

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW PRESENTATION BY
THE COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA
AT THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM

STATEMENT BY
FOREIGN SECRETARY, MR. CARL B. GREENIDGE
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Excellencies,

The commitment of Guyana to sustainable development is of long vintage. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the SDGs, represents another welcome opportunity for Guyana to consolidate its pursuit of sustainable development.

Already there are SOME IMMEDIATE CERTAINTIES. Progress on goals 15 & 13 has been remarkable, however our social sector-related goals require immediate action for their improvement. The most important goal, as stated earlier, is Goal 4, Quality Education. Work on education reform is being discussed during consultations on the new education strategic plan and Guyana is seeking partnerships to support technical assistance in this sector which will inform budget intervention.

What then are the specific findings of the VNR of Guyana with respect to achievements to date and the challenges which lie before us?

First, let me outline the most significant developments that place Guyana on a positive trajectory of progress:

1. Green Economy Strategy. As previously noted, Guyana has one of the the highest percentages of forest coverage of any country globally. Under the Paris Agreement and in partnership with Norway we have committed to expanding the area of forest to be conserved and to reducing deforestation as a part of our contribution to the mitigation of anthropogenic climate change.
2. Strong Political Will. Successive administrations have provided consistent leadership on matters of sustainable development from the establishment of Iwokrama to pioneering work on REDD-plus. The SDGs have been fully aligned with our national development plan and integrated into the national budgetary process. We consider this a sine qua non for pursuing both ownership and true sustainability of interventions.
3. Inclusion & Social Cohesion. According to our National Poet, Martin Carter, unless "all are involved" and unless all can relate to the SDGs, the plans are unlikely to be as impactful as desired. Our commitment to this is tangibly demonstrated by the involvement and presence here today of Captain Gerry Goveia, Chairman of the PSC & founding member of the Civil Society Forum. The empowerment of women has been a notable area of satisfaction. In fact, we are now faced with the reverse challenge of "male eclipse" where increased attention needs to be paid to the educational performance of our boys.

Second, notwithstanding these laudable achievements, there are several crucial challenges which if not addressed can undermine

overall national progress with respect to the SDGs. The primary areas of concern are as follows:

1. Data. Creating an environment for evidence based decision making is our most critical challenge and an issue with which the Budget Director will treat in greater detail.
2. Education and health. Expanding human capacity is essential to achieving the SDG agenda on the whole. So is reducing the persistently high levels of infant and maternal mortality and improving overall educational outcomes and healthy lifestyles.
3. Infrastructure involves laying the groundwork for stronger geographical linkages and enhanced productive capacity; Enhancing the link between education and employment and education and industry. Access to clean modern reliable energy in this respect is perhaps the single most transformative undertaking for Guyana.
4. Means of Implementation, especially finance and capacity. Needless to say, access to sufficient resources and capacity to facilitate investment in sustainable development has been a perennial challenge. I can easily devote all day to this area but let me emphasize in particular the problem of the continuing use of GDP per capita as the primary measure of development progress, the related complications with graduation from access to concessional resources, the loss of capacity through migration, access to technology and finally, debt sustainability considerations.

On the whole, we consider the VNR Report to be a critical inflection point and exercise in consolidating national progress towards the SDGs. The prospects are promising with continued strong political

leadership and strengthened partnerships for meaningful SDG progress in Guyana in the future.

Guyana is at an exciting juncture of its development. It embarks on an economic future based largely on oil and gas while retaining a strong commitment to a low carbon growth trajectory within a strong governance framework. While committed to resolving those aspects that would in any way detract from our forward movement we are optimistic about the possibilities for progress.

I thank you.