**OFFICIAL STATEMENT BY MR. GODFRED POMPEY AT 2017 GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION 22-26 MAY – CANCUN, MEXICO**

**INTRODUCTION**

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. On behalf of the government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, I wish to express appreciation and thanks to the Government and people of Mexico, the UNISDR and various sponsors, for your warm welcome and hospitality during this 2017 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. At this forum, we will review our progress in the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction which was adopted in Japan in 2015.

**BACKGROUND**

St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a multi-island developing state in the English-speaking Caribbean which is vulnerable to a range of natural hazards: our geography and geology have exposed us to a range of hydro-meteorological and geological hazards which have resulted in damage and loss of 12 – 15 percent of our GDP almost annually.

We are a participating state of CDEMA and have long adopted our regional Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Strategy 2014-2024, which is our regional framework for the implementation of the Sendai Framework.

In recognition of the foregoing, my Government has seen the wisdom in making significant investments in the areas of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and our programmes for DRR and Climate Change incorporates the Sendai Framework, the SDGs and the UN Climate Change Paris Agreement.

**NATIONAL PRIORITIES**

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is committed to meeting the seven global targets and the priorities of the Sendai Framework and has sought to build our resilience in several areas:

1. ***Disaster Finance***

Beginning the 1st of May, St. Vincent and the Grenadines has for the first time established a disaster contingency fund which will allow us to meet the immediate needs post disaster and contribute to our short and medium term recovery programmes. This fund is expected to raise EC$10 million dollars annually and reduce immediately the need for external assistance. This policy directive clearly supports Priority 3 of the Sendai Framework: ***Investing in Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience.*** While this amount will not be adequate following the impact of a major disaster, it builds on the existing initiatives that have been undertaken over the years.

We are in the final two years of implementing the Regional Disaster Vulnerability Project funded by the World Bank and the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines where funds have been committed to build the resilience of our infrastructure and strengthening the institutional capacity of key agencies. Our investments consider the ‘Building Back Better’ concept and our bridges and roads are being designed for the more frequent and intense events. We are also committed to building the resilience of our communities and increasing the knowledge about hazards when financing national DRR and Climate change programmes.

It must be noted though, that funding for DRR is reducing. We therefore call on all agencies to recommit to prioritizing financing for DRR, as Climate Change continues to increase the frequencies of excess rainfall and drought in our Small Island Developing States.

1. **Strengthening Early Warning Systems**

The improvement in early warning systems at the local and national levels is a national priority. While the absence of baseline data poses some challenges as they are needed to generate risk and hazards maps, we are working with a host of national and regional agencies to enhance our capacity for early warning. St. Vincent and the Grenadines continue to increase its network of stream flow and rain gauge equipment for flood monitoring, and for the first time in 2016 our local water resource agency could alert the disaster office of possible flooding downstream of one of our major river and communities.

Additionally, our recently opened Argyle International Airport now boasts three (3) forecasters, who can accurately inform us of any impending hydro-meteorological hazard, and the Meteorological Department has now been reorganized to meet the new era of information and communication that is needed to keep citizens up to date on meteorological and climate information and data. Despite these improvements, we continue to have challenges in receiving information for smaller events such as flash floods and trough systems which tend to regenerate when approaching our islands and steep topography.

Over the next year our Emergency Communications Network will see a major improvement with the strengthening of our communication systems to be able to reach the more vulnerable communities before and after emergencies, this US$2 million-dollar project will increase communications with all key agencies, but must of all can disseminate early warning information to all communities in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

We are therefore continuing our work with a host of agencies to improve early warning for all hazards.

1. **Understanding Disaster Risk**

St. Vincent and the Grenadines continue to promote this Priority one of the Sendai Framework through our adaptation of the all hazards approach of our regional CDM Strategy. With climate change, many communities have become more exposed and are experiencing increasing incidence of flooding, landslides and droughts, and are thus becoming more vulnerable. Over the last few years many have gone to bed with a roof over their heads and wake up homeless.

We continue to promote our public education programmes on floods, hurricanes and geological hazards, and have partnered with UNDP, ECHO and the Red Cross in increasing the knowledge of disaster risk at the community and national level.

While St. Vincent and the Grenadines continue to successfully incorporate the Sendai Framework and meet the global targets, we must not lose sight that we need to also improve lives and reducing poverty as in keeping the Sustainable Development Goals. Hence, we must be committed to redirecting financing for DRR and building resilient communities and people.

 Let me once again thank you on behalf of the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for hosting us at this 2017 Global Platform. We also look forward to you joining us in the Caribbean at the Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Conference in December, and to share with you our experiences in implementing the Sendai Framework. I thank you.