

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and
Foreign Trade**

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PRESS RELEASE

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LA SOUFRIÈRE FEATURES AGAIN IN OAS Meeting

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES – 14th July, 2021 - Ms. Michelle Forbes, Director of the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO), gave an overview of the aftermath of the 2021 La Soufrière volcanic eruptions at the annual Meeting on the Special Security Concerns of Small Island and Low-Lying Coastal Developing States of the Caribbean at the Organization of American States (OAS) which was held virtually on Thursday July 1st, 2021.

This year's theme "**A Multidimensional Approach to Advancing Disaster Resilience in the Hemisphere/Caribbean**" shed light on the multi-pronged approach to disaster management in the hemisphere. The Caribbean, due to its geographical location and geological structure, is the second most disaster prone region in the world, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Disaster resilience embraces this propensity for disasters and aims to build into vulnerable communities the capacity and capability to recover from disasters despite the existence of such vulnerabilities.

Representing Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as well was Mrs. Dora James who offered a testimony from the perspective of the community. Mrs. James spoke on preparations, the evacuation exercise, clean-up efforts and moving forward.

Ms. Forbes stressed that clean-up effort which will be long-term, are on-going and will be hampered by the Atlantic Hurricane Season, with the first approaching storm, Elsa, expected to make landfall on Friday 2nd July, 2021.

Ambassador Lou-Anne Gilchrist, Ambassador to the United States of America and Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States, expressed appreciation for the convocation of the meeting and reiterated gratitude for the support and solidarity from Member States following the devastating volcanic eruptions in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Other speakers were Ms. Tonya Ayow, Deputy Executive Director (Ag), The Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (CARICOM IMPACS); Dr. Kirk Douglas, University of the West Indies (UWI), Cave Hill Campus and Mr. Dennis Marcelle from the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA).

Taken together, the speakers provided a comprehensive overview of the vulnerabilities and the Special Security Concerns of Small Island and Low-Lying Coastal Developing States of the Caribbean and focused on the need for multi-pronged responses to these concerns. The case of the volcanic eruptions in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was illustrative of the compounding impact of natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic and how onerous the ramifications can be.

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