

**Statement by
His Excellency Runaldo Ronald Venetiaan
President of the Republic of Suriname
on the occasion of the General Assembly High Level Event:
Committing to Action: Achieving the Millennium
Development Goals
United Nations Headquarters, New York, 25 September 2008**

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to thank the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary General of the United Nations for convening this very important High Level Meeting on Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, now at the midpoint towards 2015.

Mr. Chairman,

In 2004 Suriname established the national MDG Steering Committee as a national network of governmental and non-state actors, with the task to monitor the implementation of the MDGs in Suriname. Our first MDG Baseline Report, issued in 2005, indicates that significant progress has been made in several fields. In the health sector for example, the successful implementation of the “Rollback Malaria Program” resulted in a reduction of the malaria incidence and the reduction of malaria mortality to zero in the years 2006, 2007 and 2008 to this day.

Our long-term Development Plan 2006-2011 identifies explicit linkages between effective governance practices and efficient public services, between private sector development and poverty reduction, as a basis for the achievement of the MDGs. In April of this year Suriname started the implementation of the Common Country Program Action Plan for the period 2008-2011, which addresses the pursuit of the MDGs and reflects a number of the national development priorities, in partnership with participating UN agencies.

Given the relatively favourable overall situation of the people of Suriname together with the progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, Suriname could have chosen to present positive progress reports in other Roundtable Meetings. Instead, we decided to come to this meeting and speak on “Climate Change” to express our serious concern, namely the ongoing human behaviour which is threatening the outcome of the efforts of so many countries to bring sustainable development to their people.

While Suriname is prudently developing its natural resources through the exploitation of its minerals and forests, the polluting of the atmosphere by heavy industrialized countries goes on. And together with the pollution, the global warming, the melting down of polar ice, the rising of the sea level continues.

Suriname is deeply concerned about all these developments. Seventy percent of its population lives in the low-lying coastal zone of the country. The World Bank Policy Research Working Paper of February 2007 has listed Suriname in the top ten countries which are most vulnerable to the adverse effects of sea-level rise caused by global warming.

Suriname ratified the United Nations framework Convention on Climate Change in 1997 and has been a party to the Kyoto Protocol since 2006. Prior to the ratification of the UNFCCC, Suriname implemented a Climate Change Program to abate and adapt to the negative effects of climate change and to formulate an effective climate change policy for Suriname.

In compliance with the commitments under the Climate Convention, Suriname has formulated a Climate Change Action Plan containing strong measures to be taken for the mitigation of and the adaptation to climate change.

With a forest cover of 90% and a low deforestation rate Suriname has the highest forest cover in the world. Suriname's forests are great carbon dioxide reservoirs, a service to all mankind. Suriname has a long history of preserving its forests and their rich biodiversity. This has been possible thanks to the sustainable management of its natural resources.

Today Suriname is blessed with a coverage of its territory by tropical rainforest for 90% and protected areas up to 13% of the land.

Recently, from 8-12 September 2008, Suriname hosted a meeting, the Country-Led Initiative (CLI) in preparation of the 8th United Nations Forum on Forests, which will be held in 2009. At the CLI meeting important discussions were held to find a financial mechanism for sustainable forest management. This will certainly serve the world and help to reverse and to mitigate the consequences of climate change.

Mr. Chairman,

In 2000 Suriname ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. A national action plan has been developed as part of a project on sustainable land management.

Suriname also has taken action on persistent organic pollutants, the dumping of waste in its sea area and the regeneration of the ozone layer.

Mr. Chairman,

At the halfway point, we call upon the international community and partners to complement national efforts and accelerate actions to achieve the MDGs by the target date of 2015.

I thank you.