



***EMBASSY OF ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES
TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA***

31st October, 2010

Fellow Vincentians:

As you may already be aware, St. Vincent and the Grenadines has sustained extensive damage and material loss in wake of the passage of Hurricane Tomas which hit our country yesterday. The relevant authorities are still making an assessment of the extent of the damage, but the preliminary estimate is that the loss would amount to millions of dollars. A considerable amount of agricultural crops in rural communities have been devastated, and the preliminary assessment of the damage from this sector alone stands at EC \$67m. Naturally, the loss of crops, livestock and poultry would result in the loss of livelihood for many.

As at 8 p.m. this evening, it has been confirmed that more than 600 houses have been damaged either partially or in their entirety. At present 1,194 people are currently housed in emergency shelters throughout the island and there is over-crowding in some of these shelters. As a result of this, schools will remain closed for the rest of this week. Seven government buildings have also been damaged, but all hospitals and essential health services have not been severely impacted. Thankfully, there have been no confirmed reports of loss of human life. However, it has been reported that two fisher- persons from the Stubbs area who went to sea on Friday are still missing.

There has been extensive damage on the northern side of mainland St. Vincent. The Leeward side of the island—which is typically sheltered—did not fare well either. Many trees have fallen, blocking roadway access to some communities. Present and impending landslides have resulted in certain areas being declared disaster zones: (i) on the windward side, from Park Hill to Owia and (ii) on the leeward side, from Belisle to Fitz-Hughes.

As a result of fallen power lines, electricity and some phone access have been interrupted island-wide. Additionally, there is no water supply in some areas. Understandably, the utility companies are working feverishly to clear the roads and restore these vital amenities. The E.T. Joshua airport will remain closed until further notice. On a whole, the Grenadine islands have been largely unscathed by this disaster.

For those of you who have not been able to establish contact with loved ones in SVG due to downed phone lines, you may use the medium of radio to send messages to your families. It has been difficult connecting to most of the radio stations at home, but I have found online access to the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) to be rather stable and reliable. NBC may be accessed at: <http://www.nbcsvg.com/>. NBC radio has been carrying live updates of the situation on the ground and has also been relaying messages to and from families both in SVG and abroad, who otherwise have not been able to connect by phone. You may call (784) 457-2705 or email them at: onair@nbcsvg.com.

This is a most unfortunate occurrence in our homeland and the Government has already made an appeal to St. Vincent and the Grenadines' foreign partners and the international community to assist our recovery and rebuilding. Thus far, Prime Minister Gonsalves has made direct contact with the Embassies of the United States of America, Cuba, Taiwan and Venezuela, as well as the Foreign Ministry of Trinidad and Tobago. USAID has made an emergency commitment of US \$50,000 and the Government of Taiwan, an emergency commitment of US \$250,000. These sums are apart from the donations that these countries are expected to make for the general recovery and rebuilding process. Prime Minister Gonsalves has also indicated that some monies are expected from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and other international agencies once the full assessment of the damage is made.

In due course, I expect to be able to inform you of what the country's immediate needs are and how you, the Diaspora, can be of assistance.

I will remain in contact with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the National Emergency Management Organisation (NEMO). The Cabinet is expected to hold an emergency meeting at 8 a.m., tomorrow, Monday 1st November. I will continue to apprise you as I receive further information and instructions from Capital.

God's blessings to you all.

La Celia A. Prince

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "La Celia A. Prince". The script is cursive and elegant, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Ambassador