

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
SURINAME, H.E. RUNALDO RONALD VENETIAAN, AT THE  
OPENING OF THE COUNTRY – LED INITIATIVE (CLI) ON  
“FINANCING FOR SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT IN  
SUPPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS”,  
ON MONDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2008,**

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**EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

IT IS A PLEASURE FOR ME TO WELCOME YOU ALL TO THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME. FOR MANY OF YOU, IT HAS NOT BEEN EASY TO GET HERE, AND WE THUS APPRECIATE IT EVEN MORE TO HAVE YOU HERE AS A PARTICIPANT IN THIS IMPORTANT MEETING. I DO HOPE THAT IN SPITE OF THE BUSY MEETING SCHEDULE, YOU WILL FIND THE TIME TO ENJOY THE BEAUTY OF THE COUNTRY AND THE HOSPITALITY OF OUR PEOPLE.

IN KEEPING WITH OUR STATUS OF REAL CHILDREN OF A TROPICAL RAINFOREST NATION, WE ENDORSE THE GOALS OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FOREST. WE THEREFORE EXPRESS SINCERE APPRECIATION TO THOSE WHO HAVE RECOGNIZED THE GOVERNMENT OF SURINAME AS A SUITABLE PARTNER AND OUR COUNTRY AS A SUITABLE SITE, FOR A MEETING OF SUCH MAGNITUDE AND IMPORTANCE. SURINAME HOSTS THIS COUNTRY-LED INITIATIVE CONFERENCE ON FINANCING MECHANISMS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF FORESTS, IN CLOSE COOPERATION WITH THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS.

AWARE OF THE VALUE OF OUR FORESTS, WE HAVE A LONG HISTORY OF NATURE CONSERVATION. IN THE PAST FIFTY YEARS, WE HAVE MANAGED TO DEVELOP LEGISLATION ON PROTECTED AREAS AND ON SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY. INDEED, WITH A 90% FOREST COVER AND NEGLIGIBLE DEFORESTATION, SURINAME PRIDES ITSELF ON BEING ONE OF THE FEW COUNTRIES ON THIS EARTH WITH AN ABUNDANCE OF PRISTINE STANDING FORESTS.

OUR COMMITMENT TO CONSERVE OUR BIODIVERSITY CULMINATED IN 1996 WITH THE RATIFICATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD), AND THROUGH THE FORMULATION OF A NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY, WHICH IS AN INSTRUMENT FOR THE OVERALL POLICY TO CONSERVE, PROTECT AND SUSTAINABLY DEVELOP BIODIVERSITY AS AN ECONOMIC TOOL. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS STRATEGY AND IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE AMAZON COOPERATION TREATY ORGANIZATION (ACTO), SURINAME HAS NOW STARTED TO LOOK INTO THE POTENTIAL TO DEVELOP AND INCREASE TRADE IN NON-TIMBER FOREST AND OTHER PRODUCTS.

WHILE ON A NATIONAL SCALE WE HAVE BEEN PRUDENT IN PROTECTING OUR BIODIVERSITY THESE PAST FIFTY YEARS, THERE HAVE BEEN DRAMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL DISTURBANCES IN THE WORLD. CLIMATE CHANGE, GROWING POPULATIONS AND INCREASING URBAN SPRAWL HAVE CAUSED SERIOUS LOSSES OF WETLANDS, FORESTS, RIVER FLOODPLAINS, AND MARINE ECOSYSTEMS. AND WITH THESE LOSSES, RESOURCES, WHICH WERE THOUGHT TO BE PLENTIFUL, ARE NOW BEING DEPLETED AT ALARMING RATES. AS FAMINES AND POVERTY INCREASE, THE WORLD HAS FINALLY RECOGNIZED THE ORGANIC LINK BETWEEN PEOPLE AND NATURE; THAT A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT IS ALSO VITAL FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

AS A COUNTRY WITH LARGE TRACTS OF FORESTS STILL INTACT, WE HAVE BECOME EVEN MORE AWARE OF THE ENORMOUS VALUE AND GREAT POTENTIAL OF WHAT WE HAVE, AND OF THE CHALLENGES TO FIND THE BALANCE WE SEEK BETWEEN MEETING THE IMMEDIATE MATERIAL NEEDS OF OUR PEOPLE AND SUSTAINING AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS INDISPENSABLE FOR HEALTHY, LONG-TERM ECONOMIC GROWTH AND HUMAN WELL-BEING.

SURINAME IS ALREADY PROTECTING ABOUT 13% OF ITS TERRITORY. THIS INCLUDES THE 1.6 MILLION HA CENTRAL SURINAME NATURE RESERVE, ONE OF THE LARGEST STRETCHES OF THE MOST PRISTINE TROPICAL RAINFORESTS LEFT ON EARTH. THERE ARE INITIATIVES TO BRING EVEN MORE LAND UNDER OFFICIAL PROTECTION. THE VAST UNDISTURBED AREAS, COVERED BY DENSE FOREST, ARE AT THE VERY HEART OF THE GUAYANA SHIELD, WHICH ACCOUNTS FOR OVER 25 PERCENT OF THE WORLD'S REMAINING TROPICAL RAINFORESTS.

THE GOVERNMENT OF SURINAME BELIEVES THAT OUR FORESTS ARE AMONG OUR MOST IMPORTANT ASSETS AND SHOULD BE UTILIZED TO THE FULLEST POSSIBLE EXTENT TO BOOST NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONTRIBUTE TO ENHANCING HUMAN WELL-BEING. AT THE SAME TIME, WE ARE A MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, AND AS SUCH WE ARE AWARE THAT OUR NATIONAL RESOURCES ARE PART OF THE EARTH'S RESOURCES, AND THAT ADVERSE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS WILL ALWAYS AFFECT US HERE IN SURINAME AS WELL.

SOMETIMES WE CAN HARDLY KEEP UP WITH THE FAST PACE OF NEW INTERNATIONAL TRENDS IN IDEAS AND IDEOLOGIES ON THE IMPORTANCE OF TROPICAL RAINFORESTS FOR THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT. HOWEVER, EVEN WHEN WE MAKE CHOICES IN FAVOR OF OUR OWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, WE ALWAYS ADDRESS THE CONCERNS, WHICH OUR PRIORITIES MAY RAISE ABOUT THEIR LONG-TERM GLOBAL IMPACT.

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

THERE IS A STRANGE PARADOX IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. EVERYONE SINGS OUR PRAISE FOR HAVING MANAGED TO RETAIN OUR FORESTS AND THERE IS INCREASING PRESSURE ON US TO CONSERVE EVEN MORE OF OUR TERRITORY AND TO REFRAIN FROM ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES THAT THREATEN OR HARM OUR FORESTS. YET, THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE ANY MEANS AVAILABLE TO HELP US INVEST IN DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR OWN PEOPLE, WHILE RETAINING THE IMPORTANT FUNCTION AS LUNGS OF THE WORLD. THE GLOBAL PANIC ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IS NOT TRANSLATED INTO COMPARABLE INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO PROVIDE THE RESOURCES TO SUPPORT RAINFOREST NATIONS. IT IS, THEREFORE, TIME AND NO MORE THAN FAIR, THAT A GLOBAL PAYMENT SYSTEM BE DEvised TO COMPENSATE US, FORESTED COUNTRIES, FOR THE ECOLOGICAL SERVICES BEING PROVIDED TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY BY THE FORESTS WE HAVE SO PRUDENTLY MAINTAINED THROUGHOUT THE YEARS.

## **EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

ON A NATIONAL SCALE AS WELL, THE TIME HAS COME FOR US TO FACE CHALLENGES THAT MAY PREVENT US FROM HAVING A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY IN A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT. A NATIONAL LAND USE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IS INDISPENSABLE, IF WE ARE TO FURTHER UTILIZE OUR NATURAL RESOURCES FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR OWN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. SURINAME IS CONVINCED THAT WITHIN OUR OWN BORDERS, THIS WILL HELP US TO DEAL WITH COMPETING CLAIMS FOR LAND, TO FOSTER DIALOGUE AND DECISION-MAKING ON THE LAND RIGHTS ISSUE AND TO DISCUSS AND RESOLVE SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT.

IT IS ALSO AN IMPORTANT TOOL IN DISCUSSIONS WE WILL HAVE WITH OUR NEIGHBOURS, SINCE ECOSYSTEMS AND LANDSCAPES HARDLY EVER COINCIDE WITH POLITICAL BORDERS. THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME BELIEVES IN THE IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDLY AND EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH ALL NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, IN THE PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT OF OUR RESPECTIVE TERRITORIES TO SUSTAIN OUR BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES FOR OURSELVES AND FOR OUR PLANET.

THUS, IT IS WITH MUCH INTEREST THAT WE NOTED THE INITIATIVE TAKEN BY THE PRESIDENT OF BRAZIL TO ESTABLISH A SPECIAL FUND TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE FINANCING OF ITS FORESTS. SURINAME HAS HAD A SIMILAR FINANCING MECHANISM SINCE 2000, NAMELY THE SURINAME CONSERVATION FOUNDATION (SCF), WHICH WAS SET UP WITH TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY, THE SURINAME – NETHERLANDS DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION, CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL, AND UN ORGANIZATIONS LIKE UNDP AND THE UN FUND. THE GOVERNMENT OF SURINAME WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO FACILITATE AN EFFECTIVE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE SURINAME CONSERVATION FOUNDATION AND COMPARABLE FUNDS IN THE REGION.

## **EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

THE FINANCING OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT CONTINUES TO BE A PROMINENT ISSUE ON THE INTERNATIONAL AGENDA AND A CENTRAL ELEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON FORESTS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. WITH THE ADOPTION OF THE LANDMARK “NON-LEGALLY BINDING INSTRUMENT ON ALL TYPES OF FORESTS (NLBI)” IN 2007, DISCUSSIONS HAVE ENTERED A NEW DIMENSION. OUR CHALLENGE NOW IS TO DEVELOP FINANCIAL MECHANISMS TO DELIVER NEW AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES NEEDED FOR A SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INSTRUMENT, TO ACHIEVE THE AGREED GLOBAL OBJECTIVES ON FORESTS BY 2015.

A STRUCTURE MUST BE PUT IN PLACE FOR THE PROTECTION OF FORESTS THROUGH THE GENERATION OF FUNDS THAT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF FORESTED COUNTRIES.

WE, THEREFORE, SUPPORT THE SPECIFIC REQUEST BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC) THAT THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FOREST CONSIDER DEVELOPING A FINANCING MECHANISM BASED ON THE PORTFOLIO APPROACH, WHICH INVOLVES MOBILIZING FUNDS FROM DIVERSE SOURCES TO ENHANCE THE CONTRIBUTION OF FORESTS TO HUMAN WELL-BEING WORLD-WIDE.

WE ALSO URGE THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY NOT ONLY TO RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF PRISTINE FORESTS AS A CARBON SINK, BUT ALSO TO FACILITATE A SYSTEM OF PAYMENT FOR ECOSYSTEM SERVICES RENDERED BY FORESTED COUNTRIES. THE GOVERNMENT OF SURINAME BELIEVES THAT SUCH FINANCING MECHANISMS WOULD BE MOST EFFECTIVE IF THEY PROVIDED INCENTIVES TO GOVERNMENTS FOR CONTINUED IMPLEMENTATION OF A SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT POLICY, AND FACILITATED GROUPS WITH SPECIAL FOREST-RELATED INTERESTS.

**EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

AS WE COMMENCE THIS MEETING, I WISH YOU ALL FRUITFUL DELIBERATIONS. I DO HOPE THAT THIS MEETING OF EXPERTS WILL BE THE LAST CLI-CONFERENCE DISCUSSING THE IMPORTANCE OF FORESTS AND CREATING ALTERNATIVE FUNDING FOR FORESTS. I LOOK FORWARD TO STRONG CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, WHICH WILL INFORM THE UNFF AND OTHER WORLD FORA. THE DECISION TO SAVE OUR PLANET IS SIMPLE. IN CHORUS WITH THE INTEREST OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY, AND IN THEIR BEST TRADITION, COUNTRIES LIKE THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME HAVE MADE THE DECISION TO DELIVER THEIR PART IN THE PROCESS OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT.

THEREFORE, CONFIDENT THAT I SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THE FORESTED NATIONS, I CALL UPON THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY NOT TO BE DAUNTED BY THE COMPLEXITIES OF PROCEDURES AND CALCULATIONS, BUT TO MAKE THE SIMPLE DECISION TO PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FINANCING FOR SUSTAINABLE FOREST POLICY.

THANK YOU.

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