

Mr. President of the General Assembly,

Mr. Secretary General of the United Nations,

Excellencies,

On behalf of His Excellency DESIRE DELANO BOUTERSE, President of the Republic of Suriname, I avail myself of this opportunity to extend my congratulations on your election to preside over this 67th Session.

The wealth of experience you bring to this august body will certainly assist you in successfully discharging your duties. We pledge our full support and cooperation.

Allow me to salute your predecessor for his skillful leadership of the 66th Session. We wish him well in his future endeavors.

To Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon we pledge our support for his valuable contribution to advancing the purposes and principles of this organization.

Mr. President,

In his Annual Statement through which the 2013 National Budget was presented last week, the President of Suriname highlighted the strengths, opportunities and challenges we are facing as a young, vibrant member of the international community.

As refiners and exporters of crude oil and its derivatives, as well as producers and exporters of gold, a combination of windfalls in earnings related to the trade of these commodities and the application of prudent fiscal policies, have resulted in a political and economic stable environment.

This stability in turn has become conducive to solid domestic and foreign investments in the more sustainable sectors, in which agriculture and tourism score high. The design and construction of relevant infrastructure demonstrates a potential to put Suriname on the world map as one of the players on the supply side of strategic commodities.

President Bouterse also presented a social package in which education and health care figure prominently. He made the point that strong international ratings are encouraging indicators for investors. However, those citizens of Suriname who lack the right

opportunities will only share in these achievements if the government is able to present them with a package comprising of:

- job oriented education at an academic as well as at a vocational level;
- adequate health services and sport facilities, and;
- the accessibility to potable water, ICT facilities and proper waste disposal.

The challenge of financing such an improved social package makes it necessary to empower our productive- and service sectors by providing funds and 'know how' to our entrepreneurs.

Mr. President,

Suriname as a young nation, is involved in an on-going struggle of decolonization. This process concerns both its structure and mind-set.

Building a nation consisting of half a million people with a bouquet of at least seven different ethnic-cultural traditions originating from the Americas, Africa and Europe, while a considerable part of our population traces back their roots to India, Indonesia, China and the Middle East, constitutes an enormous challenge.

Suriname is known for the presence of a synagogue located next to a mosque in the heart of the capital Paramaribo, while Christian churches co-exist with Hindu temples and places of worship with a strong African affinity.

We are proud to state that we have managed quite well to convert this challenge into a unique and exemplary benefit. We may proudly mention that colonial characteristics of 'divide and rule' are gradually and continuously fading. This process makes place for mutual respect, tolerance and peaceful coexistence to the advantage of all our citizens.

Mr. President,

Suriname as a country has been blessed with an exuberant array of bio-diversity. This splendid gift of the Almighty must be cherished and protected to its fullest extent!

It must be mapped out in a way that allows for a responsible use. The challenge we face is one whereby we must respond to the genuine developmental needs of our people, while we respect and preserve the bio-diversity for future generations, and indeed for humanity!

My country has committed itself to this cause by, among others, creating a Nature Reserve of 1.8 million hectares.

We have accepted the obligation to educate our small gold miners in the use of modern technology that will not only be more lucrative and safe, but also respects the need for a clean environment, allowing for potable water and profitable agriculture. Suriname must remain green and smart!

Mr. President,

Suriname is very much aware of the fact that while we have solid advantages as a nation, we can only survive and prosper with a correct positioning in a world that is becoming more and more interdependent.

Having been blessed with oil reserves, trillions of cubic meters of fossil water reserves, alongside hundreds of rivers, swamps and creeks, arable land and minerals including gold, copper, granite, rare earth and more, Suriname has become a focal point in view of the ever-growing scarcity of these commodities on a global scale.

In order to maintain and enhance our political stability, we must deepen and widen our eco-commercial position and so be able to keep our country and people safe from any outside intervention and interference.

Suriname has engaged in a serious quest to be embedded within the context of its immediate neighbours Guyana, France and Brazil at a bilateral and, whenever possible, a tri-partite level.

Suriname is also a devoted participant in the historic movement of regional integration that is growing in form and substance.

We are active members of UNASUR, the Secretariat of which will be based in Suriname as from July 2013.

We are committed to the creation of CARICOM multinational corporations, giving a more meaningful basis to the single market and economy goals put in place since 2006.

As one of the founding members of CELAC we continue to be dedicated to the integration mechanism of the Americas, remaining committed to the principles and objectives of the Organisation of American States.

Although our region is making enormous stride in furthering democracy and development, we must draw the attention of the international community to the lack of progress in assisting one of the most disadvantaged countries in the Western Hemisphere, namely Haiti.

We call upon the international community to honour its pledges to assist the government and people of Haiti in their efforts in rebuilding their beloved country.

Furthermore, our quest for integration will never be complete if we continue to accept the isolation of our sister nation Cuba as a consequence of the unjustly imposed economic and trade embargo.

Once again, we firmly call for an immediate end to these coercive measures, causing so much suffering to the people of Cuba.

Mr. President,

When Suriname became a Member of the United Nations, thirty-six years ago, we were little aware of its importance in a number of issues not specifically dealing with decolonisation. Now we have grown in understanding. We realize that a proper functioning United Nations, including a democratically based Security Council, has the potential to become the single most important stabilizing factor in a world that moved from bi-polarity to multi-polarity.

In this world of ever shifting economic, political-diplomatic and military powers, this year's themes were adequately chosen.

We specifically want to draw your attention to the need for dialogue in situations of conflict. In our understanding it is not easy for the powers that grew accustomed to controlling third nations, to grasp the full consequence of moving away from dominance and dependence to -- interdependence and the need for dialogue in solving real or alleged conflicts.

Both the United States of America and the Federative Republic of Brazil clearly endorsed this concept in their statements at the opening of our General Debate.

We urge all Member States in general, and the former colonial powers in particular, to accept the new reality of our world by categorically refraining from applying their own standards to judge the outcome of other countries' democratic structures and aspirations, disrespecting the internationally accepted principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of nations all over the world.

It is within this framework that I quote President Bouterse's closing remarks at the presentation of the 2013 National Budget:

(I quote)

“As regards the sovereignty of our beloved Suriname as an independent nation ... Our principle task is none other than to respect and to defend the sovereignty of our nation against all violations and attacks from outside.

Whenever and by whomever our sovereignty is being challenged, our legitimate government has no other duty than to defend and safeguard the entrusted sovereignty of the country.”

(end of quote)

Mr. President,

This organization was built upon the ashes of World War II and we pledged to save successive generations from the scourge of war.

Peaceful settlement of disputes is therefore our only avenue through which we can ensure that this planet will be saved from annihilation. This principled stand must be applied to all areas of conflict, whether it be in the Middle East, Africa, the Americas or anywhere else in the world.

Mr. President,

The target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals is fast approaching.

2015 will be a decisive year when world leaders will gather once again to assess the implementation of the commitments made.

We underscore the importance of creating well-being for all and providing greater opportunities for the vulnerable in our society, by giving full access to quality education at all levels, and affordable and quality healthcare and services, as well as realizing the commitments towards gender equality and the empowerment of women.

It is necessary to increase the ability of women all over the world to bring about change; to ensure that they can exist in an environment free from violence and conducive to their well-being, including access to decent employment, services and housing.

Mr. President,

We acknowledge the global burden and threat of Non-Communicable Diseases.

In moving towards the full implementation of the Political Declaration on NCDs, as well as other commitments made, we stress the importance of multi-sectoral actions, strengthened health systems, the availability of adequate and sustained resources as well as enhanced international cooperation, through effective partnerships.

Suriname has increased its efforts in the fight against these often overlooked silent killers.

Mr. President,

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20, concluded without an agreement on a clear commitment with regard to the financing of sustainable development.

This is a very serious matter, considering the threat of climate change, among others, to a successful outcome of the efforts of small states like Suriname towards achieving sustainable development.

The international community cannot abandon its obligation to provide the necessary means to combat serious consequences of over-consumption, pollution, and carbon emissions, which threaten to undo our own achievements in protecting the environment and securing the well-being of our peoples.

We continue to expect from the United Nations to spearhead the efforts for technical assistance and to advance the continuation of the dialogue.

Mr. President,

Suriname is deeply concerned with regard to the basic premise upon which countries in development are classified in the international financial institutional framework.

Such classification, without due consultation, negatively affects the type and level of assistance that a country can receive from the international financial institutions. We cannot but qualify these decisions as undemocratic, and a virtual punishment of our achievements in improving our social economic situation.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I wish to solemnly declare that Suriname will always put its faith in multilateralism through its unwavering support for the principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter of our United Nations.

I thank you, Mr. President.