

## **Theme: Upholding Humanitarian Norms and Supporting Humanitarian Action in Times of Crisis**

Madam/Mister President, distinguished Colleagues, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Parliament of the Republic of Suriname, I extend warm appreciation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union for organizing this important and timely debate under this theme.

Suriname is a small country with a large heart — a society built on the foundations of diversity, tolerance, and mutual respect. Our people descend from many origins: our Indigenous communities, the first stewards of our land, and others who arrived as African slaves or as indentured laborers from China, India, and Indonesia. Together, they shaped a nation where cultural diversity is not a challenge, but a cherished strength.

Today, our capital city stands as a living testament to peaceful coexistence — where a mosque and a synagogue rise side by side, and where every faith and ethnicity finds its place. Our Inter-Religious Council, known as IRIS, brings together representatives of all major faiths — Catholics, Muslims, Hindus, and Moravians — to promote dialogue and cooperation between government and civil society.

This is who we are: a country that practices humanitarian values not only in words, but in the way we live together. We often say that Suriname is “our own United Nations.”

Our National Democratic Party, which I represent, is Suriname’s largest multi-ethnic and multi-religious party. And for the first time in our history, it is led by a woman, Her Excellencie Jennifer Geerlings - Simons — who,

in July of this year, became Suriname's first female President. Her election was more than a political milestone; it was a reaffirmation that equality and inclusion are the cornerstones of humanitarian governance. When societies empower women, protect minorities, and give voice to the marginalized, they strengthen peace and resilience from within.

This year, on November 25, Suriname will mark 50 years of independence. While our nation continues to face the challenges of development, harmonious living is not among them. To celebrate and reinforce our unity, the government will launch a National Heritage Month in August 2026 — a platform to showcase our culture, cuisine, and creativity, and to share with the world what humanitarian coexistence can truly look like. I warmly invite all IPU members to visit Suriname and experience firsthand our model of unity in diversity.

Our country has also made significant offshore oil and gas discoveries, with production expected to begin by 2028. We approach this new opportunity with humility and foresight. Our priorities are clear: to strengthen local content, to build strong and transparent institutions, and — above all — to preserve our carbon-negative status of 93 percent forest cover.

Parliaments must ensure that humanitarian assistance is impartial and accessible, that the rule of law prevails even in emergencies, and that social protection systems reach those most in need. Through legislation, budget oversight, and public dialogue, we can turn humanitarian principles into everyday realities.

Madam/ Mister President,

Suriname stands ready to work with all IPU members to strengthen humanitarian action, to promote dialogue among nations and peoples, and to safeguard human dignity everywhere.

Because the true measure of progress is not how much we build, but how deeply we care — for one another, and for the generations yet to come.

I thank you.