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PM Dr. Friday Urges Global Action at UN: “Investing in Resilience Now is More Cost-Effective Than Paying for Loss Later”

Addressing the United Nations High-Level Plenary Meeting on Sea-Level Rise, on Thursday September 24th, 2026, Prime Minister the Hon. Dr. Godwin Friday delivered a resolute message on behalf of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. He emphasized that rising sea levels represent an urgent developmental, economic, and humanitarian crisis for small island nations.

Highlighting the acute physical exposure of the archipelago, Prime Minister Friday informed world leaders that approximately Eighty-five percent (85%) of Vincentians and over Ninety (90%) of the nation's critical infrastructure are concentrated along a narrow coastal belt. With Caribbean sea levels rising at double historical regional baselines, coastal erosion, infrastructure damage, and saltwater intrusion directly threaten local livelihoods, freshwater resources, and cultural heritage.

"In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, sea-level rise is reshaping our coastlines," Prime Minister Friday stated. "We have no time to lose. We need decisive action to pivot from reacting to loss to investing in resilience".

To combat these threats, St. Vincent and the Grenadines is advancing a coordinated, whole-of-government adaptation strategy. Through its National Adaptation Planning (NAP) process, climate risk is being integrated directly into state planning, public investment, and economic decision-making.

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Key focus areas include safeguarding vulnerable sectors such as water security, agriculture, tourism, and marine resources. The government is prioritizing nature-based solutions – including the protection and restoration of mangroves, coral reefs, and coastal marine ecosystems – supported by regional data sharing and scientific cooperation.

Prime Minister Friday strongly endorsed the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) Leaders Declaration on Sea-Level Rise and Statehood. He reaffirmed the principle under international law that established maritime zones and statehood remain permanent and stable despite physical shoreline shifts.

He stressed that the preservation of sovereign rights, territorial entitlements, national identity, and cultural heritage must be guaranteed as coastal geographies change.

Prime Minister the Hon Dr. Godwin Friday issued a call involving key national and regional demands:

- **Financial Accountability:** A call to transition from international declarations to direct resource delivery by 2030.
- **Predictable Adaptation Funding:** Ensuring global climate finance is accessible, adequate, predictable, and tailored to the unique vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
- **Maintaining the 1.5°C Limit:** Urging global partners to honor temperature targets to prevent catastrophic, irreversible ocean impacts.
- **Preventing Development Reversals:** Ending the cycle where national development gains are repeatedly erased by climate disasters.

"Progressing from incremental adaptation to transformative resilience requires finance," Dr. Friday concluded. "The message from us is clear: investing in resilience now is more cost-effective than paying the far greater price for loss and damage later".

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