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Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*

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I. Introduction and methodology

1. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has a policy of promoting, protecting and respecting the fundamental human rights of all individuals. The legislative framework of the State, which emanates from its Constitution, encourages the protection of human rights and provides opportunities any individual to remedy any abuse or compromising of their fundamental human rights.
2. The Ministry of Legal Affairs was responsible for the coordination of the meetings with the relevant Governmental Departments and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to produce this report.

II. Country background

3. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is situated in the Eastern Caribbean at the southern end of the Windward Islands Chain. It is an archipelago of islands, Saint Vincent being the largest, with the smaller Grenadines comprising Bequia, Mustique, Canouan, Mayreau, Union Island, Palm Island, Petit Saint Vincent and a number of small islets.
4. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines covers approximately 384km², and has a total population of 111,380. The country gained independence from Britain on October 27, 1979, instituted a Parliamentary Democracy on the Westminster model, and has remained a part of the Commonwealth. The House of Assembly is a unicameral parliament with fifteen elected members and six appointed senators. Parliament continues for five years from the date of the first sitting of the House after any dissolution. The Governor-General appoints senators, four on the advice of the Prime Minister and two on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition.
5. The legal system is derived from English common law and statutes. There are eleven (11) courts in three magisterial districts. The Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) consists of a Court of Appeal and a High Court of Justice. Appeals lie to Her Majesty in Council from decisions of the Court given in any proceeding originating in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in such cases as may be prescribed by or in pursuance of the Constitution of the State. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines recognizes the original jurisdiction of the Caribbean Court of Justice, in respect of the interpretation and application of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas which establishes the Caribbean Community.

A. Constitution

6. The Constitution of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, which came into force in 1979, is the supreme law of the country and, if any other law is found to be inconsistent with the Constitution, the provision of the Constitution prevails and that law is void to the extent of the inconsistency.
7. On 25 November 2009, a referendum was held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to approve a Bill for an Act to provide a new constitution for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Only 43.13% of voters supported the Bill which had to have been approved by not less than two-thirds of all the votes validly cast on that referendum. The referendum was the first of its kind to be held by a member of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.
8. Chapter 1 of the 1979 Constitution deals with the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals. It guarantees the protection of right to life, personal liberty, freedom of

conscience, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of movement. It provides protection from slavery and forced Labour, inhuman treatment, deprivation of property, arbitrary search or entry, discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, place of origin, political opinions, color or creed and secures protection of the law including the right to a fair hearing and presumption of innocence. The Constitution also provides for the enforcement of the protective provisions by stating that if any person alleges that his fundamental rights and freedoms has been, is being or is likely to be contravened, that person may apply to the High Court for redress.

B. Legislation

9. Legislation enacted to ensure good governance and to regulate and improve the lives of its people include et al:

- (a) Agricultural Produce and Livestock (Prevention of Theft) Act 2007¹;
- (b) Banana Industry Act 2009²;
- (c) Banking Act 2006³;
- (d) Caribbean Community Act 2005⁴;
- (e) Carnival Development Corporation Act 2002⁵;
- (f) Copyright Act 2003⁶;
- (g) Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act, Cap 165⁷;
- (h) Domestic Violence (Summary Proceedings Act)1995⁸;
- (i) Drugs (Prevention of Misuse) Act, Cap 219⁹;
- (j) Drug Trafficking Offences Act, 1993¹⁰;
- (k) Education Act 1992 (Revised2006)¹¹;
- (l) Environmental Health Services Act 1991¹²;
- (m) Equal Pay Act 1994¹³;
- (n) Exchange of Information Act 2008¹⁴;
- (o) Financial Intelligence Unit Act 2001¹⁵;
- (p) Freedom of Information Act 2003¹⁶;
- (q) Law Revision Act 2009¹⁷;
- (r) Married Women's Property Act, Cap 175¹⁸;
- (s) Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act 1993¹⁹;
- (t) National Parks Act 2002²⁰;
- (u) Possessory Titles Act 2004²¹;
- (v) Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering (Prevention) Act 2001²²;
- (w) Protection of Employment Act 2003²³;
- (x) Public Assistance Act, Cap 231 of the 1990 Revised²⁴;
- (y) Public Officers (Conditions of Employment) Act, Cap 208²⁵;
- (z) Public Officers' Protection Act, Cap 209²⁶.

- (aa) Regional Security System Act 2005²⁷;
- (bb) Recognition of Divorces and Legal Separations Act, Cap 178²⁸;
- (cc) Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 2009²⁹.

III. Promotion and protection of human rights

A. Housing

10. The Housing and Lands Development Corporation (HLDC) is a statutory body which gives effect to the planning and development of housing and land for residential and community purposes. Its mandate is to assist the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in providing affordable housing opportunities for Vincentians nation-wide while simultaneously embarking on the development endeavours designed, strategically to ensure its sustainability and validity as a statutory corporation.

11. The HLDC have conducted an Informal Settlement project which is aimed at addressing the infrastructural requirements, Surveys and Land ownership issues of many economically disadvantaged persons.

12. The No-income/vulnerable group (persons earning between \$0.00 and \$750.00 per month), low income and middle income housing programme which was introduced in 2003 has improved the living conditions of hundreds of Vincentian families. Over 521 low income houses and 14 middle income houses have been constructed.

13. Emphasis has been placed on the No-Income housing programme which addresses the shelter needs of persons whose monthly income level is not more than \$700.00 and who are faced with difficulties in accessing credit to from financial institutions to construct or to renovate their homes. This programme is the first of its kind in the history of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Hundreds of Vincentian families stand to benefit from the programme.

B. Education

14. The present administration believes that education is for living and production. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is currently embarked on an education revolution at every level.

15. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is a signatory to initiatives for promoting equity and equality in education. These include the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) which emphasizes that basic right of every child to an equal opportunity to primary education; the Education for All Dakar Framework for Action 2000 which states that the schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions.

16. The formal system of education in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is stipulated under the Education Act of 1992. This Act is the main instrument that governs, organizes, administers and regulates education in the State. Under this Act, provision for compulsory education and education for children with special needs was made for the first time.

17. The Education Policy of 1995 articulates the rationale and philosophical basis of educational development in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The State's philosophy of education is based on the beliefs that all children have the right to education and the ability to learn.

18. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines recognises that appropriate Early Childhood Education can minimize disparities between children as they enter the formal education system and has introduced statutory regulations for Early Childhood Education including the licensing of Early Childhood Education Schools, whose operations are currently being done by private agencies.

19. In an effort to increase access to pre-primary education, the State is investing in privately owned and operated Early Childhood Education centres to upgrade the facilities, ensuring quality and equity in pre-primary education. Additionally, the State is constructing Early Childhood Education Centres in new primary schools with the projected construction of eight facilities. These measures would provide for smoother transition from pre-primary to primary school. These centres will target all students including the physically challenged.

20. Prior to the Unity Labour Party Administration, the education was typified generally by inequity. At the secondary level, the Government turned askance against inequity and introduced in 2005, universal access to education. In 2010, 2,161 candidates sat the common entrance examination. Of this number, 57.6% met the prescribed standard. This was a huge improvement over the 35.0% to 40.0% range in the years before 2001.

21. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is committed to equity and equality for all and seeks to provide equality of access for all students in accordance with their individual needs and abilities. With the establishment of more geographically accessible schools to cater for the students in the rural areas and the introduction of free universal basic education; access to secondary level has increased. To accommodate the physically handicapped, where access to wheel chairs is difficult, ramps are being built in schools where such children attend. Newly constructed schools are now being designed to allow full accessibility for students with disabilities.

22. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has in place a National Student Loan Programme. It is intended to provide loans to students who wish to pursue studies and who upon completion of their studies are expected to contribute to the Economic and Social Development of the State.

23. In 2002, the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines made a policy decision to allocate a proportion of the funds for the Student Loan Programme to assist the poorest segment of the population. The principal beneficiaries under this programme are those persons who have the ability, but lack the financial and other resources to qualify for assistance under the Standard Student Loan Scheme. Students accessing loans under this programme are required to sign a Bond for the amount of the loan. In this regard, persons whose loans are approved under this programme have their loans secured by the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

24. Additionally, the UNESCO-backed Adult Literacy Crusade and Adult Education Programme have greatly reduced the rate of functional illiteracy.

C. Social security

25. The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has enforced numerous schemes to improve the lives of its people. These include:

(a) A Poverty Relief Fund established within the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries. This enables farmers to cope with the fall out from Bananas.

(b) A Social Recovery Programme within the Ministry of Social Development where funds are set aside to identify and support social and community development initiatives.

(c) The Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) Project – a regional programme sponsored and managed by the Caribbean Development Bank. It has been in operation now for the past two decades. This programme assists low-income communities with improving access to public services through the provision of social and economic infrastructure and the development of skills to enhance employability.

(d) Home Help for the Elderly - This project is designed not only to help the destitute elderly and reduce the effects of poverty on this segment of the population, but also as a means of employment creation for person providing home assistance. Assistance ranges from cleaning and making meals to bathing and running errands.

(e) Social Safety Net Programme, whereby public assistance is provided, for example, building materials can be provided to indigent persons; provision is made in the form of assistance for uniforms, transportation, examination fees and meals for destitute students. Additionally, the Family Services Division provides monthly monetary assistance of \$200.00 to over 6,000 person who are 65 years and over. Assistance is also provided to the elderly in the form of transportation allowance and rebates for water and electricity. This rebate is made possible with collaboration between the Central Water and Sewage Authority and the Saint Vincent Electricity Services.

(f) Book Loan Scheme where secondary school students are provided with all their text books for EC\$50 per school year.

(g) Skills Training Programme - A government-sponsored initiative in which young persons are trained in non-formal skill areas in preparation for employment. Areas of training include carpentry, pottery, craft, welding and plumbing. Work is also done on preparing persons to employ positive attitudes towards work.

(h) The Street Children Rehabilitation Programme was implemented whereby children living or working on the street and those at risk of doing so are returned to their schools. Assistance and parental training are provided to the parents to care for these children.

(i) The Government finances the return of teenage-mothers to school through the payment of fees, purchase of books, provision of transportation, and the provision of day-care services for babies. The success of this programme has become a regional best practice of the United Nations Population Fund. In the meantime, planning is extended to provide support services to young fathers, better preparing them for the role of fatherhood.

(j) The National Insurance Services (NIS) - The main purpose of this social security programme is to provide long-term benefits to assist persons after they have retired. Its predecessor the National Provident Fund was established in January 1970 by Act Number 1 of 1970. The NIS commenced operations on January 5th 1987 by Act Number 33 of 1986. Part of the NIS strategic thrust is “to administer our social security programme with a view towards alleviating poverty and increasing the standard of living in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines”.

One of the NIS social assistance programme is the Non-Contributory Assistance Age Pension. This provides income to those elderly persons most in need. This programme provides cash benefits to numerous individuals who meet specific eligibility criteria associated with defined categories of need. Means tests are typically applied to the income and assets of individuals as a major condition of eligibility.

Since 1995 the NIS has devoted approximately EC\$ 7.1 million to Student Loans. This loan system is being phased out to the National Commercial Bank (SVG) Ltd. However, the NIS remains committed to complete service to those students previously enrolled in the Loan Scheme.

D. Gender equality and empowerment of women

26. The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines made a commitment to carry out its obligations in adopting and promoting the implementation of the Quito Consensus outline at the Tenth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, and continues to strengthen its institutions, programmes and partnerships as catalysis to economic turnaround and social progress.

27. The Government honours its duties under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979); the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1953); Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000); and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women “Convention Of Belem Do Para”(1994).

28. The creation of the Gender Affairs Department in 2001 has had an important and positive impact on the way in which gender-related issues are regarded.

29. A general policy of prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex is embodied in Article 13 of the Constitution of the State. Further, the protection of the Courts for the infringement of any Constitutional Rights is guaranteed under Section 16 of the Constitution. This section guarantees the right of access to the courts in order to assert a claim arising from infringement of fundamental rights of all persons. No case has been brought to date by any woman in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines alleging discrimination under the Constitution. Legislation has been passed which seeks to provide relief for women in specific situations where discrimination is perceived to be taking place. The main example of this is Maternity Leave.

30. Whilst the Constitution prohibits discrimination on the ground of sex, measures taken to implement this in practice include the provision of support services for women who feel they have been victims of discrimination. The Gender Affairs Division provides information and training to women and to the general public on issues related to gender.

31. The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines formulated a National Population Policy and established a Population Policy Unit in the Central Planning Division. Since then, a comprehensive Social Planning framework has been developed, the action plan of which, is driven by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Social development. At the core of this committee’s mandate is the realization of gender equity and gender equality.

32. The formation of the Family Court in 1992 and the National Committee on the Rights of the Child has created the necessary enabling framework for the enforcement of legislation as regards ensuring gender equality under the law. Of particular importance is the creation of the Domestic Violence Act in 1998. Further revisions in the law to protect the rights of women and girls and to protect children from sexual exploitation is well under way.

33. Public authorities and institutions in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are guided by the terms and conditions of the legislative enactments, which are laid down by parliament. Members of the public are generally treated similarly irrespective of gender. In some cases, women are treated with more courtesy and respect than men.

34. The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in partnership with civil society organizations and the supported by United Nations Development Fund for Women has undertaken measures to strengthen state accountability and community action for ending gender based violence.

35. Measures to address these issues are done through the Family Court Act, 1992. The Family Court provides a non-combative setting where the punishment is not emphasized and where the role of the social support services is stressed. Notwithstanding, within the Family Court, women can directly pursue remedies in the protection of their own legal rights in areas where they have been discriminated against within the context of particular legislation.

36. The Government has also addressed the need for a Crisis Center in collaboration with the Childs Rights Committee, Family Affairs Division and the National Council of Women.

37. The Government has place a high premium on the security of all citizens. Accordingly, the work of the Gender Affairs Division addresses abuse committed against women and girls and its causes. Violence and crimes committed against women and girls remain a priority concern of the administration.

38. Recognizing that equality in decision-making is essential to the empowerment of women, the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines seeks to promote the full and active participation of women in all spheres of public life and believes this is best achieved through educative approaches in partnership with civil society.

39. The evidence of the unwavering commitment of the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in demonstrative actions came when more women have been appointed to the government positions at the national level.

40. Since March 2001, an unprecedented number of women have been appointed to important governmental posts, for example, the Attorney General and the Deputy Prime Minister. The Family Court which addresses many gender-issues is headed by a woman and one of two High Court Judges is female. The Registrar of High Court and Deputy Governor-General are also females, thus creating a level of gender sensitive administration and leadership in senior public life. These women are influencing agendas and helping to change the culture of women in politics and leadership.

41. The Government has also moved with support at the national and interregional levels the establishing of a virtual institute of women in politics known as the Caribbean Institute of Women in Leadership.

42. Moreover, as far as the advancement of gender equality, equity and the empowerment of women are concerned; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is the first country in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) to engage in a pilot study on Gender Equality as it relates to gender budgeting and government resource allocation.

E. Rights of children

43. It is the parents' primary responsibility to protect their children's rights. If they are unable to fulfil this duty, the Government has committed itself, through the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to support parents in meeting their responsibility or, in some cases, to take over that responsibility.

44. The Domestic Violence Summary Proceedings Act provides a legal framework for the protection of children, while the Family Services Department is the government agency responsible for monitoring and protecting the welfare of children.

45. Since 1997 Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has celebrated the month of April every year as Child Abuse Prevention Month, a month of activities dedicated to publicizing the need for the prevention of child abuse. This programme is spearheaded by the Social

Welfare Department. Child Month is celebrated in May every year to highlight activities relating to children.

46. Free medical care is provided by the health service for children 16 years and under. A School Health Programme covers all pre- and primary schools and includes identification and treatment of common health problems, immunization and counselling. The country has achieved virtually 100 per cent immunization of children. The community health service, through health clinics, provides ante- and postnatal care covering all aspects of maternal and child health.

47. The Government has instituted comprehensive programmes to combat HIV/AIDS and mother-child transmission of the disease. Literacy and primary school attendance rates are robust. A comprehensive “Wellness Revolution” is underway to combat a host of preventable lifestyle diseases, and to promote children’s health and nutrition.

48. The Government heavily subsidizes textbooks and primary school meals through its Book Loan and School Feeding Programmes, and has radically expanded students’ access to tertiary scholarships, grants and student loans.

49. Under the laws of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines there is no discrimination against a child based on the child’s or his or her parent’s or legal guardian’s property³⁰.

50. Additionally, there is no discrimination against a child based on the child’s or his or her parent’s or legal guardian’s disability. In practice however there is a difficulty in providing services such as education and health care to children with certain types of disability which render them unable to attend the available institutions geared towards the care of persons with disability.

F. Disabled persons

51. The Government observes the laws that prohibit discrimination against persons with physical and mental disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, and the provision of other state services. The law does not mandate access to buildings for persons with disabilities. However, the Government has undertaken to provide such access wherever it is practical to do so.

52. The Government supports a school for persons with disabilities. The Social Development Ministry is responsible for assisting persons with disabilities. The Government’s devotion is shown by the fact that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines became the 96th ratifier of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on October 29, 2010. The State also took a further step in ratifying the CRPD Optional Protocol, which gives citizens additional avenues for pursuing justice if all other legal resources fail to act within the country. The rights included in this treaty are the right to be protected from abuse, violence, and torture; the right to live in the community, with one’s family, without being institutionalized against one’s will; the right to have access to education, transportation, and other public services; the right to access information and communication, including via sign language or Braille; the right to employment and a decent standard of living; and the right to access social justice.

G. Worker rights

53. In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines workers can form and join unions of their choice without prior authorization. The Government maintains good relations with the organized unions, and the Employers’ Federation and promotes social dialogue with the Labour unions and holds regular meetings of the Social Partnership Council, which brings

together Labour, management, and government to jointly resolve Labour management issues.

54. The law provides for the right to strike, however, the Essential Services Act³¹ prohibits persons providing such services (electricity, water, hospital, and police) from striking, unless they provide at least a 14-day notice to the authorities. The law prohibits retaliation against strikers, and it is effectively enforced.

55. The law provides for establishment of an arbitration tribunal and a board of inquiry in connection with trade disputes and allows provision for the settlement of such disputes. Arbitration panels are formed on an *ad hoc* basis when a Labour dispute arises and are not limited to Labour disputes involving essential workers. Unions are permitted to organize and bargain collectively, and the Government protects these rights. The law provides that if both parties consent to arbitration, the Minister of Labour can appoint an arbitration committee from the private sector to hear the matter.

56. Workers are not to be summarily dismissed without compensation and provides for reinstatement or severance pay if unfairly dismissed. The law protects workers from dismissal for engaging in union activities and provides them with reinstatement rights if illegally dismissed.

57. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is a member of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization (ILO). It has ratified the following conventions:

- (a) Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, 1921 (No. 11);
- (b) Workmen's Compensation (Agriculture) Convention, 1921 (No. 12);
- (c) Medical Examination of Young Persons (Sea) Convention, 1921 (No. 16);
- (d) Equality of Treatment (Accident Compensation) Convention, 1925 (No. 19);
- (e) Minimum Wage-Fixing Machinery Convention, 1928 (No. 26);
- (f) Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29);
- (g) Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81);
- (h) Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87);
- (i) Labour Clauses (Public Contracts) Convention, 1949 (No. 94);
- (j) Protection of Wages Convention, 1949 (No. 95);
- (k) Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98);
- (l) Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100);
- (m) Holidays with Pay (Agriculture) Convention, 1952 (No. 101);
- (n) Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)
- (o) Maritime Labour Convention, 2006;
- (p) Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No 122);
- (q) Labour Inspection (Agriculture Convention), 1969 (No 129);
- (r) Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No 144).

H. The Garifuna

58. With the support of the government the Garifuna Heritage Foundation was formed in July 2001 with the objective of promoting the cultural heritage of the Garifuna People in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and in the Diaspora. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is the birthplace of the Garifuna Nation as it was here that a union of African people and Amerindian Arawak and Kalinago people produced the Garifuna, formerly known as the “Black Caribs”.

59. The Garifuna Heritage Foundation is committed to providing leadership and support to the process of the renaissance and development of the Garifuna culture in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The Garifuna Heritage Foundation also has developed an international programme in recognition of the fact that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is still recognised by all the Garifuna communities in the world as the ancestral homeland and the birthplace of the culture.

60. The work of the Garifuna Heritage Foundation consists in Public Education and Training Programmes, Advocacy Programmes, Public Awareness Programmes and Economic Development Programmes aimed at enabling young Vincentians in Garifuna Communities as well as in other parts of the country to become involved in the development and promotion of the Garifuna Heritage and Culture.

I. Good governance

61. The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines considers good governance to be the maintenance and enhancement of constitutionally enshrined fundamental rights and freedom; the active participation of the population, and democratic control over the institutions of governance; the maintenance and strengthening of the independence and quality of the judiciary; initiating an on-going war against official corruption and the promotion of a politically-hygienic system of government; making government more accountable and efficient; the empowerment of the people generally and the building of a genuine partnership between the government and civil society; and the shouldering of Government’s international obligations in the many-sided war against terrorism, international crimes and money-laundering.

62. Within recent times a series of “good governance” initiatives have been taken, including:

- Holding frequent meetings of Parliament and improving the workings of that legislative body;
- Broadcasting meetings of Parliament live on radio and television;
- Ensuring that the tendering process for government contracts is completely transparent and without political interference;
- Establishing a functioning National Economic and Social Development Council comprising all major interest groups, political parties, and state officials to address broadly all the critical issues affecting the macro-economy and society.
- Establishing a functioning Tripartite Committee on the Economy comprising equal representation from the private sector, trade union movement and the government to examine and prescribe for the issues of employment, investment, productivity, wages/salaries, and prices;
- Acceding to the OAS Convention on Official Corruption;

- Drafting legislation to address “the integrity” of Parliamentarians and senior public officials;
- Putting practical accountability measures in place within the state administration to cut out corruption and waste;
- Drafting of legislation on many matters touching upon the fight against terrorism, including the financing of terrorism;
- Co-operating fully with funding Governments and international agencies on a raft of measures relating to governance;
- Adopting the Cotonou Agreement;
- Passing parliamentary motions in the process for constitutional reform and the reinstatement of local government
- Strengthening, with other OECS countries, the judiciary.

IV. Achievement, priorities and challenges

A. Poverty reduction

63. The Government has vowed to confront poverty in all its dimensions. Its objectives are to maximise the economic potential of the country in an effort to deliver higher and sustainable growth, eradicate poverty and reduce unemployment, and improve the general welfare of the population, within a framework of enhancing good governance.

64. The various initiative and programmes which the Government employed over the past 9 years in the “War Against Poverty” were driven by a decisive approach to poverty reduction and guided by a carefully elaborated Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP). This has been the blueprint for all poverty reduction initiatives undertaken to date.

65. The Government has also established special initiatives to cope with poverty. A Poverty Relief Fund has been established within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and Rural Transformation to enable farmers to cope with the decline of the Banana Industry. The Ministry of National Mobilisation, Social Development, The Family, Persons with Disabilities, Youth, Sports and Culture has also had funds set aside for the development of a Social Recovery Programme which is aimed at identifying and supporting social and community development initiatives. The low-income housing programme being implemented by the Ministry of Housing, Informal Human Settlements, Physical Planning, Lands and Surveys is also intended to have an impact on Poverty.

66. In recognition of a need for a social policy framework to develop clear and cohesive policies and strategies focused on poverty reduction, the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines assigned responsibility for the development of a Poverty Reduction Framework to the National Economic Social Development Council (NESDC) which consists of representatives from a wide range of civil society organizations and senior public servants. A Poverty Reduction Task Force was established by NESDC to develop a Poverty Reduction Strategy for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

67. The key components of National strategies and initiative for poverty reduction includes:

- (a) *Developing effective policies to Stimulate Growth, Trade and Investment through:*

- Improvement of the macro-economic environment;
 - Expansion and diversification of the sources of economic growth including the agriculture, fisheries and tourism sectors;
 - Investment promotion and poverty reduction;
 - Facilitating credit and support to small business and micro-enterprise, in recognition that these play an importance in promoting sustainable economic development and by extension opportunities for poverty reduction;
 - Accessing dead capital; rationalizing the squatter situation (dead capital is defined as land, property and other assets that are not properly titled and therefore cannot be utilized efficiently and effectively for capitalist development.
 - improved income distribution (poor distribution of wealth creates disparities in the society);
 - Strengthening natural resource management (as environmental sustainability is viewed as a critical component of the poverty reduction strategies);
 - Strengthening rural development (most poor are found in rural area and where most natural resources and opportunities for agriculture exist);
 - Strengthening capacity for improved data generation, and analysis; and policy development and execution.
- (b) *Increasing/generating employment opportunities* by supporting job creation in tourism, agriculture and the micro-enterprise, and informal sector.
- (c) *Greater and better investment in human capital, particularly in the following areas –*
- **Education** – The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has identified education as a main indicator of poverty realizing that with the demands for increased productivity and a need for diversification of the economy, an educated populace is therefore a necessity. The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines regards education, first and foremost, as a social institution indispensable for quality production, order, progress, poverty reduction, and the development of individuals and society. It has thus, through the Ministry of Education developed the Education Sector Development Plan. This plan is the outcome of extensive discussions and consultations with a wide range of stakeholders in the sector throughout Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and is geared towards providing overall direction for the development of education in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines The Government has also recognised that quality education leads to greater employability. Thus programmes are geared towards strengthening the preschool system, providing adult education programmes, providing support to compulsory education strategies, exploring possibilities of a phased in approach to Compulsory education, provision of technical and vocational training for youth, and reintroduction of agricultural science programmes in schools.
 - **Health** – Most programmes are geared towards the poor because they are at greater risk of illness and disease, less likely to report illness and a greater percentage is subjected to hospitalization and longer hospital stays. There is a thrust to upgrade and increase health care facilities throughout the country.

- **Social Service delivery – capacity building** : This component of the strategy seeks to develop the capacity of various agencies involved in social service delivery, enabling them to identify strategic programmes in the development of human/social capital. Additionally, the institutional strengthening of the Ministry of National Mobilisation, Social Development, The Family, Persons with Disabilities, Youth, Sports and Culture is seen as a vital element; another is the strengthening of Non-governmental Organisations and Community Based Organisations to function at a community level.
 - **Social protection and coping strategies** – These include the development of an expanded Basic Needs Programme which provides emergency support to the needy and development of labour intensive public works projects which provide employment for the poor. In addition, there is a programme to prevent and address domestic violence and another to developing non-contributory Pension programmes for the elderly.
 - **Agriculture** – Poverty appears to be greater in rural areas, those most dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. Agricultural improvement will include programmes to combat praedial larceny, restructuring land tenure practices to enable greater access to land, developing public education programmes for economic trade literacy, enabling farmers to access business opportunities on the global market, and restructuring agricultural extension services to service the demands of agriculture in the context of free trade.
 - **Children** – It is recognized that working with children is critical to addressing issues of education and other causes of poverty. The Children Against Poverty Programme targets low achievers within primary schools (ages 5 to 16) using a creative and integrated approach to learning. It seeks to provide educational opportunities for children while developing socialized skills and attitudes. Community adults act as mentors, helping with school work and job shadowing. There is also a parenting component to Children Against Poverty Programme where (through a Micro-enterprise Programme) parents of participants are exposed to skills training in areas of effective parenting, leadership, communication and conflict resolution skills and training in fishing, tourism and handicraft. This provided a support mechanism for the children.
 - **Other related issues** are gender, sports, cultural development, worker values and attitudes and drug abuse.
- (d) *Improving social and physical infrastructure through –*
- re-focusing public expenditure through the Public Sector Investment Programme to provide adequate socio-economic infrastructure and eradicate poverty.
 - increased access to water, sanitation and electricity to segments of the population. Priorities will include providing an efficient energy sector; rural electrification; repair and maintenance of the national road system; improving water supply and sanitation; improving telecommunication, irrigation and drainage facilities; and improving the transportation system.
- (e) *Strengthening Civil Society Participation* in an attempt to empower communities to participate in planning, monitoring and coordinating poverty reduction policies and programmes. This will be achieved through the proper

development of the national information systems and also through the re-introduction of local government.

(f) *Good governance and the Business Environment* in accordance with and guided by the UNDPs “Governance for sustainable development” policy document. It encompasses such issues as the (i) maintenance and enhancement of constitutionally fundamental rights and freedom; (ii) making government more accountable and efficient; (iii) maintenance and strengthening of the independence and quality of the judiciary and initiating an on-going war against official corruption and (iv) the promotion of a politically-hygienic system of government.

68. However in spite of the achievements, there are several constraints to development namely:

- Attitudinal - this constraint is evident in the way people prioritize their wants as opposed to needs. Often persons who come looking for assistance would prefer to spend limited finance on luxuries and then come to the government for assistance to take care of their needs;
- Limited financial and human resources to execute programmes;
- Reduction in voluntarism – There is growing resistance in persons to render their assistance without some form of remuneration;
- A breakdown in family structure, leading to issues of child abuse, juvenile delinquency and general depletion in social order.

69. The National Poverty Reduction Strategy is pivoted on an *informal* tripartite contract between the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, civil society and the private sector. Government recognizes that the quest for development demands a holistic and deliberate effort to involve the key players in the development process and thus, to ensure the effective targeting of the root causes of poverty.

1. Integration of the public, private and civil sectors

70. The National Poverty Reduction Strategy requires a policy framework in which good governance is exercised and consolidated, and where there exists the political and social space for meaningful consultation among the various facets of society. By opening up the space for dialogue and for broader relations between the government, the private sector and civil society, it is envisaged that the economic and social climate that is essential for development will be created.

71. To be sure, the tripartite contract to pursue a joint approach to policy formulation and to manage social change and development from an integrated standpoint will eliminate the duplication of efforts which has long been an aggravating factor in the war against poverty. Indeed, the integration of the public, private and civil sectors will facilitate the deepening of participatory democracy and the subjugation of sector-based interests to the advantage of the national good. Moreover, in the face of scarce developmental resources, this process of integration is fundamental to the restructuring of the economy to achieve high and sustainable levels of growth through enhanced competitiveness, economic diversification and increased productivity.

2. Government’s vision

72. The Government is ever cognizant of the fact that development is first and foremost about improving the quality of life enjoyed by the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines As expressed in the 2002 OECS Human Development Report, 'development is about creating the environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead

productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests'...It is thus about 'expanding people's choices' It is within this context that the Government has repeatedly articulated its vision for a National Poverty Reduction Strategy.

73. The Government believes that the most effective way to take people out of poverty is to put them in a position where they can work and earn income for themselves. Accordingly, the Government will first of all, at the macro level, create the climate in order to achieve higher levels of sustainable growth. Additionally, it will make education and the empowerment of the family vital tools in the struggle against poverty. In this regard, the Government will ensure that its people have the requisite skills and competencies to capitalise on the opportunities that created, through the new focus on the development and improvement of the education system.

B. HIV/AIDS

74. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines like the rest of the world has not been exempted from the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The first reported case of HIV infection in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was in 1984. The Government's response has been swift, recognizing the fact that this epidemic has serious developmental implications if left unchallenged.

75. Thus a strategic plan was launched in December 2001. The plan then outlined the following six priority areas:

(a) Strengthen intersectoral management, organizational structures and institutional capacity.

The objectives include re-organisation of the National HIV/AIDS Task Force and the HIV/AIDS Unit and the improvement of institutional capacity to deliver relevant quality health and social services

(b) Design and implement care, support and treatment programmes for People Living with HIV/AIDS and their families.

The objective includes establishing a care treatment and support network system for persons living with AIDS and their families.

(c) Develop and implement HIV/AIDS/ Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and control programmes with priority given to youth and high-risk/vulnerable groups.

The objectives include utilizing the holistic approach to provide targeted prevention and control programmes for adolescents, young adults and high risk/vulnerable groups; upgrading knowledge and skills of Medical and Nursing Practitioners in the Management of STIs; mounting public information programme on common signs, symptoms, treatment issues for selected STIs; and conducting pre and post surveys.

(d) Conduct research and training programme.

The objectives include improving the capacity of selected personnel in the development and conduct of small scale applied research studies, data analysis and recording findings and conducting specific HIV/AIDS/STI Research.

(e) Upgrade surveillance systems.

The objective includes strengthening HIV/AIDS/STI Surveillance Systems.

(f) Implement advocacy programmes.

The objective includes promoting a supportive environment for persons living with AIDS.

76. The time frame of the first strategic plan was 2002–2006. It was developed utilizing several working groups who accessed information from relevant institutions, NGOs, private sector personnel, People Living with HIV/AIDS, religious organizations, the Chamber of Commerce, teachers, police officers, other public servants and the general public. A Caribbean Epidemiology Centre /PAHO Team also assisted in the development of the initial plan.

77. The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in its mission to scale up the HIV/AIDS prevention and control programme began negotiations with the World Bank in 2003 to finance the programme. The World Bank funded project necessitated the development of an updated strategic plan to synchronize the time frames of the project and the national strategic plan as well as to expand the plan to encompass a multi-sectoral implementation approach. This revised strategic plan covers the period 2004–2009. The process of updating the strategies was undertaken at a workshop in February 2004 and involved all stakeholders, with technical assistance from the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre. This strategic plan maintains the priority areas articulated in the original plan.

78. A number of changes and improvements have taken place with regard to the government's response to the epidemic. These include:

(a) *Strengthening of the HIV/AIDS Unit* - The HIV/AIDS Unit of the Ministry of Health and the Environment is currently performing the coordinating function for programmes under the expanded response. Additionally, a National HIV/AIDS Programme Director, a Social Worker, four Counsellors and a Psychologist have been appointed, along with a clerk/typist and an office attendant. There is also a medical specialist, who although attached to the Milton Cato Hospital, is part of this team.

The four counselors have been redeployed to other public health facilities namely, the Stubbs Public clinic, Levi Latham Health Center, the Clare Valley Public Clinic and the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital Out-Patient so that the services of these counselors can be expanded to include other health conditions and not just HIV/AIDS.

(b) *Laboratory upgrade* - The capacity of the Laboratory at the Milton Cato memorial Hospital was expanded.

(c) *Persons living with HIV/AIDS* - Through the Ministry of Health, the social support programme for persons living with HIV/AIDS has been implemented.

79. The period 2008-2009 officially marks the conclusion of the 2004-2009 strategic plan activities for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. This period was characterized as one of consolidation and sustainability in order to ensure the longevity of the fight against HIV/AIDS. Services such as Voluntary Counselling and Testing, stigma and discrimination, care and treatment, advocacy, training, social support, Laboratory support services, monitoring and evaluation, surveillance and behaviour change communication and other prevention activities have been strengthened, integrated into and sustained by the Ministry of Health and the Environment and external agencies.

80. **Successes** – The HIV/AIDS prevention and control programme has achieved numerous successes as a result of the great political will of the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the availability of resources and the high level of dedication of personnel from both public and private sector. Success stories are fitting for every aspect of the HIV/AIDS prevention and control programme. The establishment of the Caribbean HIV/AIDS Alliance in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has successfully attempted to bridge the gap between prevention and support services and most-at risk groups such as men who have sex with men and sex workers. The work of the alliance is done through peer communicators. The programme is effectively monitored and quarterly reports are

produced and disseminated to the Ministry of Health and the Environment. Similar work is done by the PSI where their prevention programme is not only geared towards sex workers and men who have sex with men but also to youth on the block.

81. The drive to advocate behaviour change and market prevention methods is also a huge success as it is characterised by a multi-sectoral approach involving faith based organizations, community based organizations, non-governmental organizations along with the public sector health care workers. Media coverage has been at an optimum level in order to ensure the widespread dissemination of advocacy campaigns. The sectors have targeted the general community while simultaneously placing tremendous emphasis on youths. Out-reach programmes have been successfully implemented in approximately 60% of the schools on the mainland.

82. Voluntary Counselling and testing is accessible to 100% of the population at numerous sites throughout Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. As a result, the daily uptake of VCT services and rapid testing is being conducted at both public and private institutions. Care and treatment continues to be successfully monitored through the electronic tracking system in the HIV/AIDS/STI clinic. The free readily available drugs for People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) (including pregnant women) have been a major success.

83. The capacity building in Laboratory support services has been beneficial to the HIV/AIDS programme. The National Laboratory continues to facilitate the diagnostic processes for early detection of HIV in babies and ensure the daily testing of samples for HIV.

Major challenges and remedial actions

84. Although the successes have been vast, there are still many challenges that are being faced during the fight against HIV/AIDS in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The mere fact that our Island is a multi-island state creates limitations in the development and implementation of programmes in the Grenadine Islands. Thus, training of health care workers is imperative for members of staff in these islands in order to ensure that one public health approach is being practised.

85. Human resource continues to be a major challenge for both public and private sector facilities. The high level of internal mobility of staff and migration to foreign territories exacerbates the issue of human resource. The vertical nature of the programme was also instrumental in creating a subsequent human resource shortage as the close out of externally financed projects is drawing to a near. The Ministry of Health and the Environment has therefore taken the initiative to integrate many of the services of the prevention and control programme into already pre-existing programmes as mentioned before.

86. There is a huge challenge faced with PLHIV as they themselves are still battling with the fear of being discriminated and stigmatized. Thus, the incorporation of PLHIV as peer communicators has assisted in addressing this issue.

87. The Preventing Mother-To-Child-Transmission (PMTCT) is facing an even bigger challenge with the number of known HIV positive women becoming pregnant on multiple occasions. The PMTCT committee has committed themselves to address and upscale prevention methods in HIV pregnant women.

88. There is still a wide information gap in knowledge surrounding most-at risk groups in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. One of the major groups of concern is the men that have sex with men. The Ministry of Health and the Environment is planning to conduct a behavioural survey and seroprevalence study amongst men who have sex with men in order to gain strategic information for the purpose of effective policy and programme development geared towards men who have sex with men. The activities carried out by

both public and private sector have been immense, however, the effectiveness of prevention programmes have been difficult to measure as it requires the realization of behavioural surveys. The Ministry of Health & the Environment conducted a behavioural survey in 2005 and aim to conduct another geared towards the general population. This will offer the necessary information to evaluate the accomplishments of the prevention programmes through comparative analysis with the OECS BSS 2005.

C. Health and wellness

89. As of 2001, the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has repaired or renovated 21 clinics; built and equipped four brand new and modern clinics; installed well-supplied pharmacies in all the clinics; built a modern polyclinic at Stubbs; enhanced the delivery of water to 98 percent of the houses on Saint Vincent; improved water delivery to the Grenadines; ensured that garbage is collected and properly disposed of nationwide; beefed up the delivery of secondary health services; developed the provision of tertiary health services overseas by the government.

90. In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines life expectancy is 72.6 years for women and 70.8 years for men. Infant mortality is 18 per thousand. Maternal deaths have averaged less than 1 per year for the past 10 years. However, the 42% of the population under the poverty line most likely show a quite different picture.

91. The first cause of morbidity and mortality are cardiovascular diseases which have an annual mortality rate of 58 per 1000, more than 8 times higher than the mortality due to all communicable diseases. However, HIV seroprevalence is estimated at 1.8% and has the potential to soon become a major cause of morbidity and mortality. Some of the non-communicable diseases are related to genetic influence, lifestyle and epidemiological and demographic transition. The Government of SVG funds all EPI vaccines and the full vaccination coverage is close to 100%.

92. Health is one of the priorities for the Vincentian Government, as expressed by the accorded benefit of 10% of total Government expenditure and 4% of GDP to this sector. The health sector allocation for the fiscal year 2007/2008 was EC\$53 million, and for 2008/2009, EC \$72 million Primary Care Services consume the largest share of the health sector budget, in 2007/2008 EC \$36 million and 2008/2009, EC \$39 million. This underscores the emphasis the government has placed on primary care services. The Milton Cato Memorial Hospital (MCMH) in 2007/2008 was allocated EC \$18 million and in 2008/2009 EC \$18.5 million.

93. The Mental Health Centre was allocated EC \$2.8 million in 2007/2008 and EC \$3.3 million in 2008/2009. The pharmaceutical programme was allocated EC \$5 million in 2007/2008 and EC \$6 million in 2008/2009.

94. The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines views health care as a fundamental right of all Vincentians. Accordingly, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has made significant progress in the delivery of health care over the past 10 years. Gains are apparent both in the quality of health care delivered and the availability and accessibility of health-related services across the nation. The Government aims to continue to provide comprehensive health care to all its citizens at an affordable cost to the country and to ensure that environmental concerns are considered in all aspects of national development. Further, the Government is committed to ensuring that all citizens have access to clean drinking water, proper sanitation, and a safe environment free from health hazards.

95. The Ministry's priority programmes are committed to improving the conditions of vulnerable, high-risk population groups such as the elderly, the disabled, women of childbearing age, children, adolescents, the physically challenged, and the mentally ill.

Health care is primarily the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. The Government runs the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital (MCMH), which is a 211-bed facility. The MCMH is the main component of the health care system providing secondary and emergency care. The hospital houses more than 95% of the country's acute care beds. One Geriatric Care Centre, the Lewis Punnett Home with 104 beds, provides inpatient care for the elderly; and bears an annual bed occupancy rate of 103%.

96. There is a Mental Health Centre. In addition, at the primary care level, thirty nine Health Centres spreading over nine health districts provide services to the users of these facilities. On an average, each health centre is equipped to cater to a population averaging 2,900 with no one required to travel more than three miles to access care. The primary care services available include emergency care, medical care, prenatal and postnatal care, midwifery services and child health services including immunization, school health, family planning services, and communicable and non-communicable diseases control. Dental health services are delivered at selected health centres throughout the state while Mental Health Services are offered on a visiting basis at all health centres.

97. Private care is also available. The private sector has over twenty general practitioners and consultants. There are also senior doctors working in government hospitals or polyclinic who have private practices. There is only one small private hospital in the country, the Mary Field Hospital. Private sector health services and facilities also include pharmaceutical, Laboratory, diagnostic, and dental services.

98. It is acknowledged that the empowering of individuals and communities to accept responsibility for their personal health, as most of referred diseases are originated by personal behaviour, will require the strengthening of linkages between the public and private sector agencies as well as NGOs.

99. The health sector has been undergoing reforms in response to the changing social and economic environment as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has had to face an increasing number of new and demanding challenges. These include, among other factors, an ageing population, violence, environmental risks, HIV/AIDS and new and re-emerging diseases. The demographic profile of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reflects an aging population with an increase in life expectancy from 69 years in the 1960's to 71.5 years in the 1990's, relatively low infant mortality (18.0 per 1000) and low death rates.

100. Statistics confirm this tendency for the growth of aging population. The 45-80 age group is estimated to increase from 23.6% to 34.3% between 2001 to 2015, which constitutes a radical change in the structure of the population age and will press the health system to find new solutions to deal with the elderly.

101. With respect to health care financing, the challenge facing the Ministry of Health is to ensure equity in access to care, improved efficiency in the delivery of care and the sustaining of the current levels of health care. Furthermore it is seeking find ways and means to influence the life style of the less well-informed and health-aware segments of the population.

102. The main challenge for the Ministry of Health is to develop pro-poor health approaches, coordinate public and private service delivery and increase efficiency and affordability of health policies. To cope with these major challenges, a draft Strategic Plan for Health 2008–2013 has been produced by the Government with the assistance of PAHO which when finalised is intended to shape the future orientation of health reforms in light of the current challenges facing the country.

D. Prison facilities

103. The contract for the construction of a new correction facility at Belle Isle in St Vincent was signed in 2004. The Belle Isle Correctional Facility includes a Facility Administration Building, Minimum Security Inmate Housing Block to accommodate 256 inmates, Medium Security Inmate Block to accommodate 96 inmates and a Maximum Security Inmate Block to accommodate 48 inmates.

104. There are Staff Quarters, Special Services Unit Base, Superintendent's Residence, Facility Manager Residence, Kitchen/dining building, Education/Craft and Trade Building, a Laundry building, Utility building, Medical/Isolation building and an Entry Control/Gate House building.

E. Drugs and crime

105. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, up until very recently, was an economy that relied primarily on banana exports to the United Kingdom. However, in the face of challenges made to the World Trade Organisation by other large banana interests and the United States preferential access to the UK market is fast disappearing. Today, the State is producing less than half of the bananas it grew only 10 years ago.

106. The resulting unemployment, rural poverty and sudden social dislocation have presented a number of difficult challenges to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. One of these is an increase in marijuana cultivation in the remote hills of the country's interior, where producers destroy ancient old-growth rain forests to cultivate hundreds of acres of cannabis herb.

107. Unfortunately, marijuana production has rapidly morphed into an elaborate criminal enterprise. Law enforcement officers in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are seizing ever-increasing numbers of ever-more sophisticated firearms, which are directly linked to narcotics trade and trafficking in our country and region.

108. In an effort to contain the use of illicit drugs and related crime, a number of outreach ventures have been launched for the dissemination of information on the implications of illicit drug use. Such ventures include radio programmes such as "On de Beat"; a television programme called "Crime Stop"; and a Drugs Awareness Resistance Education Programme (DARE) which is in the nature of an interactive school programme.

109. In the context of outreach to young males who may be predisposed to criminal activity, a counselling service is available at The Marion House. There is also a Crime Prevention Unit supported by programmes developed at the national correctional facilities. The Juvenile Justice System incorporates "Liberty Lodge", a home for delinquent children and a Family Court has been established to deal with juveniles and also with domestic violence cases. The repatriation of criminals from a number of developed countries also presents a number of problems. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is also a member of the Regional Security System (RSS) and participates in the regional meetings of Commissioners of Police. Existing legislation is being strengthened in the context of the review of Proceeds of Crime Act. The Financial Intelligence Unit is also involved in initiatives aimed at the prevention of drug trafficking and related offences.

F. Loss of trained personnel to the developed world

110. This area of concerns is already impacting on Saint Vincent and the Grenadines from a socio-economic standpoint. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines continues to lose a

cadre of personnel considered ‘the cream of the crop’. These persons are usually highly trained and experienced in key areas which contribute significantly to the country’s development. These losses are mainly due to limited local opportunities for upward mobility, the constant search by individuals for more lucrative forms of remuneration and a quest to obtain greater professional development. Also of note is the fact that several western countries conduct vigorous recruitment programmes offering higher paying jobs and other attractive benefits. Some of the key sectors where this loss of professionals is being experienced are in the fields of medicine (nurses), education (teachers) and among various types of technicians.

G. Globalization and trade

111. The economy of small developing countries such as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are susceptible to external market forces brought about by new trade liberalization policies. Over the years, the country has enjoyed preferential market treatment for major foreign exchange earners such as bananas. However, with the inevitable loss of this preferential treatment and with the impending new trading regimes, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will now be forced to compete with other countries that are more technologically capable, have cheaper costs of production, can produce in larger quantities and in some cases still enjoy subsidies by their government. This will have severe consequences on the competitiveness and profitability of local products and enterprises.

H. Increases in chronic diseases due to changing lifestyles:

112. Chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, cancer and risk factors such as obesity are on the rise in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Life expectancy is also increasing in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and there will be greater demands on the country’s limited resources in order to cope with and treat these illnesses. The European Union has accordingly improved the tenth EDF which focuses primarily on health sector reform. The purpose is to contribute toward the continuous development of an efficient, effective and sustainable health care system with emphasis on preventing and managing chronic non-communicable diseases and improving delivery and management of health care services.

113. The Government has developed and implemented a wellness policy including public awareness and lifestyle behaviour change initiatives based on the results of a nutrition survey geared towards the reduction of obesity and diabetes.

V. Capacity building and technical assistance

114. The Government recognises that human rights are always evolving and is thus dedicated to ensuring that the human rights of its people are respected and enforced. However, the Government understands that shortage of personnel and financial resources can hinder the compilation and analysis of data to produce requisite human rights report and acknowledges the need for assistance in this regard.

Notes

- ¹ Agricultural Produce and Livestock (Prevention of Theft) Act 2007 seeks to put measures in place to assist and protect local farmers as over the years, farmers have faced a number of issues including theft of their animals and produce.
- ² Banana Industry Act 2009 seeks to facilitate the improvement of the banana industry in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.
- ³ Banking Act 2006 addresses the need for effective, risk focused supervision of financial institutions to ensure the safety and soundness of the financial system.
- ⁴ Caribbean Community Act 2005 gives effect to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy.
- ⁵ Carnival Development Corporation Act 2002 gives the Carnival Development Corporation the power to manage, promote, develop and carry out the carnival festival or activity within and outside of the State.
- ⁶ Copyright Act 2003 seeks to afford better protection for literary, dramatic, musical, artistic and other works and creative products, and to provide for the right of performers and others in performances.
- ⁷ Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act, Cap 165 of the 1990 Revised Laws makes provisions for matrimonial injunctions, occupation orders and other rights relating to the spouses.
- ⁸ Domestic Violence (Summary Proceedings Act)1995 provides protection by means of summary proceedings in domestic violence matters.
- ⁹ Drugs (Prevention of Misuse) Act, Cap 219 of the 1990 Revised Laws seeks to curb the spread of the drug trade internally and externally.
- ¹⁰ Drug Trafficking Offences Act, 1993 is to be read in *pari materia* with Cap 219 and makes provision for the recovery of the proceeds of illicit drug trafficking.
- ¹¹ Education Act 1992 (Revised2006) governs education and establishes salient principles that guides the development of education for the future.
- ¹² Environmental Health Services Act 1991 provides for an Environmental Health Board, which shall be responsible for advising the minister as to any matter relating to environmental health.
- ¹³ Equal Pay Act 1994 provides for the removal and prevention of discrimination, based on the sex of the employee, in the rates of remuneration for males and females in paid employment.
- ¹⁴ Exchange of Information Act 2008 makes make provision for assisting domestic regulatory authorities to obtain information and for assisting foreign regulatory authorities to obtain information from within Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.
- ¹⁵ Financial Intelligence Unit Act 2001 established the Financial Intelligence Unit which is the national/centralised agency for the collection, analysis and dissemination of suspicious transaction reports.
- ¹⁶ Freedom of Information Act 2003 provides for rights of access to official documents and public authorities to members of the public.
- ¹⁷ Law Revision Act 2009 provides for the revision and reconciliation of the laws of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.
- ¹⁸ Married Women's Property Act, Cap 175 of the 1990 Revised Laws which amended the law relating to the property of married women.
- ¹⁹ Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act 1993 provides for mutual assistance in Criminal Matters within the Commonwealth.
- ²⁰ National Parks Act 2002 was developed to protect and manage existing and proposed protected areas.
- ²¹ Possessory Titles Act 2004 revolutionizes land titling and secures titles for persons who have been in adverse possession of lands for at least 12 years.
- ²² Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering (Prevention) Act 2001 provides for the prevention of money laundering.
- ²³ Protection of Employment Act 2003 makes provisions for the promotion of the employment relationship.
- ²⁴ Public Assistance Act, Cap 231 of the 1990 Revised Laws which provides for the administration of public assistance.
- ²⁵ Public Officers (Conditions of Employment) Act, Cap 208 of the 1990 Revised Laws prescribes certain rules of conduct in the conditions of employment of members of the public service.
- ²⁶ Public Officers' Protection Act, Cap 209 of the 1990 Revised Laws protects public officers and

- persons acting on behalf of the public in pursuance of any law from vexatious and frivolous actions.
- ²⁷ Regional Security System Act 2005 provides for the implementation of the Treaty establishing the Regional Security System.
- ²⁸ Recognition of Divorces and Legal Separations Act, Cap 178 of the 1990 Revised Laws makes provision for the recognition of Divorces and Legal Separations granted outside Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.
- ²⁹ Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 2009 provides for the rehabilitation of persons who have broken the law.
- ³⁰ The Status of Children Act, Cap. 180 of the 1990 Revised Laws has sought to remove the discrimination against children born out of wedlock in cases relating to succession to property on intestacy or which emerges out of the construction of a will. The law allows for a child born out of wedlock to have equal status with his or her siblings born in wedlock once the paternity has been established prima facie.
- ³¹ The Essential Services Act Cap 149 of the 1990 Revised Laws.
-