



STATEMENT

BY

**H.E. S.R. INSANALLY
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
REPUBLIC OF GUYANA**

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Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates

At the outset of my statement I would wish to offer you, Mr. President and our newly appointed Secretary General my warmest congratulations and best wishes for the success of this sixty-second session of the General Assembly which has as its main focus, the impact of climate change on global peace and development.

There is now, as the recently concluded High-Level Meeting has revealed, a greater awareness of these issues and the need to address them with greater urgency. Like the legendary Rip Van Winkle, we appear to have finally awakened from a long and deep slumber to find that the world around us is in serious danger of disintegration

Our environment has become frightening. As a result of the increased consumption of fossil fuels over the past decades, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased by more than twenty-five per cent leading eventually, if unmitigated, to a rise in the earth's temperature in excess of five degrees by the end of the century. This warming is likely to produce an increase in sea-levels by almost two metres. Since one third of the world's population lives close to coastlines, this elevation will have a disastrous impact on living conditions for many millions.

At the same time, the world's forests are said to be vanishing at the rate of fifteen million hectares a year, threatening the loss of almost fifty per cent of forest cover in developing countries. Altogether, these climatic changes will take a heavy toll on the economic and social growth of many countries, through a higher incidence of drought, desertification, flooding and other natural disasters.

The primary responsibility for this environmental degradation has been laid - and quite correctly so - at the door of those developed countries whose industrialization policies and programmes have shown scant regard for the preservation of the global eco-system. By piggy-backing on the natural assets of the developing countries these states have achieved astonishing economic and social progress and created consumerist societies whose appetites for even greater extravagance know no bounds and must be satisfied regardless of the cost.

In the face of mounting evidence that climate change does in fact imperil the earth and its resources, some developed states appear willing to accept - albeit reluctantly - that carbon emissions must be significantly reduced to preserve the ozone layer as a shield from the effects of green-house gases. Even so, they do not seem prepared to accept primary responsibility for protecting the environment. Instead of "common but differentiated responsibility", they speak of "shared responsibility", clearly demanding a greater contribution by developing countries to the campaign against climate change. This demand often becomes a conditionality for any development assistance that they provide.

For many developing countries, which suffer from a chronic lack of resources, this imposition is clearly unequal and unfair. These states which include many in sub-Saharan Africa, small islands in the Caribbean and Pacific and low-lying coastal states like Guyana, are especially vulnerable to climatic changes and consequently disaster prone. The Barbados Action Plan and subsequently the Mauritius Strategy were both devised for the purpose of alleviating the destructive impact of the many natural disasters faced by these disadvantaged countries. However, despite their initial promise, these agreements are yet to yield the measure of assistance needed by small states to overcome the consequences of climate change. Invariably these affected

countries must rely on their own limited resources to protect the environment from harm.

Guyana fully understood and responded to the challenges of climate change when more than a decade ago it made available to the international community almost one million acres of its pristine forest for study of bio-diversity and sustainable development. However, the future of the Iwokrama Rainforest Centre for Conservation and Development is now threatened since financial support from the international community has become increasingly scarce. At the same time, as our President noted at the High-Level event on Climate Change on 24 September, the Kyoto Protocol rewards - quite perversely, I may add - those who burn and pillage their resources but punish others like Guyana who are committed to preserving their standing forests. This inequity should no longer be tolerated.

Very importantly, any post Kyoto Agreement must be endowed with the resources necessary for its full implementation. Development assistance statistics have shown a marked diminution in levels from past years with little promise of any additional or new financing needed for environment-related projects. There therefore needs to be what has been called a Partnership for Additionality which, in return for a commitment by countries to the preservation of the environment will provide adequate and predictable financing to allow them to pursue a path of accelerated and sustainable development. It is high time to honour the commitments given at the Monterrey Conference on the Financing Development.

As a country which is below sea-level, Guyana has been further sensitized to the threat of Climate Change as a result of frequent floods which wreak economic havoc on our coastal population. The last major inundation was

in 2005 when the economic loss suffered was, according to ECLAC's estimate, nearly sixty percent of the country's GDP. Unfortunately for us, the tragedy occurring as it did around the same time of the Tsunami disaster did not feature prominently on the radar screen and therefore received little notice in the international community. However, thanks to the assistance of a few friendly countries and the resilience of our own people, we are on the road to recovery. The experience however impels us to renew our call for the strengthening of multilateral facilities to provide all victims of such natural disasters with prompt and adequate relief.

We have also been alarmed by a recent report of the United Nations Panel on Climate Change which warns against the disastrous effects that global warming is likely to have on our hemisphere, including the probable collapse of the Amazon eco-system within forty years and increased tropical storms in the Caribbean. The Government of Guyana has accordingly formulated an ambitious energy policy aimed at reducing the country's reliance on fossil fuels and developing alternative possibilities such as sugar based ethanol and hydro-power. The name Guyana - a name that means "land of many waters" - is blessed with abundant rivers that can be harnessed to provide power. Equally important, we are committed to a sensible policy of conservation through good practices and the use of energy-saving techniques. In these various ways, we hope to play a meaningful part in the campaign to preserve the earth from the ravages of climate change.

As both the outcome of the High-Level Session and the Statements heard so far in this Assembly, make clear, the battle against Climate Change cannot be won unless a truly global effort is made to save the planet. In the words of my country's national poet (quote: *"All are involved"*)

*This I have learnt:
today a speck;
tomorrow a hero;
hero or monster;
you are consumed!
Like a jig
shakes the loom;
like a web;
is spun the pattern
all are involved!
All are consumed!*

Therefore until all of us - both Governments and peoples - accept in a deep and meaningful way the imperative of prudent environmental management our civilisation - such as we know it - will disappear.

In this new era of globalization, mankind has been made acutely aware of the deep inter-dependence of nations and the concomitant need for cooperation with one another to ensure our common survival. This awareness notwithstanding, many in the developed world, continue to practice their misguided "beggar thy neighbour" policies which effectively preclude developing countries from satisfying the aspirations of their peoples to a better life.

Take for example, the area of trade and economic cooperation, the main pillar on which Globalisation has been built, the developed countries continue to propagate the thesis that free trade will guarantee prosperity for all. The reality is that most countries, such as my own, simply cannot compete successfully in fully liberalised markets unless they are assisted in making a gradual transition. Instead of assistance, however, some of the preferences which we have enjoyed hitherto in some markets are being summarily withdrawn.

Witness the unilateral denunciation last week by the European Union of the Sugar Protocol, a legally binding instrument of indefinite duration, which governs the sugar exports of many African, Caribbean and Pacific countries to Europe. This step comes in the midst of negotiations on this issue and is clearly a sign of bad faith. It has been taken without consultation and contradicts the European Union's own sermons to us on partnership and good governance. As a result of this action thousands of our citizens, especially the rural poor, whose lives depend upon the sugar industry will likely face bitter hardship. It is therefore imperative in negotiating future trade arrangements, including the Doha Round, that due regard be paid to the development challenges of small states.

Similarly, in the area of peace and security there is a blatant disregard of the Rule of law by many states which, in pursuit of their own selfish national interests, do not hesitate to fan the flames of conflict in various parts of the world. As a consequence, millions are forced to endure unspeakable pain and suffering which in today's world of instant communication, we not only hear of but actually see and feel in real time. Our common humanity obliges us to call once again for a return to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and in particular to the peaceful settlement of disputes, whenever and wherever they occur.

In this context, I am pleased to announce that last month, on 20 September, an Arbitral Tribunal of great eminence under the Presidency of Judge Dolliver Nelson, distinguished former President of the ITLOS, sitting pursuant to Annex VII of the Convention, made an Award of the maritime boundary between Guyana and neighbouring Suriname. The President of Guyana described it as "a just and erudite" Award. The President of Suriname called it "fair and equitable." It was a further feather in the crown of international law, a further blow struck

against the resort to force, a further victory for peaceful process under law in the settlement of disputes. Guyana had initiated recourse to the Dispute Settlement provisions of the Convention which, I am happy to recall, was brought into force by our country's Ratification in 1993. Under the aegis of a UN regime created by internationalism and the Rule of International Law our two small countries can now pursue the development of their maritime space without the encumbrance of dispute.

In further demonstration of its own commitment to the United Nations Charter, my Government has placed before the General Assembly an initiative calling for a **New Global Human Order** based on the principles of equity and social justice. It is born of our conviction, that given the failure of our past efforts, the world now needs to formulate a qualitatively different and more holistic strategy leading to a strong political consensus and broad-based partnership to address the agendas for global peace and development. The Resolution before the General Assembly now enjoys the co-sponsorship of forty-nine states and will in time command, we hope the support of the entire international community.

As this new era of globalization unfolds, with its many challenges and opportunities, I invite this august Assembly to support fully our appeal for the firm establishment of a more enlightened and compassionate model of multilateralism as the cornerstone of future international relations.

I thank you.