

Statement by Mr. Asiskumar Gajadien, Head of delegation of Republic of Suriname for
IPU Assembly, Kigali Rwanda, 11-15 October 2022

General debate theme: **“Gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments as drivers of change for a more resilient and peaceful world”**

Madam President of the 145th IPU assembly,
President of the IPU,
Secretary General,
Secretary of the Assembly,
Excellencies,
dear colleagues,
ladies and gentleman,
Good afternoon

Madam President,

There are many examples in the world that prove that gender equality can lead to ensured stability, progress and long-term development of nations. Democratic process demands the participation of all citizens, therefore anno 2022 we need more gender equality and gender sensitive based parliaments. The contribution of women in Parliament can improve political outcomes, as they are key actors in promoting economic and development growth.

We acknowledge that obstacles for gender equality are mostly due to difference in culture, religion and political systems. To achieve gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments, there is a need to improve women’s rights, their political participation and to change political systems, especially when nominating candidates for national elections.

To eradicate gender inequality, we need to :

- create awareness amongst young women for their role and the impact they have in policy making processes. We should also create awareness among all actors directly and indirectly involved in these processes to support women in politics;
- adopt legislation on quota based on gender equality;
- amend the electoral system to specifically include gender equality in nominating candidates for national elections.

Madam president,

Suriname has made some significant progress on gender equality related to legislative and policymaking achievements over the past decade. From ratification of major human rights conventions, such as the CEDAW, to processing recommendations of the Gender Legislation Committee to amend national legislation.

In 2019, Labor laws have been amended to strengthen the maternity rights of women, but also added paternity leave in order to support women during and after childbirth and to emphasize the role of the father in the family.

We are currently debating stronger legislation against violence against women and sexual harassment of women in society. It is expected to pass parliament this month.

In collaboration with the UN (UNIFEM), the National Bureau for Gender Policy of the Ministry of Home Affairs has implemented several national and regional programs to promote gender equity and equality. Numerous training on the subject of gender, gender planning, gender analysis and gender mainstreaming and skills training (networking, lobby, negotiations) have been organized for government high level officials, as well as for political parties (supported by UNDP).

In 2010, only 10% of the seats in parliament were held by women. After this The National Assembly of Suriname initiated an awareness project called “more women in political decision making” for women in political parties, to include more women as candidates on their lists of nominees. After the last national elections of 2020, about 30% of seats in Parliament are now held by women, which is also the percentage of women ministers now in government. According to the national report on the Sustainable Development Goals in 2022, for the SDG 5 indicator “Seats held by women in national parliament”, Suriname scored “moderately improving”.

We still have a long way to go towards our target of 50%, but seeing the development in our university, where the majority of students are increasingly women, I think that in the near future, the gender policy in Suriname will have to shift to encourage more men in our parliament and in the government.

Suriname attaches great importance to gender equality, as it is fundamentally written in our constitution. No-one is to be discriminated against on the grounds of gender, religion, race, social standing, politics or any matter. Anyone should have equal opportunities to reach their full potential. Empowered women and girls contribute to the health and productivity of their families, communities, and countries, creating a harmonious effect that benefits everyone.

Ongoing projects and programs are being implemented in Suriname for more inclusive and gender-responsive sustainable actions, to ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

We will continue to progress our commitment to remove all economic, social, cultural and political obstacles to women’s active participation in public and private life, such as directed by our constitution.

To conclude, we thank the IPU and we are convinced that together we will make the world a safe and secure place for all by bringing lasting solutions to our common global challenges – whether it is eliminating violence against women and girls, promoting gender equality and health, eliminating poverty, building economies, fighting climate change, or advancing peace and security.

Finally of all, on behalf of my delegation and myself, please allow me to also express our appreciation to the Government of Rwanda for their warm hospitality and excellent preparations made for this Conference.

Thank you.