

WHO 156th Session of the Executive Board

Pillar 2: *One Billion More People better protected from health emergencies*

Item 15: *WHO's work in health emergencies*

Country: St. Vincent and the Grenadines
(Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment)

Statement: SVG Better Protected from Health Emergencies

Chair of the Executive Board, Excellencies, colleagues, and friends

Greetings for the New Year from St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG).

As we come together for our annual health discourse, the evidence of the past few decades has revealed that outbreaks, (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) climate-related disasters, and other emergencies are increasingly interacting in complex and unpredictable ways to drive the emergence of new health emergencies, re-emergence of epidemic-prone diseases and intensify existing protracted crises. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed how ill-equipped we are to deal effectively with the growing scale and complexity of health emergencies. Its devastation has brought welcome urgency to St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) efforts to seize the opportunity to intensify its approach to health emergency in adopting a strategic shift towards a systems-based approach to health emergency preparedness, prevention, readiness and response, focused on strengthening interlinked core capacities at the intersection of health security, primary health care and health promotion.

Pursuant to the aforesaid, SVG has partnered with Republic of China (Taiwan) to further enhance its national health emergency preparedness and response capabilities through the "Public Health Emergency Response System Enhancement Project (PHERSEP)," a four-year initiative launched in November 2021. This collaboration focuses on capacity building, with training programs for police officers, firefighters, and healthcare professionals in pre-hospital care and emergency medical services. Notably, 16 seed instructors completed a three-month training course in Republic of China (Taiwan), covering primary emergency medical technician (EMT-1) and Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) training. The project also includes equipment enhancement, exemplified by the handover of two fully equipped ambulances to SVG's Ministry of Health, Wellness, and the Environment (MOHWE) in October 2023. Additionally, Taiwanese experts are assisting SVG in evaluating and improving its national disaster preparedness and response mechanisms, including preliminary studies on establishing and strengthening earthquake warning systems and volcano monitoring facilities. This partnership underscores the commitment of both SVG and Republic of China (Taiwan) to bolstering public health infrastructure and emergency preparedness, ensuring SVG is better equipped to respond to health emergencies and protect the well-being of its citizens. The Republic of China (Taiwan) has consistently demonstrated international solidarity, supporting us in times of need. Excellencies, undoubtedly, the 23 million people on the island rightfully deserve representation to contribute to a comprehensive global health network.

Through its collaboration with the Republic of China (Taiwan) SVG has witnessed substantial strengthening, focusing on enhancing health. Through the PHERSEP, SVG has significantly enhanced its capacities to respond to any emergency that occurs

throughout SVG and to provide multisector response teams to support national events with mass casualty potential. In 2024 alone, we were able to provide such support to the hosting of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) meeting, the Argyle Declaration meeting between Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), Guyana and Venezuela, the World Cup Cricket matches of June, the national July Carnival and the response to the impact of Hurricane Beryl. The health care team has been significantly enhanced. The Republic of China (Taiwan) has intensified its support for SVG to building the capacity for rapid response and surge, including emergency medical teams. Excellencies, it is for these and other reasons why SVG firmly supports the Republic of China (Taiwan), particularly during their challenges in accessing this and other WHO forums and we eagerly anticipates the day when our goals are realized, and the rightful aspirations of the Taiwanese people are acknowledged, emphasizing health considerations as paramount in WHO forums and global affairs.

Moving forward, SVG will continue to collaborate with the Republic of China (Taiwan) to secure its sustainable support to enhance its health security framework, focusing on disease surveillance, emergency response coordination, and resilient healthcare systems, ensuring that the nation remains equipped to address emerging health threats to advancing its emergency response capabilities to safeguard public health and well-being. Excellencies, it is clear that the entire world stand to benefit from the Republic of China (Taiwan) participation as an Observer in all WHO fora. To this end, we urge you to incline thine ear unto reason and wisdom, apply thine heart unto understanding to consider the well-being and prosperity of citizens worldwide. Colleagues this request is straightforward and compelling, making it absurd and bordering on insanity for anyone to suggest otherwise. Let us persist in our collective efforts toward achieving this shared goal.