



STATEMENT

by

His Excellency Chandrikapersad Santokhi

President of the Republic of Suriname

on the occasion of the General Debate
of the
76th Session of the
United Nations General Assembly

New York
22 September 2021

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THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME | ADDRESS

On the occasion of the General Debate of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 22 September 2021

Your Excellency Abdulla Shahid, President of the General Assembly,

Your Excellency António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations,

Excellencies,

Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. President,

- I congratulate you, on your election, to preside over this 76th session, of the General Assembly.
- I assure you, of my country's full support, during your presidency
- I take this opportunity, to acknowledge His Excellency Volkan Bozkir, for his sterling leadership, of the very challenging previous session, **and** wish him well in his future endeavors.
- The unpredictable turns, of the global political and economic landscape, demonstrate, that **multilateral** cooperation, international solidarity, **and** concrete action, **are** required **more** than ever.

Indeed, Mr. President,

- We all should work together, to deliver **for** the People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships.
- **All** of these inter-connected challenges can be considered a puzzle, whereby the **pieces** can be found, in various countries.
- I urge all of us, to work together, to solve this puzzle and secure the future of our planet.
- With this, we will demonstrate leadership, humanity and political responsibility and commitment.
- **Now** distinguished colleagues, is the time **for** solidarity, unity and global leadership!

Mr. President,

- The COVID-19 pandemic has **clearly** highlighted, that when in crisis, **seemingly** international solidarity, has little, or no meaning.
- Multilateralism and international solidarity came under pressure.
- It has **unveiled** weaknesses of the effectiveness of our international mechanisms, **and** global legal infrastructure.
- Regretfully the principle of collective effort and responsibility, was replaced by a more individual approach.
- **One** to protect the nation first.
- However, I am taking this opportunity, to express my sincere gratitude, to the countries and organizations, who expressed solidarity, and had provided valuable support, to my country and people, in the battle against this pandemic, at a **very** early stage, our thanks extend especially to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, India, China and also the USA.
- Mr. President, the exposed weaknesses of our health systems, must be addressed, with **innovative** measures, with the use of modern technology and international cooperation.
- Allow me, as we go forward, to underscore **the** importance of using science **and** technology, for peaceful purposes.

We also need to pay attention, to the long-term social, and psychological aspects, the widening of the education gap, and the digital divide, as well as the unequal access to **vaccines**.

- Moreover, many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, known as a middle-income region, regrettably, have not benefitted from the various COVID-19 multilateral debt relief solutions.
- Mr. President, we must develop a post COVID-strategy, with a focus on:
 - Developing an effective strategy to improve vaccination levels in our societies.
 - Rebuilding the economy;
 - And establishing a COVID 19 recovery fund, with support of the international financial institutions and the private sector;
- We cannot go back, to what we were used to, but rather focus on:
 - **How** we organize ourselves, for the “**new normal**”, with COVID-19 as part of our lives;
 - Removing barriers, for ease of doing business and investments.

Mr. President,

- Beyond the severe impact of COVID-19, we have been challenged, with financial and economic **deficiencies**, including a **high** debt burden.
- In this regard, access to concessional financing, is of critical importance, in **rebooting** our economy.
- Currently, we face unrealistic, unfair, and counterproductive classification instruments.
- Suriname looks forward to new substantive methods of financial support, based on the socio-economic reality, of the countries concerned.
- At the same time, the vulnerabilities of countries, should be taken into account.
- I call on **all**, to support the multi-dimensional vulnerability index, as proposed by SIDS (Small Island Developing States) and **remove** bureaucracy in supporting these states.
- It is, in the interest of **all** of us!

Mr. President,

- Suriname supports the call for a **stronger** and **more** effective United Nations.
- A restructured and **revitalized** United Nations must **ensure**, that the organization, **remains** the source of redress, for the international community, and **home**, to international justice and **equitable** decision-making.
- It is my firm believe, societies **should** be organized based on democratic values, good governance, an independent judiciary, and with respect for human rights.
- In achieving these objectives, we **must** allow countries, especially in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, to develop sustainable economies, without obstacles.
- Isolation and trade blockades, such as, in the case of Cuba, in my own region, undermine these principles and are **counterproductive**, to achieving these goals.
- Therefore, I am calling for continued dialogue and negotiations, to solve differences and conflicts, within the framework of the charter of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

- Climate change remains a serious challenge and an existential threat, **which** requires the attention of all us.
- In recent months, we have witnessed its worldwide impact, such as deadly floods, widespread forest fires and significant rises in global temperature.
- **No country or region** was spared of its wrath!
- In the case of my country, Suriname, and the countries, with low-lying coastal areas, we are committed, to fighting climate change, because we are particularly vulnerable, even though, we have contributed, **the least**, to this problem.
- Suriname is a High Forest, Low **Deforestation** country, with a forest coverage of approx. 93%.
- Suriname significantly contributes, to the mitigation of the effects of climate change.
- We are one, of the few carbons negative rating countries, in the world.
- Yet, we are not fully benefitting, from global arrangements, associated with **sound** forest management.
- The time has come, to acknowledge the **unique** challenges, faced by the high forest, low deforestation developing countries, and to **improve** and **maximize**, their **fair** access to climate finance.
- As we prepare for COP 26, in early November this year, in Glasgow, we **must** bear in mind, that noble ideals, with strong political commitments, do not mean much, if not supported, with new financial resources.
- COP 26, therefore, should result in ambitious and **actionable** commitments.
- Suriname calls on developed countries, to **recommit** to the 100 **billion US** dollars per year, to support developing countries, as agreed in the 2015 Paris Agreement.
- In this regard, I stress **the** importance of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) and the need, to support its activities, aimed at protecting the Amazon rainforest and its **biodiversity**.

Mr. President,

- One year ago, the new government of Suriname, under my leadership, took office, and had to deal with several financial and economic challenges.
- **Amidst** the **climate change** challenges, and the COVID-19 pandemic, my country is also confronted with a **challenging** fiscal choice, between servicing, **an** increased sovereign debt, **or** to spend **more** in health, education, and the livelihoods of our citizens.
- In order, to get the tremendous foreign debt under control and make our economy healthy again, **my country** had decided, to develop a comprehensive recovery plan, which at staff level, has been approved by the IMF, **and** we look forward to **Board Level** approval as soon as possible.
- Suriname, is also at the **cusp**, of **attracting** substantial foreign direct investments, particularly in the **extractive** industry, agriculture and tourism.
- For this purpose, the enabling environment, is being prepared, including the development of a local content policy **and** a new investment code, to facilitate **these** investments.
- Therefore, I am inviting **the** international business community, to invest in my beautiful country and contribute, to sustainable development and the **earmarked** transition towards a green economy.

In closing Mr. President,

- I stand here, at the stronghold of **multilateralism** and **international** solidarity, and **call** on **all** of us, to play our part in moving our words into action.
- We need a new **more agile, equitable** and effective multilateralism, based on the new realities, the world is facing today.
- One that is efficient, with collective leadership, a solution-oriented approach, and serving the needs of all countries.

Mr. President,

Distinguished leaders,

- It is our obligation, as leaders of today, to build a better world and planet, for those living today, but more so, for those generations still to come.

I thank you. May God bless you.
