

**Remarks by Asiskumar Gajadien, Parliamentarian of the National Assembly of Republic Suriname,
on the occasion of the thematic Debate of the 144th IPU Assembly: *"Getting to zero: Mobilizing
parliaments to act on climate change"*.**

20-24 March 2022, Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia

Madam Chair,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

Let me, on behalf of the National Assembly of Republic of Suriname and my delegation express my appreciation to the People and Parliament of Indonesia and the IPU for the warm welcome and for hosting this in-person meeting in Nusa Dua, Bali under challenging circumstances.

Furthermore, I wish to extend our heartiest congratulations to Madam Chair on your well-deserved election as Chair of the 144th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly.

Madam Chair, Distinguished Colleagues,

The world has not completely defeated the COVID-19 pandemic. Climate Change remains the biggest challenge the world has to deal with. The impacts of Climate Change could eventually eclipse the current crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In recent months we have witnessed the impacts of Climate Change, such as deadly flooding's, widespread forest fires and huge rises in global temperature.

On top of this, the world is facing the Russian-Ukraine crisis with rising tensions and far reaching consequences for the world economy and its people.

Our thoughts are with the victims of the Russian-Ukraine crisis and we welcome all initiatives that meet regional realities to have real negotiations for a possible peace agreement and especially to adapt the proposed resolution in our assembly which expresses the voices of many here and the ones we represent to stop the war.

We are also thankful for the opportunity to make a contribution to the theme of the meeting which is well-chosen and timely, as Climate Change becomes more and more concerning.

We concur with this forum to underline the importance of this theme: how our parliament mobilizes the awareness on climate change worldwide and its challenges due to the fact that Suriname is a huge risk area for the effects of climate change.

In this regard we recall with pleasure the Regional Seminar on Climate Change and Disaster Risk reduction for Parliaments of the Caribbean. This seminar was jointly organized by the National Assembly of Suriname and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in November 2018. The Seminar addressed the challenges posed by climate change and the role that parliamentarians can play to address the issue, especially in the Caribbean region. We adopted the Paramaribo Declaration on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction and requested the IPU to bring our conclusions and recommendations to the attention of the global parliamentary community at the 140th IPU Assembly in Doha.

Since Parliament has an important role to play in everything that has to do with Climate Change plans and Climate Change legislation, allow me to present an overview about the way in which the parliament of Suriname deals with this climate change issue in our diverse, peaceful and colorful Republic of Suriname in South America.

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.

For those who are not very familiar with my country, Suriname is the greenest country on Earth and is home to:

- 550,000 inhabitants;
- A wide ethnic and cultural diversity;
- 10 Forest dependent tribes;
- Over 200 forest dependent communities;
- 14.8 million hectares of tropical rainforest, which means 12.9 hectares of forest per capita, and 10% of the world's river freshwater.

Suriname is a carbon negative society, storing 11 Gigatons and absorbing more than 8 million tons of forest carbon every year.

This means that with such a service of carbon storage and annual carbon absorption, Suriname is providing a key ecosystem service to the planet and the global community.

However, due to Climate Change, we have now become one of the most vulnerable countries insignificant stores of gold, oil and other valuable minerals. In Suriname changes in rainfall patterns and rising temperatures are leading to:

- Increased health risks and associated costs;

- Decrease in hydropower production;
- Reduced access of river pathways.

Distinguished colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Various research have shown that Suriname is a high risk country for climate change, especially when it comes to sea level rising. We all are aware that sea level rising is one of the main consequences of climate change, due to the rise of the temperature on earth which will cause certain loss of all living beings on this earth. To make Suriname resilient for the effects of climate change different kind of projects and programs have been developed with the aim as is mentioned below:

- Sustainable restoration and protection of the banks and the coast by constructing dikes and planting mangroves;
- Risk management for natural disasters;
- Strategic approach to of potential threats to on people and nature, such as local storms, floods and drought;
- Man-made disaster management, such as transport and storage of chemicals, explosives and radioactive materials;
- Water- and waste management;
- Managing the spread of dangerous diseases and plagues.

For these initiatives the Parliament organized workshops to inform parliamentarians about the developments and challenges of climate change in Suriname, regarding:

- The effects of climate change on specific sectors, such as agriculture, fishery and similar authorities to ensure food security and food safety;
- Create public awareness on climate change and environment;
- Concrete possibilities for adjustments in short, medium and long term;
- Commit to the Paris agreement to reduce CO2 emissions;
- Cost aspects of adaptation as mitigation;
- Recent international developments and scientific information on climate change, the role of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN-FCCC) and the Sendai framework for disaster risk management 2015-2030.

The National Institute for Environment and Development in Suriname (NIMOS) conducts research related to environmental issues in Suriname and helps to reduce and prevent pollution in cooperation with the Health Care Office (BOG) and local governments (DC's). Suriname has committed to various environmental treaties and has approved the environmental framework law in 2020.

At the national level Parliamentarians could consider holding special sessions to assess progress in the implementation of the developments and challenges of climate change in Suriname.

The Inter Development Bank (IDB) has also published a report in July 2021: "*The state of the climate report: Suriname*", which indicates that several factors contribute to Suriname's particular vulnerability with reference to the effects of climate change (<https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/State-of-the-Climate-Report-Suriname-Summary-for-Policy-Makers.pdf>).

What Suriname does to prevent disasters caused by climate change?

- Part of the Climate Treaty is about protection of the Surinamese forest which absorbs a large amount of the CO₂ emissions. In the environmental framework, law has been established in the sense that no mangrove must be felled and instructions about where no land should be issued;
- Projects are carried out under the REDD+ program such as preserving the forest that absorbs CO₂ emissions for which Suriname must receive payment from abroad;
- The foundation for Forest Management and Forest Supervision (SBB) has set up a biodiversity monitoring system together with the foundation Center for Agricultural Research in Suriname (CELOS) and the National herbarium. The aim of this system is to collect reliable information to map the growing degradation of the mangrove ecosystems by setting up permanent sampling plots all along the coast;
- One of the obligations of the Climate Treaty (Paris Agreement) is to report regularly about activities that Suriname has taken on upon climate change. Within the Third

National Communication project there will be a greenhouse effect evaluation in different sectors. The evaluation must ensure that appropriate measures, where necessary, are taken.

- The effects of sea level rising due to climate change in Suriname are studied by experts and scientists, founding Mangrove forum Suriname (MaFoSur) and the University of Suriname who will propose adaption measures to the government.
- With the support of different climate projects all the districts of Suriname have developed a contingency plan. Training has been provided to enhance the Early Flood Warning System and Disaster Response Mechanism.

It's crucial for our parliamentarians to tackle the issues in these areas and to take actions, particularly in terms of legislation.

We do need to change our behavior and act now for we don't have another planet to live on. We should work together, to deliver for the People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships. It's not only about us, but it's more about the coming generations.

Thank You.