

## Video-Statement

by His Excellency Runaldo Ronald Venetiaan,

President of the Republic of Suriname on the occasion of the “Summit on Climate Change”, convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, 22 September 2009, United Nations Headquarters, New York

The international community is showing increasing concern for the impact of climate change on the environment, eco-systems, biodiversity, development and sustainable livelihoods of all people of our Planet. This clearly demonstrates that climate change has evolved into a transboundary challenge of unprecedented importance, and has indeed become the defining issue of our time.

There is increasing scientific evidence that anthropogenic activities are the main causes of the deteriorating situation of the global climate. Countless efforts at international, regional, sub-regional and national levels have underscored that if we are to combat and reverse the catastrophic effects of climate change, we must take into account that mitigation and adaptation measures, as well as technology and finance are inextricably interrelated.

The Government of the Republic of Suriname pays tribute to the important leadership role of the United Nations and its specialized organizations and institutions in providing scientific, political and diplomatic guidance to the process of combating climate change. The UN Agenda for climate change has demonstrated that an integrated approach to the role of forests, biodiversity, eco-systems and climate is critical to achieving a comprehensive and effective new climate framework within the context of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in December 2009.

Forests have proven to be invaluable as a habitat for much of our Planet’s biological diversity, they are carbon sinks, they provide myriad ecosystem services, and they support many economic and developmental values. Yet, empirical data from international and regional organizations and institutions show the sad state of the world’s forests, and urgent action is needed to deal more effectively with deforestation and forest degradation.

My country, the Republic of Suriname, is a *High Forest Cover and Low Deforestation Country* and still has large tracts of intact natural forests. Throughout many years, our policy has been to balance development and conservation activities, which has resulted in our current forest cover of over 90% of our territory and a deforestation rate of only 0.02%.

Intact natural forests like ours, serve as a major source for carbon sink within the context of the current global climate regime. But until now, this vital aspect has been largely ignored in the ongoing REDD negotiations. The Republic of Suriname has supported and fully endorses the inclusion of intact forests, as a vast resource for earth’s climate regulation and biodiversity, in a future REDD plus mechanism.

Because of our low-lying coastal area, Suriname will be seriously affected by the rising sea level, one of the negative impacts of climate change. Most of our agricultural lands and economic activities, as well as the majority of our population, are on the strip of land we have utilized along the coast, leaving our abundant forest resources almost untouched. This poses a further developmental challenge for us, one that is in addition to the social and economic needs and priorities we have already identified for our future course.

As a developing country, we believe that for us to both achieve the Millennium Development Goals and deal with the impact of climate change, it is of utmost importance that environmentally sound technology is transferred and that technical and financial support is made available.

Developing countries will require innovative financing urgently to deal with climate change in an effective, fair and balanced manner, if we are to confront what has emerged as a major threat and challenge to our development priorities. I, therefore, call upon the international community, in particular the donors and international financial institutions, to make new and additional financing available in order to support vulnerable developing states to deal with diverse adaptation and mitigation challenges.

The political and diplomatic momentum is obviously present to work together to improve the state of our Planet Earth, to help adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. We, leaders of the global community, have the responsibility to pass on to future generations a healthy planet which provides them with ample opportunities for their prosperity.

While reiterating the threat that climate change poses to the future of humanity and to our Planet as a whole, the Government of the Republic of Suriname wishes to call emphasis to the need for a concerted and comprehensive global response, in a true spirit of commitment and cooperation amongst all nations and peoples. This will have to be reflected in all current and ongoing negotiations on climate change, whilst we take care that the principle of “*common but differentiated responsibilities*” does not merely become a fashionable rhetoric. It is in this spirit that the Government of the Republic of Suriname pledges its commitment to, in the Secretary-General’s words, “*seal the deal*” with an all-encompassing, fair, balanced and effective multilateral agreement.