Statement to be delivered by the His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, at the High-level Meeting to Commemorate and Promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

New York, 28 September 2021

Mr. President,

I thank you for convening this High-level Meeting to Commemorate and Promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. I welcome the opportunity to engage in frank discussions on this critical issue.

Mr. President,

Nuclear disarmament was the subject of the very first resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1946. Yet seventy-five years later, progress in achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world remains markedly slow.

I have taken note of a recent disconcerting report that, in January 2020, nuclear states possessed more than ten thousand nuclear warheads, and that a significant number of these are kept in a state of high operational alert, ready to be launched in minutes. This means that significant resources are being invested in maintaining nuclear weaponry while poverty, hunger and want are still to be overcome.

Mr. President,

I am convinced that the multidimensional impacts of the present COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic should force a rethink of the way we have been approaching the disarmament agenda, especially given the nexus between peace and sustainable development. We simply cannot continue to expend large amounts of resources on the instruments of war while many around the world are in dire need of support to advance implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We must increase our advocacy for a redirection of the resources from the maintenance of nuclear artillery towards development activities.

Mr. President,
We must not forget the devastation visited on our planet by the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki seventy-six years ago. These are glaring reminders of the human suffering that nuclear weapons are capable of causing and of the potential havoc they can cause on the environment.

Against this backdrop, Guyana hopes that this year’s commemoration of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, could serve to bolster commitment to the eradication of nuclear weapons so that the world is never forced to relive the horror of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

**Mr. President,**

The entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) on 22nd of January was a watershed moment for the disarmament agenda. There is now a legally binding international agreement that comprehensively prohibits the development, testing, manufacturing, production, acquisition, possession, stockpiling, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under *any* circumstances. We have now closed the legal gap which previously existed in the international disarmament regime. Guyana is proud to have contributed to this historic achievement.

While the entry into force of the TPNW is a step in the right direction, its intended legal effect is undermined when one considers that no Nuclear Weapon State has signed, let alone, ratified the Treaty.

Of equal concern is the non-entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty twenty-five years after it was opened for signature.

My appeal, then, is to those States whose ratifications are required for the CTBT’s entry into force as well as to all UN Member States who have neither signed nor ratified the TPNW. International peace and security depend on a strong disarmament regime and the cooperation of all Member States is critical.

Allow me to conclude, **Mr. President,** by reiterating Guyana’s full commitment to this end.

I thank you.