Hon. Mohabir Anil Nandlall SC MP
Attorney General & Minister of Legal Affairs
Presentation at the 149th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly

"Harnessing science, technology and innovation (STI) for a more peaceful and sustainable future"

No doubt, today, society rotates upon the axis of science, technology and innovation. Almost every conceivable facet of human life is impacted in this regard. Therefore, as one of the most premier decision making fora, it is incumbent upon Parliaments across the globe to harness these concepts for global peace and to advance human progress. The theme of this debate is, therefore, most opportune.

The age of information, communication and technology has transformed the world into a radically different place with unparalleled benefits. Communication is now instantaneous. Physical work has been made appreciably easier and more efficient. Meetings and engagements of almost every conceivable type have become more virtual than in-person. Energy is progressively being produced from renewable and sustainable sources than those that have proven to be environmentally hazardous. Almost every facet of public administration and governance are moving from manual to electronic, data and paper driven processes are now digitised and are becoming paperless. Expensive large military hardware are being replaced by sophisticated and technologically controlled drones with greater efficiency and accuracy. Crucial medical procedures are being replaced by non-invasive laser driven processes with greater clinical successes. And I can go on but I think the point is made.

However, human history has taught us that with benefits come burdens, and, the challenge before us as Parliaments is how to maximise these benefits and minimise the accompanying burdens.

For example, we all know that mechanisation comes at the expense of labour with higher unemployment being the inevitable consequence. Perhaps this is the greatest challenge flowing from the increased use of science and technology. As **Karl Marx** reminds us, labour is not merely a factor of production but the *raison d'être* of production. Therefore, production without labour is a zero sum game.

As we harness the use of science and technology, we have to ensure that we strike that delicate balance because unrestrained, science and technology can render a predominant portion of the human race redundant. This is already happening in the developed world where computers and robots are replacing workers by the thousands. Parliaments, therefore, through laws and policies, must create a regulatory framework that will ensure that this delicate balance is maintained.

No doubt, climate change is upon us. Global warming, rising tides, the increase in hurricanes, tornados and other harsh weather phenomena are no longer matters for conjecture. They are now permanent features of our lives. Therefore, environmental preservation and sustainability are matters of the highest priority - if the lives of future generations are to be secured. It is the duty of our generation to ensure that we leave a safe planet for future generations. While it can be argued that science and technology may have led to the environmental degradation which exists today, we cannot undo what is already done. The least we can do is reduce the degradation. We can use the technological opportunities available to protect and preserve what is left.

My country, Guyana, of 86,000 square miles, is 86% forest. Guyana has the second highest percentage of forest cover on earth and one of the lowest deforestation rates. Our forest stores 19.5 gigatonnes of carbon and sequesters more than 153 million tons annually. Even with our new-found natural resource - oil and gas, it would require less than 20 percent of sequestered carbon to offset our emissions at maximum output. Despite the fact that we have one of the most sustainable forests, we are nevertheless investing heavily in alternative renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, hydro and natural gas. Additionally, we are one of the largest sellers of carbon credits on the world market. In this regard, Guyana presents a model for the global community to emulate.

Another fundamental challenge that arises from the use of science and technology is the use of these facilities by the criminal underworld to perpetrate organised crimes such as terrorism, the financing of terrorism, money laundering, smuggling of firearms and narcotics, etc. In most cases, the level of science and technology employed by criminals is superior to that available to law enforcement agencies, especially in developing and not so developed countries. The result is violence, social chaos and public disorder. In similar vein, cyberspace has become a fertile platform for the commission of crime such as cyberbullying, extortion, incitement, pornography, identity theft, fraud, etc. It is therefore incumbent upon Parliaments to enact laws with harsh penalties to penalise such wanton misuse of science and technology while at the same time preserving civil liberties.

Unless we act on these matters swiftly and condignly, then the burdens of science and technology will quickly outstrip their benefits.