Her Excellency the Permanent Representative of St. Vincent and the Grenadines

His Excellency the Permanent Representative of France,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen

Again this year we have come together to commemorate the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, an honorable and valid purpose that we have undertaken for decades now.

By definition, extreme poverty means living on less than $1.90 a day, but the reality is much more complex in that it removes from people living in poverty any opportunity to reach their full potential.

On this commemorative day, while we acknowledge and applaud the progress already made in the struggle against the scourge of poverty, we must also recognize that the struggle is far from being won given the disturbing statistics we receive at each step of evaluation.
In fact, according to estimates, I am sorry to say that more than 700 million people still live in extreme poverty and strive to satisfy their most basic needs such as health, education, and access to water and sanitation, to name just a few.

Likewise, only 45 percent of the global population is effectively covered by at least one social benefit, in 2016.

Not only are the successes noted in this struggle inadequate, unequal, and imbalanced, but also it is clear that poverty spares no region of the world.

According to the World Bank, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa account for about 70 percent of the global population living in extreme poverty. At the same time, middle-income and developed countries are not spared either: at the present time, 30 million children grow up in poverty in the richest countries of the world.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The points I have made come from statistics, but the moving statements that we have all just heard are very real, immediate, and above all cannot and should not leave us indifferent.

How can we understand and how can we admit that in our world today, there exists so much injustice, inequality, suffering, and humiliation; and also often scorn and indifference toward the distress of men, women, and above all, children — the people who are the future of the world?

If the people who are supposed to take on the world of tomorrow grow up in such conditions, what will the future look like?

This is worrying, isn't it? This is why we must all work to make up lost time, all the more so because eradicating extreme poverty is not impossible.

In this regard, Africa is increasing its initiatives to create growth that is inclusive, sustainable, and shared throughout the continent.

To take one example, at the summit of the African Union held last July, the heads of state signed an agreement to create a new free-exchange zone, which would serve eventually to make the African economies more competitive and to stimulate intra-African commerce.

These heads of state also recognized the need to reform the African Union so that it would make a greater contribution to the prosperity of the continent; and they agreed that Africa, with all its potential, should take ownership of its own future.

In addition, the African countries clearly defined the areas that need more investment, like education, health, employment, and the empowerment of young people along with support for their civic participation and their representation within governments. The countries also agreed to
stimulate key investments in agriculture with the aim of creating millions of new jobs, of increasing profitability, and of fighting hunger and malnutrition.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We commemorate this October 17 with the theme: "Coming together with those furthest behind to build an inclusive world of universal respect for human rights and dignity."

This theme reminds us of the importance of helping each person to regain dignity, of promoting solidarity to improve our lives together, and of offering pathways to more integration for each segment of society, above all the most disadvantaged people.

More than ever, it is urgent for us to take action.

Thank you.