



## REPUBLIC OF SURINAME

### **Statement by H.E. Mr. Faizel M. Noersalim, Minister of Home Affairs, at the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Marrakesh, 10 December 2018**

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Mister President,

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Suriname, I wish to express appreciation to the Organization for the excellent arrangements made for this Conference, and to host country Morocco for its kind hospitality.

Migration is a multidimensional reality, with its challenges and benefits. It is therefore crucial to adopt a holistic approach towards migration in order to effectively combat illegal migration. Doing so will improve people's choices and the opportunities to migrate safely and productively.

As a result of this approach, the positive development impact of migration on the migrants and their families will be enhanced in both origin and receiving countries. It provides greater credibility to migration and thereby strengthens trust between countries, which creates a basis for cooperation on further migration options. Countries of origin, transit and destination all have a role to play.

International migration can be effectively addressed through joint concerted efforts and commitments from all countries. The adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration at this Intergovernmental Conference, is therefore testimony that the international community has realized a need for the joint efforts.

This Global Compact represents the first-ever cooperative framework on international migration under the auspices of the United Nations. The Republic of Suriname will make all efforts to implement the agreements as mentioned in this document.

Mister President,

Suriname traditionally has experienced migratory flows. From as early as 1630, people have been migrating to Suriname, either voluntarily or forced. Our population therefore consists of indigenous peoples, tribal communities of African descent, and various other ethnic groups, among others descendants from indentured laborers from India and Java — all expressing and enjoying exceptional tolerance and religious freedom, respecting each other's cultural background, and all of whom are equally entitled and have access to social programs including healthcare and education.

We are indeed proud that our people, coming from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, live in peace and harmony with each other, forging bonds conducive to nation building and working towards the wellbeing of all citizens, young and old.

In a small society, migration can dramatically change the size and the structure of the population in a short period of time. This is the case for international migration but also internal migration. Migration is seen as the "game changer" in demographic developments, the major challenge for sustainable development. The Development Plan 2017-2021 of the Republic of Suriname takes into account the two most fundamental development challenges, namely our small population and the openness of our economy.

It is generally agreed that in the agriculture sector specifically there is an identified need to complement Suriname's labor force with laborers from abroad. Already, a large share of agriculture-field labor is performed by migrants, and the Surinamese Government supports the arrival of even more migrants to meet the labor needs.

The importance of migrants cannot be emphasized enough. Migrants make positive and significant contributions to economic and social development in their host societies and to global wealth creation, through either remittances, investments, innovation, brain gain, transfer of knowledge and technological and financial spillovers.

The perception of migration as a driver for development is still being seen as a new concept. However, for countries with weak institutional and human capacity, migrants can provide these countries with highly qualified and much needed labor force. Therefore, it is important to integrate migration policies into our development strategies, and also take into account the importance of the diaspora and the linkage to migrants.

The Surinamese diaspora plays an important role in the country's ambitions for sustainable development and its members are becoming more important with their contributions to growth in skills, knowledge, trade and investment. Acknowledging that the diaspora is a significant resource for contributing to the economic and social development, the Government passed and promulgated in 2014 a law that specifically aims at facilitating persons of Surinamese origin. This enable them, among others, to obtain a Diaspora Document to travel freely to Suriname with minimal administrative measures.

In the last quarter of 2017 the project "Mapping of the Surinamese Diaspora" was initiated, and we are currently finalizing the "Skills Gap Assessment". By registering Surinamese people who live and work abroad, including their qualities and skills qualifications, we aim to maximize the employability of our diaspora.

Mister President,

Suriname wishes to reaffirm the need to promote and protect effectively the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, regardless of their migration status — especially those of women and children, persons with disabilities and older persons. International migration should be addressed through international, regional and bilateral cooperation and dialogue, and through a comprehensive and balanced approach.

In general, it is important to implement a comprehensive strategy for improving data collection on the movement of migrants, as well as improving the registry system of our nationals residing (legally or not) in other countries and providing them with proper documentation. In this regard, the Surinamese Government has been registering its diaspora through its consular missions since 2014.

We should also address stigmatization and otherwise worsening the vulnerability of migrants. In many parts of the world we are witnessing, with great concern, increasingly xenophobic and racist responses to migrants. We must not forget that in many countries previous migration flows have contributed strongly to their state of development, and as the international community we have to remain determined in rejecting such negative and misinformed rhetoric.

In closing, Mister President, we acknowledge that reasons for migration are manifold and because of the transboundary nature of this phenomenon, international cooperation and understanding remain crucial.

I thank you for your attention.