



**Statement to be delivered by His Excellency Dr. Mohamed
Irfaan Ali, President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana
at the General Debate of the 78th session of the United
Nations General Assembly**

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*Theme: "Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity:
accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable
Development Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress and
sustainability for all"*

Creating a Just and Equitable World

Mr. President,

Please accept my warm congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly for its 78th session. I assure you of Guyana's full support as you carry out your responsibilities.

I also take this opportunity to express our appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi of Hungary for his leadership as President of the 77th session of the General Assembly.

I join those before me in expressing Guyana's solidarity with the Governments and Peoples of Libya and Morocco in the wake of the recent devastating flood and earthquake.

Mr. President,

The theme for this year's Assembly recognizes the need for us to collectively reset global relationships and imbue them with enhanced trust and solidarity. Only in doing so can we aspire to confront the most pressing challenges of our era:: climate change, conflicts, the energy and food crises and achieving sustainable development.

Climate Change and a balanced approach to net zero

Mr. President

I remain convinced that multilateralism remains the most effective approach to address these challenges, foremost of which is climate change. We are all experiencing its devastating effects. The difference, however, is our capacity to respond.

It is well established that those bearing the brunt of climate phenomena have made virtually no contribution to the current crisis. Small Island Developing and low-lying coastal States like Guyana are among the hardest hit and require adequate financing to address the attendant effects. The commitments by developed countries, including the pledge of US\$100 billion per year, remain unfulfilled. How much longer must developing countries wait for these commitments to be fully delivered?

Though at net zero emissions, Guyana continues to pursue growth premised on a Low Carbon Development Strategy. Our goal is to ensure that our resources are utilized sustainably to foster inclusive and equitable development for our people. As a country with the second highest forest cover per capita in the world, we know the importance of forests in mitigating the effects of climate change at the global level .

Our advocacy in this regard, has resulted in Guyana being issued 33.4 million tons of carbon credits - the first jurisdictional scale programme in the world. Thus far, we have secured 750 million US dollars for the period up to 2030.

Mr. President,

Guyana is committed to a clean energy transition. We are aiming for over 80 percent reliance on renewable energy by 2030.

Technology, capacity and financing are key for developing countries to build the relevant energy mix and the share of renewable energy needed. Guyana is using revenue from oil and gas resources to finance its transition to renewable energy, notwithstanding that we are already at net zero.

Allow me to expound on the critical question of a just, affordable and equitable transition. Bloomberg estimates that **achieving global net zero emissions** by 2050 requires annual investments to more than triple from the 2021 level to 6.7 trillion per year. To limit the rise of global temperature to less than 2 degrees Celsius, the IEA estimates that investment in the **energy sector alone** will have to be increased to approximately 1 trillion per year. At the same time, in developing countries the situation is more frightening with close to 900 million people in the world having no access to electricity.

All of this against the backdrop of a widening financing gap in achieving the SDGs, with **adaptation** alone estimated at 160 – 340 billion by 2030, and 315 to 565 billion by 2050, according to UNEP.

More than 90 countries have committed to net zero emissions. To achieve this, the IEA estimates that by 2050 more than eighty-five percent of buildings must be zero carbon ready, more than 90 percent heavy industrial production must be low emissions and almost 70 percent of electricity will have to come from solar photovoltaic. To put this into context, based on these targets, renewable share in the generation of electricity will have to increase from 29% in 2020 to 88% by 2050. Meanwhile to remove carbon from the atmosphere, the world will need to simultaneously halt deforestation and increase tree cover gain 2 times faster by 2030.

This means by 2050, 7.6 gigatons of Co₂ will have to be captured and stored compared to 0.4 gigatons in 2020.

According to McKinsey and Company it would cost 375 trillion dollars in cumulative spending **on physical assets** to transition to net zero by 2050.

Mr. President, the question is: under these circumstances how realistic is the transition path to net zero?

It is clear that global ambition of net zero by 2050 is not currently realistic, given the cost of transition and the financing commitments thus far.

I say all of this not to reduce ambition but for us to honestly and frankly direct our energies to a more balanced approach towards net zero in a realistic environment. My country, Guyana, is blessed with the best of both worlds, that is, the ability to lead on climate change and with our expansive oil and gas reserves can contribute to the advancement and development of our country and region.

But let me hasten to add, Mr. President, Excellencies, Delegates:

COP 28 will not achieve the desired objectives of definitively putting our planet on a net zero trajectory, if we continue to address this matter in a doctrinarian way, ignoring the current realities. A growth in demand for energy and a significant part of that demand will come from many in the developing world who continue to live in energy poverty. It is also a fact that renewable energy will not meet the growth of demand in the near future. If the debate at COP 28 is framed by two camps: one calling for no cuts in fossil fuel production, including the most polluting form such as coal, and the other saying that the only solution to net zero is an end to fossil fuel production, then we will fail once again to achieve a viable outcome, and not be able to give our world the energy it needs to grow and prosper.

I believe that net zero by 2050 as a target **can only** be achieved by a combination of measures that include: a cut in fossil fuel production; incentivizing the introduction of renewables at scale; exploring advances in technology in using carbon capture and storage; cutting deforestation and land degradation and; introducing measures to curb demand for energy.

As custodians of a rainforest the size of England and Scotland combined, we are of the view that the lack of financing for standing forests suggests they are worth more dead than alive. That is why we support the expansion of financial mechanisms that appropriately value the environmental services provided by forests including through the carbon market.

Sustainable Development

Mr. President,

We are at the midpoint of implementation of the 2030 Agenda – our global blueprint for sustainable and resilient development. Financing is a cornerstone of all efforts to achieve the SDGs and the challenges faced by developing countries, including the funding gaps, which I highlighted in the SDG Summit. Commitments, including that made 50 years ago to provide 0.7 per cent of GNI in ODA, must be fulfilled.

The existing financial architecture is incapable of addressing current global challenges and must be reformed.

In this regard, the early adoption of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index, implementing the measures in the Bridgetown Initiative and addressing liquidity support, private capital, development lending, trade and more inclusive governance of the International Finance Institutions, must form part of the reform agenda.

Food Security

Mr. President,

The world is presently experiencing a global food crisis marked by soaring food prices, heightened food insecurity, and increasing levels of hunger. Conflict, climate change and the effects of the pandemic contribute to this dire state.

Approximately 119 million people in 26 least developed countries faced severe food insecurity since the beginning of 2022. Due to rising food prices and trade restrictions, this situation has worsened.

By 2030, it is estimated that nearly 670 million people, equivalent to 8 per cent of the global population, will suffer from undernourishment.

Global agri-food systems must be urgently transformed to ensure they are more resilient, and that nutritious food is affordable for all.

We also condemn the weaponization of food as an instrument of war.

Health

Mr. President,

Guyana welcomes the convening of the three High-Level meetings on health and the important commitments in the political declarations. But we must together move rapidly to implementation if we are to achieve Universal Health Coverage for all and be adequately prepared for future pandemics.

Guyana has already made tremendous strides on the path to Universal Health Coverage. In so doing, we have increased our health spending by sixty-four percent in the last three years.

Peace and Security

Mr. President,

Global peace is hinged on respect and human dignity. Our work at all levels must advance the dignity and rights of **every person on our planet to create a just, equitable and peaceful world**. We have noted that since the war began in Ukraine more than a year ago the developed world provided a about 220 billion dollars in support to Ukraine. The World Bank added more than \$37.5 billion in emergency financing - almost 260 billion dollars mobilized in less than two years.

On the other hand, aid to the Palestinian people over a period of 26 years – 1994-2020 – amounted to just over 40 billion dollars according to figures compiled by the OECD. Haiti received just over US\$20 billion in aid for reconstruction and development over the past 60 years. African countries were recipients of just over 113 billion dollars for 2015 and 2016 to fight hunger, according to the OECD.

To be clear, Guyana unequivocally supports the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity as enshrined in the UN Charter and remains in full solidarity with the people of Ukraine and what they justly require from the international community. However, I cannot overlook the disparity in the approach to other countries and regions of the world. This must be corrected. Clearly this is a demonstration of an unjust eco-system surrounding and supporting development finance, peace and security. Importantly, it also proves that if truly committed, mechanisms **do** exist to unlock financing at scale.

International Law

Mr. President,

Adherence to the rule of law, including international law, must continue to be the cornerstone of all of our engagements.

This is being undermined by threats and naked acts of aggression against sovereign states and by the perpetuation of old conflicts and disputes between states.

The Russian invasion must end. Greater diplomatic efforts must be made to bring an end to this war.

Mr. President

The ongoing crisis in Haiti is of grave concern. Urgent and decisive action must be taken to secure a comprehensive solution. I commend the offer by the Governments of Kenya and Rwanda to lead the Multinational Force (MNF) in Haiti, as well as the offers by the Bahamas and Jamaica. Guyana is committed to working closely with partners within the UN and CARICOM frameworks to find a long-lasting, stable, and sustainable solution to the Haitian crisis, so that our Haitian brothers and sisters can live in peace and dignity.

Cuba

Mr. President,

The Republic of Cuba has been the object of aggression for more than six decades. We repeat our call for the dismantling of the unacceptable embargo against our sister Caribbean state. The economic and political aggression along with the designation of Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism must come to an end.

Palestine

I also reaffirm Guyana's longstanding solidarity with the Palestinian people and support for their dignified existence in their homeland in accordance with the two-state solution. As Member States of the United Nations, let us do more to move past rhetoric so that the peace process can progress.

Guyana- Venezuela Border Controversy

Mr. President,

When I addressed the Organization of American States last Friday, I recalled to that hemispheric body how Guyana was excluded from the OAS for 25 years from its birth as a nation, on account of a spurious territorial claim to two-thirds of our homeland, by Venezuela. But justice prevailed, and Guyana was ultimately admitted.

It is sad, however, that fifty-seven years after Guyana's Independence we remain threatened. Venezuela's efforts to undermine our freedom, sovereignty and territorial integrity are today before the International Court of Justice, as decided by the UN Secretary General under the Geneva Agreement of 1966.

The ICJ's jurisdiction in the matter has been twice affirmed by the Court. We are confident that Guyana's sovereignty and territorial integrity will **also** be affirmed when the Court issues its final judgement.

I regret to inform you that Venezuela's threats continue. Just last night, Guyana received a very threatening message from Venezuela. It came in the form of a Communique attacking Guyana for putting certain oil blocks in our sovereign waters up for bid.

Guyana considers this a threat to regional and international peace and security, as well as to Guyana's investment partners.

We demand that Venezuela honors its obligation under the Charter to pursue only peaceful means to settle any disputes it may have with Guyana, including adjudication before the International Court of Justice. Allowing the Court to decide would ensure a resolution that is peaceful, equitable and in accordance with international law. Guyana will spare no effort in defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

I express appreciation to every member of the international community that has continued to support Guyana's efforts to preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Guyana's Non-Permanent Seat on the United Nations Security Council (2024- 2025)

Mr. President,

As Guyana takes its place next January as a member of the Security Council, those principles of international law and justice, so prominent in the Charter of this Organisation, shall be our guide.

And so, I express heartfelt gratitude for the overwhelming support of Member States to our candidature to the United Nations Security Council for the 2024-2025 term.

I wish to assure the entire UN membership that Guyana is committed to working with fellow Council members and the wider UN membership to fulfill the mandate of the Security Council.

Security Council Reform

Mr. President,

As I reflect on the state of growing insecurity in the world, let me also reiterate the calls made by CARICOM for the early and urgent reform of the United Nations Security Council to make it more effective and inclusive.

Women and Youth

Mr. President,

The empowerment of women and girls in all spheres of life is a priority of my Government. We have made significant progress in creating an enabling environment to promote their education, financial independence and empowerment. We are committed to ensuring women and youth equal participation in all aspects of public life. Young people are not only tomorrow's promise but must be empowered to participate in today's decision-making.

Mr. President,

September is the month dedicated to Indigenous People in my country. We are aware that globally, Indigenous Peoples are often left behind. Not so in Guyana. My government is investing heavily in Indigenous Peoples' development, ensuring their inclusion and participation in decision-making at all levels. Our land titling program has resulted in Indigenous Peoples obtaining legal ownership of 16.4 percent of Guyana's land mass. In addition to regular government investment, 15 percent of all proceeds from the sale of carbon credits go directly to Indigenous villages to finance their development. Guyana is the first country to implement such an initiative. We are proud of our record and stand ready to share our experiences.

Closing

Mr. President,

Allow me to conclude by renewing Guyana's solidarity with the peoples of the world; our commitment to multilateralism; our readiness to partner with States large and small in the quest for peace and prosperity for all.

I thank you.