



## **STATEMENT**

by

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Suriname**

On the occasion of the General Debate  
of the  
72<sup>nd</sup> Session of the  
United Nations General Assembly

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*Please check against delivery.*

Mr. President, Excellencies Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of His Excellency Desiré Delano Bouterse, President of the Republic of Suriname, I wish to extend to Mr. Lajčák congratulations on his election to preside over the General Assembly.

Suriname is grateful to the past Chair for his efforts in addressing the issues of the small and vulnerable states within the SIDS construct. We wish Mister Peter Thomson success in his new role as Special Envoy of the Secretary General on Oceans.

Mr. President,

Allow me to address critical issues related to the theme of this year's session, which are directly related to Suriname and the Region we belong to.

### **Natural disasters and Climate Change**

Suriname, Mr. President, cannot but give special attention to the extraordinary fashion in which the annual hurricane season has presented itself in the Caribbean. Our thoughts go out to the many families, the mothers, the children, the elderly and the sick who are living the worst possible nightmares!

We are convinced that those affected will be comforted with the hope that all is not lost, since the world community stands with them and pray for the betterment and speedy recovery of our Region.

We also acknowledge, the suffering in Mexico, as a result of the recent heavy earthquakes, and express our deep felt sympathy for those victimized.

Excellency, these events confront us with the relativity of human power and state power, whether unilateral or multilateral.

A quick review of the damage caused by the recent natural disasters, shows us the destruction of the means of production and physical infrastructure.

This, Mr. President, has created a social disruption that goes far beyond the immediate needs of the victimized societies!

We, also observe that the world at large, demonstrates a strong sense of solidarity when calamity strikes and humanitarian assistance is urgently needed.

However, to alleviate the desperate condition of the peoples, we must, in our international efforts, address the calamities in a further and wider perspective.

We must assist the respective Governments in restructuring the socio-economic and physical infrastructure, in a way, that these states can become more resilient and reduce their vulnerability in the future. This will require the development of innovative concepts and an intensive sharing of global experience! Combining forces at a global scale has become crucial.

Furthermore, it will imply aggressive mobilization of adequate resources. Such, necessary resource mobilization, will face obstacles. We will have to face the fact, that a number of the more affluent nations, entertain inward looking policies that do not augur well with the pressing need to join hands in solving these, truly global, problems.

The past weeks made it very clear to all of us that the forces of nature do not discriminate. President, no they don't and Suriname strongly supports the view that nations should proportionately contribute at a global scale if we want to survive as humanity!

When scientists indicate precise and foreseeable natural disasters, it is obvious that we should take precautionary measures, mitigate possible dangers and adapt existing structures to minimize the effect. Becoming more resilient remains the only way forward. It is in this regard unacceptable that Caribbean countries including Suriname are being graduated into Middle Income Countries, with a zero option to obtain concessional loans.

Mr. President, I add my voice to the lamentation regarding the fact that the vulnerability of these countries should be taken into account when classifications are applied.

Thus, it is ironic that Suriname is facing such threats of climate change, while at the same time our country is making a tremendous contribution in mitigating climate change. As a high-forested, low-deforestation country with 93% forest cover - which is the highest of the world - Suriname provides regulation services to the global climate, including as a carbon sink.

In addition to providing livelihoods to indigenous and tribal communities, our forests are biodiversity hotspots, with an impressive number of endemic and international significant species. Our forests also support fresh water regulation as part of the unique Amazon ecosystem, and provide employment and income generation through an active forest industry. Above all, we have set aside for conservation purposes, 1.6 million hectares of pristine rainforest, referred to as the Central Suriname Nature Reserve, as a gift to humanity.

While Suriname's greenhouse gas emissions have been historically negative, it is a challenge to enhance the country's economic development while maintaining this unique position in the world.

To achieve this goal, Suriname is ready to partner with Governments, the global community and other stakeholders to transform our economy, in which environmental protection, including through REDD+, social advancement and economic prosperity, take central stage. Our Multi Annual Development Plan, recently adopted by Parliament, is testimony to this vision for our nation's sustainable development.

### **Non-interference and non-intervention**

On the issues of non- interference and non- intervention, Mr. President, I draw your attention to the following.

The natural disasters I just referred to, coincide with growing political conflicts which may well lead to a serious loss of human lives and the destruction of human achievements. A number of these conflicts are related to a stark disrespect for the basic principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations since 1945.

Non-interference in the affairs of sovereign states, and non-intervention are not empty principles. They are based on a firm belief that all peoples are equal and that the prevailing structures of government and democracy cannot be prescribed externally.

Recent interventions in the Middle-East have not created better societies. On the contrary, we have witnessed divided warring factions that can hardly be qualified as an improvement to the Governments that were ousted.

Suriname also has experienced the ill effects of interference in internal affairs. The destruction of infrastructure and means of production amounting to approximately 300 million US dollars, and much worse, is the fact that hundreds of children were deprived of access to education and proper health care.

Today, as a nation, we are still suffering from the results of the so-called foreign supported internal strife that disrupted societies in the interior, characterized by a socio-economic order that lasted for more than 300 years.

Suriname knows what interference means and the only way we have dealt with it, is by insisting on dialogue, resulting in the signing of the Peace Treaty in May 1992. So, when we tell the world that non-interference and non-intervention are principles to adhere to, at all cost, we are talking from our own experience.

Over almost three decades, Suriname's commitment to peace and development through the promotion of dialogue and the implementation of broad based social programs, remained in full accordance with the principles and guidelines of the UN. Dialogue in the spirit of mutual respect has led to peace and prosperity.

In this same vein, in 2012 the legislator passed an Amendment to the Amnesty Law of 1992. This, by applying amnesty to the full period of political violence in Suriname covering the period of 1980-1992. In doing so, the legislator complied with article 8 of the Constitution, which bans discrimination and guarantees equal rights to all citizens.

This amendment further provided for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, allowing for a clear distinction between politically motivated violence and criminal acts.

Mr. President, allow me to inform this gathering that in 2015 this road to peace and sustainable development of Suriname enjoyed full acceptance, noting that a greater majority elected the incumbent Government. Moreover, civil society has taken up the responsibility to advance the peace process through the implementation of initiatives contributing to the cause of truth finding and reconciliation.

Against the backdrop, Excellency, of the aforementioned developments, it is with concern that Suriname took note of the unverified and biased comments published by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers.

Therefore, Suriname categorically rejects the assertions of this special procedures mandate holder, who didn't provide the Government an opportunity to respond in a timely manner.

Mr. President,

The 71st General Assembly marked a milestone in the way the world views the 5 decades old unilateral Economic, Commercial and Financial Boycott against Cuba. Last year, there was not one state that voted against the resolution to bring a definite end to this unilateral decision that has proven to be unproductive from all angles.

However, the current reality obliges us to continue expressing our deepest concern, since we learned about the continuation of this detrimental and unilateral policy. Suriname therefore, with absolute respect for the sovereignty of each nation to determine its own policies, urges that constructive dialogue and cooperation must prevail, and that bridges must be built on the basis of equality and respect for independence and sovereignty.

Suriname rejects any measure that might strengthen the blockade, which is in violation of international law, the sovereignty of States, the principles of non-intervention in internal affairs and self-determination.

My Government reiterates the critical importance of these principles, and underscores the relevance of the processes of dialogue, diplomacy, peaceful resolution of conflicts and political and economic cooperation as building blocks for stability, peace and democracy in the Americas.

In this line of thought we encourage the U.N. Member States in general, and especially the South American and Caribbean States, to deal with the problems of our sister nation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in a constructive manner. Let us keep on stressing the need for dialogue between all parties. History proves that interference and intervention have never turned out successful!

Mr. President, Suriname is deeply concerned about the current developments in the Korean Peninsula. We believe that the interests of the Korean people must remain paramount in whatever configuration for a sustainable solution. First and foremost, the Korean people must be given guarantees that the use of violence can never be a solution for the problem.

Whether this originates in North Korea or elsewhere, the only remaining road to a sustainable solution will be dialogue and negotiations for the dignity and well-being of the Korean people in their struggle for peace and development.

The example of South America and the Caribbean in remaining a Nuclear Free Zone, could well serve as a model to be followed. The absence of nuclear weapons creates an environment conducive to dialogue and meaningful negotiations.

## **Tolerance and mutual respect as a condition for sustainable development**

Mr. President

The global village is becoming ever more inter-dependent. Different cultures and ethnic orientations are rapidly becoming the basis for racial and global conflicts. Therefore, we have to find new paradigms to effectively limit the dogmatic adherence to religious and social concepts. Showing tolerance and mutual respect have become a must if we want to guarantee future generations' peace and sustainability.

The Government of Suriname is following the recent re-emergence of right wing extremism, framed in populism in many quarters of the world, not only with keen interest, but also with a certain degree of concern.

This development has the potential of putting the social cohesion within countries and bilateral relations between nations under severe pressure. Thereby affecting opportunities and the potential for cooperation.

Suriname has worked tirelessly to achieve national unity, which has resulted in a very diverse and well integrated society where tolerance forms one of the basic principles which underpins its very existence.

Thanks to the type of nation we have built, very disturbing and destabilizing factors such as right wing extremism, ethnic and religious intolerance cannot have or find a place in our nation, neither will it ever be able to take root and grow.

Suriname, today, enjoys an exceptional era of tolerance and mutual respect, with Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims and other religious denominations living in an atmosphere of peace and mutual respect.

Suriname, with roots from all continents of the world, has become, through intensive dialogue and mutual respect, a shining example of the importance of not entertaining supremacist concepts.

Therefore, the Government of Suriname is considered best positioned to understand and analyze the current global trend which needs to be reversed with immediate effect.

Suriname stands ready to share its experience and best practices with other sister nations on the issue of nation building, based on diversity, pluralism, integration and peace.

Then I am convinced that others will better understand one of the important motto's of Suriname: "Diversity is Power".

### **Socio-Economic challenges**

My Government strongly believes, Excellency, that focusing on people is the quint-essence of the application of power. Suriname is an example in kind.

As a nation, we have recently faced the ill effects of a largely commodity-based export economy. The sharp downturn in oil and gold prices in recent years—combined with the unfortunate closure of the century-old bauxite and alumina complex—challenged Suriname's macroeconomic management since mid-2015.

By any international standards, Suriname faced a severe shock that was compounded on the balance of payments side, by the sharp increase in imports related to two major investment projects in oil and gold mining, that together accounted for about 35% of annual GDP.

We estimate that the economy contracted severely by more than 10 percent in 2016, requiring unprecedented fiscal and monetary policy adjustments and some temporary balance of payments support.

To stabilize the exchange rate, reduce domestic demand, and reestablish a viable balance of payments position, the monetary authorities sharply curtailed credit creation in the country, with credit to the private sector contracting in nominal terms.

Since October 2016, the exchange rate has stabilized, monthly inflation rates have fallen to less than one percent, and the country has returned to a current account surplus position.

Our macroeconomic response to the external and fiscal pressures started in earnest in August 2015 with a massive contraction in Government expenditure and increases in taxation.

The Government acknowledges that the extractive sector, producing gold, fossil fuels and other marketable minerals will remain critical for our economic development in the foreseeable future. We accept this reality, being fully aware that the wealth created must be deployed in financing a well-planned initiative to expand our economy in a sustainable manner.

With this objective in mind, the Government has recently adopted very important legislative measures. One, dealing with the establishment of a Sovereign Wealth and Stabilization Fund; the other, introduces the institutional framework which will facilitate Foreign Direct Investments.

As outlined in our Multi-Annual Development Plan, Suriname intends to strike a balance between the export of commodities on the one hand, and export of final products in sync with the services industry, on the other hand.

Mr. President,

Suriname acknowledges her citizens as the most important resource for its development. In spite of the challenging budgetary constraints, the socio-economic policies of the Government remained people oriented. The continued application of the Basic Health Care Law provides for proper health care for the entirety of our population.

In addition, as announced by President Bouterse, and as part of the Social Contract, adequate housing, access to education, youth participation, engagement and sports development, job creation, care for persons with disabilities and the elderly have remained priorities for sustainable development and growth!

**In conclusion**

Excellency, the message delivered by Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, assured us of his commitment to the theme of this year's meeting. Suriname pledges its full support and cooperation.

The implementation of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in sync with the necessary reform of the United Nations, will carry a lot of weight. This will be a formidable challenge and, therefore, my Government believes that in addition to domestic resource mobilization, consideration must be given to accessible financing for development, capacity building, innovation and the transfer of technology for developing countries from a wide array of financing mechanisms.

Mr. President,

Having addressed these matters that are of vital importance for the survival of humanity, based on the principles of the United Nations, we bring to mind an Amerindian saying, that we have not inherited the Earth, but that we have the Earth on loan from future generations. It is up to us to give this wise saying its substance.

Mr. President, I wish in the final analysis, to underscore and reiterate the utmost importance of youth involvement and participation at the highest levels. In this regard, my Government has made it a priority to create the conditions for youth to be part of decision making processes. I refer to young people among others, as Innovators, Members of Parliament and Cabinet and as CEO's within what we refer to as the "youth-adult partnership". In fact, in 2010 our Government established a special Ministry responsible for Youth and Sport Development. It gives me pleasure to announce that this year, youth representatives are part of my official delegation to this 72<sup>nd</sup> session.

Furthermore, it is through political will that more women in our society can excel to the highest echelons of political decision making.

Mr. President, the 2030 Agenda envisages a world that guarantees all inhabitants of our planet, a climate conducive to self-development, of respect for human dignity, of tolerance towards other cultures and the ultimate goal of giving our planet the gift of diversity based on mutual respect.

Mr. President, finally,

It is up to each one of us, regardless of our status in society;

It is up to each nation whether big or small;

It is up to this multilateral organization to focus *on People and strive for Peace and a Decent live for all on a Sustainable Planet*. We owe it to ourselves, yes, we owe it to this and coming generations!

I thank you and God Bless you.