.]

El PRESIDENTE: Thank you, Mr. Secretary General.

PALABRAS DEL PRESIDENTE DEL CONSEJO PERMANENTE

El PRESIDENTE: Dr. The Honorable Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Mrs. Gonsalves; Mr. Secretary General; Assistant Secretary General; ambassadors; alternate representatives; distinguished guests:

I am thrilled that my first order of business as Chairman of the Permanent Council is to welcome The Honorable Dr. Gonsalves to this protocolary meeting.

During his journey to the high office of Prime Minister, Dr. Gonsalves has given much to the Caribbean in a variety of roles: student activist, university lecturer, lawyer, trade unionist, writer, and politician. Manifested in all these callings were Dr. Gonsalves' abiding concern for people and his unstinting commitment to forging a Caribbean nation. If his style has always reflected the popular touch, his ideals have always been lofty, and his goals have always been not only to raise the living standards of men and women of the Caribbean, but also to see the Caribbean assume its rightful place among the civilizations of the world. Dr. Gonsalves' training, background, and style make him well suited to contribute to the development of the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Caribbean as a whole.

As a student leader at the University of the West Indies (UWI) in the late 1960s, Dr. Gonsalves demonstrated political savvy and courage early. To the image of the University's student body as a sleepy dormitory of academic and materialistic ambition was added an image of social concern and activism.

In the 30 years between those days and the present, Dr. Gonsalves distinguished himself in various fields of endeavor. He went on to complete his doctorate in government; he completed his law studies; and he lectured at his alma mater, UWI, before entering the political arena in earnest in his native Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Political success did not come easy for Dr. Gonsalves, and perhaps this was no bad thing. His long years in the political wilderness were no wilderness. He made a success of his legal practice; he pursued the political education of the people of his country; he wrote on political and economic issues affecting his country and on matters affecting the entire Caribbean. Through it all, he put his energy and intellect into organizing politically by way of ensuring and facilitating his call to government. This wilderness served Dr. Gonsalves well. I have said myself to various persons that perhaps no other political leader in the Caribbean has come to the office of head of government better prepared for that position.

Dr. Gonsalves has brought to the office of Prime Minister just what many of us expected. He has brought his reserves of energy to bear on efforts to improve the lot of the ordinary Vincentian. He has also continued to manifest his commitment to closer integration among the countries of the Caribbean. He has been appointed main spokesman on the banana industry for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), an industry that is so vital to the countries of the Eastern Caribbean.

At their meeting in Dominica in July of this year, the heads of government of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) appointed Dr. Gonsalves to head two task forces: one on travel facilitation among OECS countries and the other on establishing an economic union among OECS countries. His wish to see a more united Caribbean fits easily into his concern with the Caribbean's place in the world community, a theme that runs through his two most recent books, *History and the Future: A Caribbean Perspective* and *The Politics of our Caribbean Civilisation*.

Dr. Gonsalves assumed leadership of his country at a very difficult time for the countries of the Caribbean, in particular for the smaller, banana-exporting countries of the Windward Islands. These countries face tremendous challenges in adjusting to the changes in the global economic environment. It is absolutely incumbent on institutions like the Organization of American States to respond strategically to these challenges and to work in concert with the countries towards this end.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been an active member of the OAS since its independence on October 27, 1979. Since then, it has steadily contributed to shaping the agenda of the Organization. We recall that some four years ago, the then Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Ambassador Kingsley Layne, was the first Chairman of the Permanent Executive Committee of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CEPCIDI), which is charged with advancing the Partnership for Development goals of the Organization.

More recently, our colleague, Ambassador Ellsworth John of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was elected Chairman of this Council's Committee on Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities. The work of this committee reflects one of the central themes of Dr. Gonsalves' administration; that is, the need for greater representative democracy and the importance of civil society in attaining more effective collaboration between those who govern and the citizenry as a whole.

Prime Minister Gonsalves' presence here today is a manifestation of the commitment of his country and his government to hemispheric solidarity. Furthermore, it is an indication of the importance that you, Prime Minister Gonsalves, and your government have attached to fostering and nurturing relations among the countries of the Hemisphere.

Ladies and gentlemen, during my last meeting in July of this year as Director-General of the OECS, it was Dr. Gonsalves who took the floor to pay tribute to me for my years of service to that organization. It is also true that I have known him since 1967 during the exciting days of student activity at the University of the West Indies (UWI).

For these reasons, admittedly, but more so for his contribution to Caribbean development, I deem it a considerable privilege to welcome the Prime Minister to this meeting. In words that will resonate well with him, Dr. Gonsalves can truly be described as a distinguished son of Caribbean civilization. It is against this background that I welcome you, Dr. Gonsalves, to the House of the Americas, and we look forward to your statement.

I now have the honor to give the floor to Dr. The Honorable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. [Aplausos.]

PALABRAS DEL PRIMER MINISTRO DE SAN VICENTE Y LAS GRANADINAS

EL PRIMER MINISTRO DE SAN VICENTE Y LAS GRANADINAS: Mr. Chairman of the Permanent Council, Mr. Secretary General, Mr. Assistant Secretary General, ambassadors, other head representatives, staff of the General Secretariat, other esteemed invited guests, ladies and gentlemen:

I feel very honored and privileged to be here to address the Permanent Council of this very important regional body. It is a pleasure to see my good friend, His Excellency Ambassador Swinburne Lestrade, here in the OAS as Chairman of this Permanent Council. Swinburne Lestrade and I attended the University of the West Indies (UWI) at the same time, and we lived on the same block in the same hall of residence. Very early in our lives we co-authored an article on Caribbean integration, and since then we have worked tirelessly for regional integration and hemispheric cooperation.

Mr. Chairman, the Organization of American States is at a significant juncture in its history as we craft our response to the senseless terrorist attacks carried out in two major cities in the United States—Washington, D.C. and New York—on September 11, 2001. Our collective physical security has been swiftly catapulted to the fore of our hemispheric agenda at home and abroad.

The recent terrorist attacks have undoubtedly had a profound impact on the peoples of this hemisphere and elsewhere. Immediate loss of life, personal injury on a large scale, psychological trauma, physical damage, economic loss, human pain, suffering and grief, among other things, have been the terrible consequences. But equally, the evil and barbarism of the terrorists and their sponsors have prompted right-thinking, civilized people and peace-loving nations to coalesce in an organized, determined effort to cripple and hopefully defeat terrorism, if not fully, at least in its more malignant and destructive forms. I speak here hopefully, but cautiously, since it appears that there is in the human condition a permanence of evil jostling for supremacy with that which is good, noble, and redemptive. All nations across the globe must henceforth act in a coordinated manner with a defined purpose to ensure that evil does not come anywhere near to triumphing. On the contrary, it is our goal to vanquish it.

At a personal level, the heinous nature of the crime against humanity of September 11 affected me. My eldest sister, Patricia, was on the 45th floor of the second of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City when the horrendous attack occurred. By the grace of God, she escaped physically unhurt, but mentally traumatized.

Fundamentally, the terrorism of September 11 was a massive blow against the poor worldwide. Much of the resources that were earmarked for poverty alleviation will inevitably be diverted to national security and law and order, narrowly defined. Further, the terrorist assaults on the United States of America have stirred in the breasts of many worldwide a quest to curtail civil liberties, to pursue racial profiling, to promote religious bigotry, and to narrow democratic and even sovereign spaces for governance. Some such persons were already predisposed to embark upon such a quest; the terrorist acts now induce them to travel upon that unfortunate and wholly wrong path.

It therefore pains me greatly to hear some supposedly well-meaning voices mouthing a prattle of excuses for the terrorist assaults upon the United States of America. Only a distorted mind and flawed logic can blame the victim for this massacre and the loss of innocent life. Only an obtuse moral relativism—that is, an acute sophistry that distinguishes not between good and evil—and a

cynicism born of extreme Romanesque comfort or personal degradation can find any justification whatsoever for these dastardly and, yes, cowardly acts.

It is part of our duty here at the Organization of American States to make solid judgements founded on high principles as the basis upon which to act in these times of profound crisis. We must eschew the usual tendency in diplomatic circles to have angels dance on the head of a pin. Clarity of thought and firmness of purpose are among the cornerstones for concerted action against terrorism and its consequences.

This moment of crisis represents, as always, a moment of and for change. It cannot be business as usual for us in the OAS or in any other international forum. Global terror has no doubt been facilitated by the globalization of the world financial system and the revolution in information technology. A new world order has to be constructed to confront global terror, but the haunting questions must be answered with clarity: “What’s new?” “Which world?” “Who gives the orders?” The leaders of nations must give unequivocal answers to these troubling queries in concerted dialogue across the world. This is part of our current leadership obligations. It cannot be ducked.

This organization, founded 53 years ago, is well placed to provide substantial leadership in these troubled times. Its very purpose demands our nations’ and our peoples’ immediate focus [Article 2 of the Charter]:

- (a) To strengthen the peace and security of the continent;
- (b) To promote and consolidate representative democracy, with due respect for the principle of nonintervention;
- (c) To prevent possible causes of difficulties and to ensure the pacific settlement of disputes that may arise among the Member States;
- (d) To provide for common action on the part of those States in the event of aggression;
- (e) To seek the solution of political, juridical, and economic problems that may arise among them;
- (f) To promote, by cooperative action, their economic, social, and cultural development; and
- (h) To achieve an effective limitation of conventional weapons that will make it possible to devote the largest amount of resources to the economic and social development of the Member States.

Each of these worthy objectives must no doubt be pursued with its appropriate emphasis at this precise historic juncture. In their pursuit, we ought not to exclude the participation of any nation in this hemisphere. In this process, we ought neither to imprison ourselves with ghosts from the past nor to permit old battles to prevent or restrain cooperative efforts in the overwhelmingly challenging present.

As the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines sees it, our current priority is twofold:

1. the regional security of this hemisphere; and
2. the economic and social stability of the nations within it.

In a fundamental sense, these twin issues constitute, in this new period, a quintessential security challenge with many-sided dimensions. By this I mean that the maintenance and promotion of regional security from the real threat of terrorism cannot be isolated from day-to-day terrors, such as child poverty, HIV/AIDS, natural disasters, illiteracy, and the trafficking in illegal drugs.

In this hemispheric body, there are 34 member states of varying sizes and resource endowments. Some can do much more than others in defending and promoting our regional and, by extension, national security. From those who possessed more bountiful blessings, more is expected. But each member state, however small in size or limited in material and personnel resources, can and should play its part nationally and should stand shoulder to shoulder with the other member states in the ongoing battle against international terrorism.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines takes its security responsibilities most seriously at the national, regional, and hemispheric levels. Since the election of my government on March 28, 2001, we have implemented the following measures, among others, on the security front:

1. The appointment of a young, highly qualified, credible, and dedicated senior officer as Commissioner of Police and Chief of Immigration, who has set about restructuring the police force so as to make a more efficacious machine in fighting crime.
2. The establishment of an embryonic Financial Intelligence Unit and White Collar Crime Unit upon the advice of the governments of the United States of America and the United Kingdom.
3. The revamping of the Offshore Finance Authority so as to strengthen its regulatory and supervisory functions over offshore banks and other offshore finance institutions in order to ensure that neither money laundering nor the proceeds of crime find a place within our financial system.
4. The presentation to Parliament of the strongest possible Proceeds of Crimes and Anti-Money Laundering Bill to be found anywhere in the world.
5. The offer to the Regional Security System (RSS) and the relevant authorities in the United States of America of the Ottley Hall Marina and Shipyard in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as a regional coast guard base from which drug traffickers and other criminals can be more easily tracked and interdicted.
6. The enhanced cooperation with the United States of America in the interdiction of drug traffickers, the deportation of wanted persons—and we have sent a few back to the United States—and intelligence matters.

7. The shouldering of our country's many-sided obligations to the RSS in the Eastern Caribbean.

Further, we in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have taken even more far-reaching security steps and will continue to cooperate fully with our hemispheric partners on the matter of security. In this regard, the issue of strengthening the collection, analysis, and application of intelligence data is of utmost importance in this period. A meeting next Friday, October 4, in Grenada of the Council of the RSS in the Eastern Caribbean will consider these and other relevant security questions.

We in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are satisfied that our hemispheric partners, particularly those who are in cooperation with us regarding poverty alleviation, will not allow the understandable current preoccupation with national and hemispheric security—narrowly defined—to curtail or slow their assistance to our policy implementation of sustainable development and poverty eradication programs.

In this regard, I wish to emphasize that security considerations, broadly defined, include:

- social development and poverty eradication;
- structural policies of microeconomic management, trade, and investment;
- good governance and quality public sector management;
- macroeconomic management in monetary and fiscal matters;
- education and training;
- improved health facilities, particularly for HIV/AIDS; and
- environmental sustainability.

These we consider to be central to President Bush's Third Border Initiative and his administration's security foci.

Mr. Chairman, my very presence in Washington today and that of my wife indicates that the political leadership of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Caribbean will not be intimidated by terrorists and will not deter us from travel. My country is small and poor but strong in tried and tested eternal values. We affirm that our nation is founded on the belief in the supremacy of God and the freedom and dignity of man. We desire that our society be so ordered as to express our recognition of the principles of democracy, free institutions, social justice, and equality before the law. We realize that the maintenance of human dignity presupposes the safeguarding the rights of privacy, family life, and property and the fostering of the pursuit of just economic rewards for labor.

Our affirmation, desire, and realization as aforesaid steel us. As a people, we have been beaten on the anvil of experience and forged in the cauldron of struggle. Fear of evil, thus, does not become us. It is from the many-sourced wellspring of our Caribbean civilization that we draw our strength in confronting evil and embracing nobility.

So if my wife and I are safe to travel by air to Washington and New York from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Caribbean, then, too, is it safe for visitors, tourists, investors, and friends from the United States, Canada, Central America, and South America to travel to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Caribbean. Anyone who fears to travel has unwittingly succumbed to the evil of terrorism. I remind everyone who is listening to me that fear is not the natural condition of civilized man and woman, whose values, way of life, and very being are under threat.

Last Friday, September 28, the OECS, an umbrella grouping of six independent states in the Eastern Caribbean plus the British overseas territories of Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands, and Montserrat, met to consider the economic fallout from the recent terrorist attacks and to chart the way forward. We have agreed to put before our people certain immediate and medium-term measures for economic and social recovery. Ongoing consultations on these matters have been initiated with the relevant stakeholders and civil society. We will shortly be going before our respective parliaments with these conclusions for this emergency period. They will be communicated to the various international organizations and nations that are inclined to assist or cooperate.

Make no mistake, the recent terrorist attacks have shaken the world's economy and have affected most adversely the poorest nations, including the small and vulnerable economies of the Caribbean. Tourism, the main foreign exchange earner in the region, has been dealt a severe body blow, and the negative impact of the attacks on the U.S. economy has sent multiple ripples throughout the economies of the region. It is fully anticipated that the net result in the region would be a decline in the overall gross domestic product (GDP) performance of the economies. International transportation, international tourism, financial services, energy, agricultural trade, and high technology trade will experience sharp performance declines, though unevenly. Foreign direct investment and international aid flow may slow, and unemployment rates are likely to rise steeply.

That is the picture on the negative side, but there is no need to panic. Hemispheric and international collaboration, consensus-building, and popular involvement nationally will ensure a prompt revival around sensible policies, so long as our peoples are properly led.

In this context, I am calling on those of our brothers and sisters in South and Central America who are seeking in one way or another to unravel the transitional banana agreement worked out between the European Union (EU) and the United States of America to reconsider their positions. The small, fragile banana economies of Dominica, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines simply cannot withstand another shock to the banana industry to overlay the pre-existing economic difficulties and the destabilizing economic blast consequent upon the criminal events of September 11. Some of our brothers and sisters in South and Central America cannot reasonably extend a hand of friendship while using a banana machete to lop off the very hand that we extend in solidarity to them on a host of other matters. I am confident that they will see that our mutual interests reside in the cessation of the banana war. This organization needs to enhance the work of the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD) to strengthen the economies of its member states.

In this very same spirit of "Together Now," I implore representatives and officials of member states to be careful in their public comments about and private accusations of other member states without proper investigation and in reckless disregard of the facts. We cannot, in any way, afford to compromise our resolve on collaborative efforts by incorrect or ill-timed remarks about actions taken by smaller, weaker economies to strengthen their economic base.

For example, there has been much loose talk about this or that Caribbean country being a money-laundering jurisdiction through offshore financial services. In the current climate, this carries the implication that high-profile terrorist organizations use such Caribbean jurisdictions to further their nefarious purposes. However, the evidence that has emerged in public points to the fact that established financial institutions in developed countries or developed financial centers outside of the Caribbean have been the conduits for the financial dealings of the terrorist groupings. Of course, we in the Caribbean must redouble our efforts to prevent money laundering. Indeed, this is what we are doing, but it is unfair to tar the region or the jurisdictions therein without reliable evidence.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to reiterate that my government fully supports the initiatives outlined in the resolution recently passed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of OAS member states. Although Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has never been a signatory to the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, in the current situation we endorse its central proposition that an armed attack or threat of aggression against a signatory nation, whether by a member state or by some other power, will be considered an act against all. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines thus supports, in principle and practice, the use of force to counter or repel terrorist acts of aggression. Peace is undoubtedly a treasured value, but it cannot be sustained without justice, and justice demands a forceful response to this terror.

Mr. Chairman, let me yet again publicly express to the American people and their government the profoundest sympathy and solidarity of the Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on the occasion of the dastardly acts of terrorism committed against them and humanity. The American people and their leaders are in our prayers, and they can rely on our full support in the fight against international terrorism. The world community, too, can rely on Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to fulfill its obligations to the United Nations and its resolutions or decisions in the battle against terrorism.

The Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have been most impressed with the wisdom, patience, calm, heroism, and measured response of the American people and their government. President Bush, as leader of the most powerful nation on earth, has shown exceptional qualities of leadership in this crisis. He has not only inspired his people and those worldwide; he has drawn out of people that which is good and noble in them, sometimes that which they do not know that they possess. In so doing, he is travelling the road not frequently traveled. As Robert Frost poetically reminds us:

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I chose the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

As I conclude, I invite all the people of this hemisphere to visit the Caribbean, a zone of peace and tranquility. It's the natural place to be, even for a short while, in these troubled times. We in the Caribbean have been blessed with an exquisite beauty from nature. We have fashioned solid, independent, democratic societies out of the turbulence of slavery, indentureship, colonialism, and imperialism. We have solved spectacularly a problem that still besets advanced nations; that is, how to build a harmonious society with peoples drawn from different cultures and different lands.

Today in the Caribbean we are a unique civilization. We are the songs of the Caribs, the Arawaks, and the Amerindians; we are the rhythm of Africa; we are the melody of Europe; we are the chords of Asia; and we are the homegrown lyrics of the Caribbean. We occupy a special seascape and landscape.

The painful and joyous journey that has brought the Caribbean to its current condition is a marvel. We will not allow the terrorists in any shape or form to disfigure it. We pledge our cooperation fully to this organization and to the magnificent country that hosts it.

Each member state must shoulder its obligations actively. Each should heed the wisdom of the Book of Ecclesiastes: "Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the cloud will not reap. Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle" [Eccl. 11: 4, 6].

Thank you.

[Aplausos.]

El PRESIDENTE: Thank you, Prime Minister, for your visit here today to this protocolary meeting of the Permanent Council.

Thank you in particular for your very strong stand on terrorism and for pointing out some of the ramifications of terrorism regarding security and economic and social development. Thank you also for drawing to our attention a widened concept of security to include issues of poverty reduction, alleviation, and eradication; issues of economic and social development; and dimensions of sustainable development. Thank you for calling for an end to what you called the banana war, and thank you, finally, for inviting all to visit the Caribbean, which you described as a zone of peace and tranquility. I think this is a beautiful note on which to end. I repeat, Prime Minister, my thanks to you for your visit here today.

I would like to request that the distinguished representatives remain in their places to be greeted by the Prime Minister.

[El Primer Ministro de San Vicente y las Granadinas saluda a los señores Representantes y luego, acompañado por el Secretario General y la comitiva oficial, abandona el salón.]

[Aplausos.]

El PRESIDENTE: Ladies and gentlemen, this meeting is adjourned.

