

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

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT BY
HONOURABLE MINISTER OF STATE, MS. DAWN HASTINGS-WILLIAMS
18 JULY, 2019, NEW YORK**

Thank you Madame President,

NareNokonErebenai. I bring you greetings in Akawaio, my native language, from the people of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, including the nine nations of the indigenous peoples. At the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development in 2015, His Excellency, President David Granger committed Guyana to the strong embrace of the Sustainable Development Goals. We are delighted to present Guyana's inaugural Voluntary National Review in honouring that commitment within the context of our Green State Development Strategy – Vision 2040.

Unwavering stewardship of the environment, consistently positive rates of economic growth and promotion of social inclusion and cohesion have contributed to a positive trajectory on several of the SDGs. On the other hand, the VNR exercise has made clear the nature and scale of the considerable challenges to effect transformational change that will require

urgent improvement in education, health, infrastructure, institutional and data systems - all pivotal to ensuring that our hard-won gains are rendered irreversible. While the SDGs are indivisible, advancing reforms to ensure quality education will provide the synergies for the realisation of the Agenda as a whole.

As a teacher for over two decades in my remote village of Kako, significant disparities between the hinterland and the coast was a reality faced each day. For instance, the small population in the hinterland schools does not permit the realisation of the standard teacher-student ratio, leading to multi-grade teaching – a scenario that is unhelpful to both the child and the teacher and, compromises both effective learning and teaching.

The lack of connectivity between the hinterland and coast, and the limited fiscal space, has constrained, to date, the availability of modern technologies in these remote areas. Establishing child-friendly methods and piloting smart classrooms are some of the initiatives being undertaken to address this challenge even as we actively explore options for expanding the number and quality of teachers made available to the hinterland. For this and many other reasons, improving equitable access and inclusive

development across the country, especially the hinterland, is an overarching priority of the national development agenda.

The VNR exercise has allowed us to zero in on the opportunities and challenges before us in ensuring that no one is left behind and I now invite you to take a glimpse of Guyana in a visual presentation which will give you an appreciation of the aspirations of our people. Thereafter our distinguished Foreign Secretary, Mr. Carl Greenidge, will address some of the stand out features of our VNR and the Director of the Office of the Budget, Ms. Sonya Roopnauth, will speak to the integration of the SDGs into the national planning frameworks and the data challenge. We are also supported by our technical team as well the Chairman of the Private Sector Commission of Guyana and Founding Member of the Civil Society Forum – Mr. Gerald Gouveia.

Now, a glimpse of the Land of Many Waters...