

Presentation by the Hon. Dr. Barton Scotland, O.R., C.C.H., M.P., Speaker of the National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana and Head of the Delegation to the 137th Assembly of the Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU)

Honourable President of our proceedings

Distinguished Colleagues, Presidents and Speakers of our respective National Assemblies

Presidents of the (IPU)

Esteemed Secretary General of the Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU)

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a distinct honour for me to be a participant in this signal event and to speak to you as Head of the Delegation of Guyana. Let me firstly express our appreciation to our hosts, the Russian Federation, for the excellent arrangements which have been made for our stay here. We are a new Member of the (IPU). Our Membership is less than a year old and I embrace the opportunity so to speak, to introduce our country Guyana to this gathering.

Our country, Guyana, rests on the North East Shoulder of South America. Our neighbours are Suriname to the East, Venezuela to the West and Brazil to the South. The northern extremities of Guyana are washed by the waters of the Atlantic Ocean. It holds an area of 216,000 square kilometres and a population of 770, 000 souls made up of several ethnicities. Guyana has been called the land of six peoples, and over the years a seventh has emerged. The presence of so many ethnicities provides both challenges and opportunities for the continuous creation of structures which can contribute to harmonious living. In this regard, Mr President, the theme of our Debate: *Promoting Cultural Pluralism and Peace through Inter-faith Dialogue* is most apposite. With your leave, Madame President, the Leader of Government Business in the Parliament of Guyana, the First Vice President and Prime Minister, Hon. Moses Veerasammy Nagamootoo will speak to this reality in Guyana at a later opportunity.