April 13, 2021

Dear friends,

The Embassy of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United States of America presents its compliments to you and informs of the current situation in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with respect to the ongoing explosive eruptions at La Soufriere, the volcano.

On Friday, April 9th, 2021, the La Soufriere volcano in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines moved from the effusive state in which it had been since December 29th, 2020, to an eruptive state. The ensuing volcanic eruptions followed swarms of volcano-tectonic earthquakes which began on March 23rd, 2021.

Scientists indicate that there are pyroclastic flows on the eastern and western sectors of the country and predict that the explosive eruptions, which emit plumes of ash into the air, are likely to continue for days or weeks. They noted on April 11th, after a series of explosive eruptions which are placing the country’s water and electricity supply at risk, that ‘the volcano continues to erupt explosively with the production of copious amounts of ash. Explosions and accompanying ashfall, of similar or larger magnitude, are likely to continue to occur over the next few days.’

To date, the explosive eruptions have caused pyroclastic density currents and have destroyed infrastructure, vegetation and crops. The resulting loss of livelihoods in the rural communities will be significant. The ashfalls have covered a significant area of the country, increasing the risk of respiratory and other illnesses and contaminating the water supply.

The Embassy further informs that a level 4 disaster was declared on April 8th, 2021, and that an evacuation order was issued for residents in the most hazard-prone areas of the country. To date, eighty-five (85) shelters have been activated, with three thousand, seven hundred and eighty-two (3,782) occupants. More than two thousand (2,000) displaced people are residing temporarily with loved ones in the safer zones.

It is projected that several hundreds of our nationals will be temporarily relocated in an organized and orderly manner to neighbouring Caribbean islands which are providing that assistance generously, and in solidarity with the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The Embassy emphasizes here that the protocols for the safe and orderly movement of nationals are in
place in collaboration with the Governments of the countries of destination. These include the requisite health protocols for minimizing the spread of the coronavirus.

The Embassy reminds that the previous volcanic eruption period extended from Friday, April 13, 1979, to August of the same year. The country therefore must be prepared to address all of the matters relating to the protection of its human, environmental and physical resources.

In anticipation of your solidarity at this time of need, the Embassy of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United States of America expresses its gratitude and reiterates to you the assurances of its highest consideration.

Lou-Anne Gilchrist
Ambassador