Mr President of the Executive Board,  
Mr President of the General Conference,  
Madam Director General,  
Excellencies, dear Colleagues,

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines aligns itself with the statement of GRULAC.

Mr. President, the COVID 19 pandemic has changed the world, bringing us, developed and developing countries alike, in a new challenging era.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is experiencing one of its worst socio-economic crises in recent times and our Government continues to implement initiatives aimed at mitigating such disaster in very difficult conditions.

Mr President, my country appreciates the work undertaken by the Secretariat during the pandemic by providing advice and sharing best practices through the webinars and information meetings.

In education, as a small island developing state, our ICT / technology infrastructure constraints have prevented us from adequately meeting the needs of all students and teachers for online and on digital devices learning.

To this end, teacher training and on-going relevant professional development are essential if benefits from investments in ICTs are to be maximized.

If action to address these issues had been provided earlier, the difficulties we are encountering due to the pandemic would have been easier to overcome.
We believe that UNESCO must fully utilize its expertise in this area to plan ahead, provide the necessary training and finance and assist in forging partnerships, to help advance the education needs in my country and the region as a whole.

Mr President, as we near the 2030 Agenda, the unusual challenges and the vulnerability we are facing are sufficient enough to place the SIDS as a global priority. Climate change and oceans, ICTs related to education and to communication and information, formal and informal education, preservation of the heritage and the biodiversity, water security, creative economies, social inclusion, are key issues to be addressed in order to promote growth and sustainable development within our islands.

Urgent action is therefore required to implement UNESCO’s SIDS Action Plan and to prepare the post SIDS Action Plan based on Samoa pathway.

In this regard, we also refer to Document 209 EX/5.II.D on the Repositioning of the UN development system and to the response of the UN Sustainable Development Working Group to the UN Secretary General’s recommendations on the Multi-country offices Review. A number of priority areas and actions are identified for a better and tailored support to the national priorities and needs to enable the SIDS to meet the 2030 agenda goals. It also requires strengthening in a coherent way the regional and sub regional field offices for a more effective and efficient programme delivery.

My country welcomed the successful visit of the MAB Division to St Vincent and the Grenadines to assist in the identification of biosphere reserves.

Under the Participation Programme, we presented a project in this regard and we are also finalising a phase of the World Heritage upstream pilot project on a transboundary site with Grenada.

As the financial resources through the programmes have been declining and no specific fundraising strategy has been established yet for the SIDS, Participation Programme becomes the main framework under which we can benefit from projects. For us, it is not normal that Participation Programme seems to be the only way to get support from the regular budget.
Among projects that we have submitted under other programmes, we highlight an IPDC project which was evaluated as non-priority.

Although the safety of journalists and freedom of expression are paramount in the IPDC programme, our objective remains capacity building and training in media development. Such priorities deserve special attention to improve access to information and the development of free, independent and pluralistic media.

Therefore, we reiterate that a solid structured financing dialogue is required to ensure an equitable distribution of funds among developing countries in the future.

Mr President, we all agree that the efforts must continue to create more constructive synergies. As the Director General had said that the preparation of the C/4 is a collective task, we are ready to work closely with the Secretariat to prepare a 41C/4 and a 41C/5 appropriate to the needs of member States and in line with the new world we face.

Thank you for your attention.