



Rev 1

**Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of
Suriname,
H.E. Yldiz Pollack – Beighle, at the General Debate of the 73rd session
of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, 29 September 2018**

Excellency María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the General
Assembly

Colleagues, Excellencies

Introduction

It is an honour to deliver this statement on behalf of my President, His
Excellency Desiré Delano Bouterse.

Madame President,

I sincerely applaud your election as the first woman of the Latin American
and Caribbean region, to **preside over the 73rd Session** of the General
Assembly.

In the course of this session year, the membership stands to gain greatly
from your outstanding personal qualities and wealth of experience as a
professional diplomat, at the helm of our General Assembly.

Suriname **pledges its unwavering support** for your efforts in making our
organization relevant again **for the entire world community**, in particular
the **disadvantaged and marginalized**, including women and youth.

Madame President,

As we remember the legacy of former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, we
honor his tireless efforts towards making the world **more peaceful and
humane** by **fighting against inequality and injustice, combating
diseases and conflict** with all the means at our disposal, **and putting the
United Nations at the center of multilateralism.**

As honored as I am to address this gathering, that brings together so many world leaders, I am also **disheartened** by the somber tone expressed by Secretary General Guterres, at the presentation of his annual report on the work of our organization.

As the Secretary General noted, targets set last year have not been met. And **we have to ask ourselves** — will we make the same appeals this year, with the same attitude of business as usual with regard to outcomes, whether effective or not?

Suriname **concurs** with the **assessment** of the Secretary General that the **fundamental issue** confronting the international community today is **the lack of trust** among nations.

In this regard, as a small nation, my country **firmly commits** to upholding internationally accepted principles, which clearly define **who we are**, and which provide for **predictable actions in our international relations**, thereby creating a climate of **trust, understanding and respect**.

We **underscore the need for a rules-based** world order with the United Nations at the center, which is needed **to create the necessary platform** to address global concerns, among which the **mobilization of funds** to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Being a low lying coastal state, Suriname is among the most threatened countries directly impacted by sea level rise. It is approximately 80% of our population that resides in the coastal area, while our main productive activities are also concentrated in this area. resulting in an existential threat.

As we have witnessed in the past days, the forces of nature stroke once again, not only at our sister Caribbean nations, but also elsewhere in the world, we are being **urged to move beyond the rhetoric and take immediate action**.

Mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity

Madame President,

My country is strategically located on the Guyana Shield, has an abundance of natural resources, a unique biodiversity and an impressive forest cover of over 90%.

Moreover, our population, including indigenous peoples, tribal communities of African descent, and various other ethnic groups, descends from all continents of the world. All expressing and enjoying **exceptional tolerance and religious freedom**, respect each other's cultural background, and all of whom are equally entitled and have access to social programs including healthcare and education.

We have used this diversity inherited from our colonial past, to our advantage by rejecting the divide and rule of yesteryear.

We are indeed proud that our people, coming from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, **can live in peace and harmony** with each other, forging bonds conducive to nation building and working towards the wellbeing of all citizens young and old.

Economic challenges and policy measures

Madame President,

As it relates to our economic challenges and policy measures, my country as a commodity-based export economy, is highly vulnerable to commodity price shocks. The sharp downturn in gold and oil prices 3 years ago and the closure of the century-old bauxite operations in 2016 have led to a sharp recession and a severe loss in government revenues.

The economy contracted by a combined 8% during 2015-16, while the government lost more than a third of its fiscal revenue in terms of GDP during 2012-17. This required unprecedented fiscal and monetary policy adjustments.

To stabilize the exchange rate, reduce domestic demand, and reestablish a viable balance of payments position, the monetary authorities moved to a flexible exchange rate regime and sharply curtailed credit creation in the country, with credit to the private sector falling from 37% of GDP in 2016 to 28% in 2017.

Since October 2016, the exchange rate has stabilized, monthly inflation rates have fallen to less than one percent, and the current account deficit in the balance of payments has vanished.

The fiscal response, usually a much more difficult undertaking, began in earnest in August 2015 with a massive contraction in government expenditure and increases in taxation.

While the crisis continued to erode revenue in terms of GDP, expenditure was cut from more than 30% of GDP in 2015 to less than 23% in 2017.

As a result, the unsustainable 10% of GDP deficit that emerged during the crisis years has already been cut to an estimated 5% of GDP in 2018.

Looking ahead, the government also put in place significant reforms to limit the impact of future export commodity shocks. Institutional reforms will help promote foreign direct investment aimed at diversifying the economy away from its heavy reliance on extractive industries; fiscal reforms aim at reducing reliance on direct tax income and broadening the tax base; and the establishment of a sovereign wealth fund will stabilize income derived from extractive industries and help mitigate the fiscal impact of future shocks.

Our efforts have borne fruit, and the government is committed to continuing the fiscal efforts to restore the primary fiscal surplus that was typical in Suriname. The International Monetary Fund and international rating agencies have commended the efforts and foresee a continued improvement in the macroeconomic performance of Suriname.

Black-listing, de-risking and the Graduation to Middle Income Country

These **efforts to steer us on the right path** of development are worsened by obstacles that are unjustifiable, and not of our making. First of all, Madame President, I wish to refer to the matter of the classification of Suriname as a middle income country, which I alluded to at this very rostrum last year, but which remains unresolved.

Our classification, like many other developing countries, including the Caribbean, based on GDP per capita, does not reflect our vulnerabilities. We strongly reject this unrealistic classification which disregards the full set of challenges that we face.

This is a matter, Madame President, which should be addressed with urgency. Access to concessional financing for our development is critical, to allow for the implementation of programs to benefit all our citizens.

Correspondent banking and de-risking, further **aggravated by unilateral actions**, among which blacklisting and the arbitrary seizure of funds, without due regard to the severe consequences to the community, including businesses and families, **remain obstacles that we do not have any influence on**.

An atmosphere of trust and political will is crucial and should lead to dialogue and cooperation in order to address all matters of concern.

Mitigating the effects of climate change

Madame President,

Although Suriname contributes significantly to the mitigation of the effects of climate change through its high forest cover and low deforestation rate, it is regrettable to acknowledge that global commitments, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, have yet to be materialized into tangible results.

Suriname is one of the 11 countries with a high forest cover and low deforestation rate, representing 20 percent of the Earth's remaining tropical forests, and storing 18 percent of tropical forest carbon. Yet, we are not fully benefitting from global arrangements associated with sound forest management.

At COP23 (UNFCCC Climate Change Conference), last year, Suriname pledged to cap its forests at 93%. We also made the conditional commitment to maintain our leadership position as one of the most carbon negative countries. **This pledge**, subject to scientific, technological, technical and financial support, goes beyond national benefits into the realm of global gains for humanity.

It is against this reality, that Suriname will host a High Level Conference on Climate Finance Mobilization in February of next year. This conference will seek to initiate and implement new economic models of eco-sustainability to improve the quality of life for all.

Combating the illicit drug trade

Madam President,

The **scourges** of illicit drug trafficking, transnational organized crime, terrorism as well as trafficking in arms and persons, place an unprecedented burden on the financial and human resource capacity of small developing countries, hampering their ability to implement policy measures aimed at achieving development objectives.

Drug abuse and drug trafficking destroy families, disrupt communities and rob our youth from a productive future.

And our open borders compel us to **strengthen the cooperation with adjacent**, neighboring and other countries to effectively combat transnational organized crime and the negative **consequences associated with it**. Such cooperation must yield results and we join others in the fight against the world drug problem.

We need more than lip service. We need joint action!

Likewise, we solicit international cooperation to protect our unique biodiversity which is under threat, through illegal poaching and trade in endangered species.

Bilateral, regional and international/multilateral cooperation

Madame President,

As it relates to our collaboration at the bilateral, sub- regional and multilateral levels, Suriname continues to stand for international peace and security.

We advocate for dialogue in any existing conflict and uphold internationally accepted principles of non-interference, non- intervention, and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Suriname respects and protects all human rights, however, we strongly reject using human rights for political gains.

All conflicts that arise, are a consequence of departing from these valued principles.

That **is why I wish to reiterate**, Madam President, that these valued principles form the bedrock of Suriname's foreign policy.

In the same vein, my country **applauds those who have chosen** the path of dialogue to resolve their disputes. In this regard, allow me to refer to the rapprochement between countries in the Horn of Africa, and on the Korean Peninsula.

Diversification of bilateral and regional partners

Madame President,

Our geographic location, positions us as a strategic hub. As such, Suriname has strengthened its bonds with neighboring and adjacent countries and with those we enjoy remarkable historic ties with.

As we strengthen partnerships based on mutual respect and benefit, we seek to advance our national development objectives with a focus on agriculture and tourism, through Foreign Direct Investments, South-South cooperation and regional partnerships.

Suriname, with its human capital as its greatest asset, an abundance of natural resources such as fresh water, oil, gold, bauxite and other minerals, maintains warm and friendly relations with many countries.

We focus on reinforcing existing partnerships and initiating new ones. As a result, many friends from all corners of the world are seeking to forge durable partnerships on the basis of mutual respect and benefit.

Madame President,

The Latin American and Caribbean region has not been spared from tensions due to **existing differences of opinion on various issues**. The proclamation of the region as a zone of peace in 2014 has certainly contributed to ensuring that there is no room for military adventures.

We strongly appeal for dialogue where there are differences.

We must prevent outside forces to impose their own agenda upon us, contrary to our interests as a region.

Let us focus on what binds us, and not what divides us!

Economic warfare

It is reprehensible that some economically powerful countries resort to applying unilateral sanctions when they encounter ideological, political or trade differences. This economic warfare does not bode well in solving disputes. **On the contrary**, positions are hardened with far reaching consequences for regional and international stability, peace and security.

Suriname strongly rejects these coercive economic and trade measures since they are counter-productive and create an atmosphere of distrust, making a peaceful resolution of disputes almost out of reach.

In this regard, we **disapprove of the continuation of the economic,** financial and commercial embargo against Cuba and its people. **Time and again,** the majority of nations takes a stand against this embargo. **Is it now,** Madame President, not the time to honor the demand of the majority of the international community and put an end to the blockade?

Madame President,

The current arms race is **deplorable and it absorbs** tremendous resources. Imagine what we could have achieved in making the world more humane if these resources were simply channeled to combating disease and hunger, improving food safety and security. **Who would not aspire to these sustainable goals, eradicating poverty and hunger?**

Like many other countries, **we call for an end to the arms race,** while also rejecting the militarization of outer space and the research of artificial intelligence for warfare purposes.

Multilateralism

Madame President,

Multilateralism remains essential for undertaking joint actions in achieving sustainable development and in addressing matters of global concerns such as maintaining peace and security, combating terrorism and transnational organized crime and addressing climate change.

Suriname supports these initiatives as we seek to reinforce the validity of multilateralism based on the principles and purposes of the United Nations.

The way forward

Madame President,

We are convinced that the United Nations remains the most important organization to discuss all matters confronting the international community, aimed at finding solutions and taking into consideration the interests of its member states. It is therefore essential to make this

institution more relevant than it is today, by making it more democratic, transparent and accountable.

Continued efforts to reform the United Nations remain crucial to reflect the realities of today's world. For example, the process to reform the Security Council must be comprehensive, inclusive, balanced and consensus-based, taking into account the **interests of both developed and developing countries and further promoting, preserving and strengthening international peace and security.**

Madame President,

Your priorities for the 73rd session have been noted and Suriname is fully supportive as together we try to make this organization relevant again.

We have to ensure that our youth is engaged and participates in a structured manner in the affairs of this world organization, recognizing that they are a demographic dividend for development and have a unique and innovative perception on matters.

As lead Head in the Caribbean Community for youth development, Suriname wholeheartedly supports the sentiments expressed earlier in the debate, to create a United Nations agency dealing with youth. I expect that the recently launched UN Youth Strategy will be inclusive and deliver on the aspirations of the world's young people.

Madam President,

In the final analysis, **when Suriname speaks, we speak** to give strength to the voices of all countries, whether small or big, developed or developing.

We must globally recommit to the principle of dialogue and the cause of lasting peace.

This recommitment that I call us all to embrace, is the inherent right to decent life and protection for all who are born on this planet.

Through our organization, we have at our disposal all the means to take on this responsibility.

YPB

We have no one but ourselves do this for us. **Let me conclude**, Madam President, by saying that if there were no United Nations, **today, we would be calling for its creation.**

Therefore, as I said before, let us focus on what binds us, rather than what divides us.

God Bless you, thank you!!