

**STATEMENT BY H.E. RUNALDO RONALD VENETIAAN,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME
AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 63RD SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY,
NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 24TH, 2008**

Mr. President,

Allow me to congratulate you on your election as President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly. I am pleased to see a member of our regional group of Latin America and the Caribbean in this high office. I am convinced that your longstanding diplomatic experience and in-depth knowledge of current international issues will enable you to successfully discharge of the high responsibility of your office.

I would also like to recognize the able stewardship and valuable work of your predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, during the 62nd Session of the General Assembly.

To the Secretary General of the Organization, His Excellency Ban Ki-moon, I pledge Suriname's full support in implementing the resolutions of the United Nations to achieve the objectives of the UN Charter towards sustainable development and international peace and security, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mr. President,

(Global Food and Energy Crises)

We are commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights this year, whilst many of these rights are still under serious pressure. New threats, such as global warming and climate change, and most recently the global food and energy crises, are an infringement on people's rights to food, health, education, security and the overall freedom to live in dignity. These tribulations are intertwined and universal, and thus beyond the control of any single nation. Millions of vulnerable people are, therefore, looking towards the international community - with the United Nations at the helm - for effective measures to bring some kind of relief.

The Economic and Social Council recently recognized the seriousness and complexity of the global food crisis and reiterated that its consequences require a comprehensive response by national governments and the international community. It is essential for us to intensify our combined efforts, and we therefore support the Emergency Global Partnership Plan for Food, called for by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in his address to the General Assembly Meeting on the Global Food and Energy Crises.

The financial and monetary implications of the global crises require substantial political and financial commitments from us all, from national governments, multilateral organizations, including international financial institutions, and from the private sector. We will have to change the way we, human beings, behave towards Mother Nature and we will have to find a solution to policies and regulations which are detrimental to our progress, such as protectionist agricultural policies in developed countries, which are causing low production in the agricultural sectors of many developing countries.

If we do not find lasting solutions now, the costs of our inaction will be unacceptably high and the threats that we will most likely pass on to the next generation, will be devastating.

My country, Suriname, was on the right track towards achieving some of the Millennium Development Goals, including poverty reduction sustained by economic growth rates of over 5% annually in the past three years, and predictions by renowned international financial institutions of 6-7% growth for the coming years. With the current food and energy crises, and the recent outbursts on the financial markets, it has now become a challenge for us to keep up the pace and quality of our development.

My Government has taken action and has already put some measures in place to respond to the new difficulties we are facing because of these external developments. We have expanded social security to the most needy, such as children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, feeding programs for school children, and increased salaries and government pensions, which had weakened as a result of years of inflation. The Government has now called upon the private sector to follow its lead and restore eroded salaries and pensions.

Mr. President,

(Development, Peace and Security in Africa)

Africa, the cradle of mankind, is a continent of immense capability, endowed with indispensable human and natural potential. Paradoxically, in many parts of the continent development is lagging behind or even absent and development perspectives are bleak.

My country commends Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for holding the important “High Level Plenary Meeting on Africa’s Development Needs: State of Implementation of Various

Commitments, Challenges and the Way Forward”, which took place just two days ago. It is our genuine expectation that the outcome of this meeting will steer new and unique opportunities in realizing positive developments and contributions for the development of Africa.

Mr. President,

(Human rights)

Suriname remains committed to the promotion and protection of human rights. My country underscores the principle of equality before the law, and that everyone should be held accountable for his or her actions. It is against this backdrop that Suriname acceded to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court on July 15th of this year. We thus expressed our commitment to fighting the impunity of those engaged in committing gross human rights violations. Providing the Court with its full potential to meet its mandate, however, depends on a joint commitment at the global level.

Mr. President,

(Global Warming, Climate Change, Sustainable Forest Management)

Environmental disturbances are of such magnitude that we can no longer ignore their negative impact on the world’s resources. As a country with 90% of its territory covered by forests, within which one of the largest stretches of pristine tropical rainforests on earth, Suriname is aware of its value and potential to contribute to the global mitigation of climate change, the conservation of biodiversity and the protection of water resources.

However, the contribution of the international community to help preserve and protect these globally valuable resources is not in proportion to the sacrifice by the forested countries. Moreover,

forested countries like Suriname, with very low deforestation rates, are forgotten in mechanisms devised to compensate for deforestation.

Suriname recently hosted the “Country Led Initiative on Financing for Sustainable Forest Management in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests”. During this international dialogue, multiple stakeholders from all over the world came together to develop substantive proposals for the establishment of an international financial framework to assist in future sustainable forest management.

We stress the importance of new financing mechanisms, since good management of forests and other natural resources cannot and should not be at the expense of the development of our own peoples, the peoples of countries, with high forest coverage and low deforestation rates.

We, therefore, look forward to substantial investments to support the sustainable development of these countries.

Mr. President,

(United Nations Reform)

Suriname has supported the restructuring process of the United Nations from the start, with the aim to achieving a more effective and efficient organization that should be better equipped to adequately address old and new challenges. In this process, we expect that the role of the United Nations as a partner in development will gain further relevance and achieve a more coherent and enhanced presence in support of capacity building and sustainable development.

Suriname is currently also engaged in a “One UN Policy” process, through which it responds to the need for coherent involvement of the UN in its development efforts. To this end, Suriname and the

UN agencies signed the Common Country Program Action Plan for the period 2008-2011, which also addresses the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. President,

We have entered an era of growing anxieties and concerns, which go beyond national borders. The contemporary world constellation requires harmonization of the United Nations with current international developments. Suriname believes that the United Nations should be given the tools and instruments to enable the Organization to address global challenges in support of a comprehensive and coherent development agenda, in the interest of all the nations of our world.

I thank you for your attention!