

**CLOSING REMARKS BY H.E. DESIRE DELANO BOUTERSE,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME CONFERENCE ON HIGH FOREST LOW DEFORESTATION
CLIMATE FINANCE MOBILIZATION
PARAMARIBO, FEBRUARY 14 2019**

Excellencies,
Delegates,

We have arrived at the end of three days of deliberations, taking in a tremendous amount of information. As all HFLD countries, not just developing countries, we shared our experiences on the many challenges, but also on the great opportunities. Our Speaker of the National Assembly, Mrs. Simons, identified the challenge clearly: financial mechanisms should oblige those who put carbon dioxide in the air to duly compensate those that take carbon dioxide out of the air.

At the Bonn Climate Conference in 2017, Suriname announced its aspirations to maintain its forest coverage at 93% of the land area. I stand here today to reconfirm Suriname's intention to continue on this path.

We are aware that our forests provide significant benefits to the world by storing enormous amounts of carbon. Long before climate change was globally acknowledged, the High Forest Cover Low Deforestation countries were already preserving healthy ecosystems.

This critical role and the contribution of forests are currently recognized across international and multilateral fora and their outcomes. This includes the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030. Unfortunately, the valuable contribution of especially HFLD developing countries to the climate change challenge is not reflected in climate finance. Cooperation amongst these countries is therefore imperative.

When I see the broad participation in this conference of countries and organizations from our own Americas, from Africa and Asia, from international institutions, as well as from the scientific community and civil society, I am confident that we are on the right track.

Delegates,
Suriname was the first country that reserved a vast amount of its land mass –11 percent for conservation purposes, by establishing in 1998 the Central Suriname Nature Reserve.

At the time, Suriname had maneuvered itself into a difficult position. Almost half of our land was handed to logging companies in the early 90s. However, the strategic establishment of the *Central*

Suriname Nature Reserve, with a total area of 1.6 million hectares, put an immediate halt to these activities.

This decision was specifically taken for protection reasons. A decision without even having the foresight of what this Nature Reserve's intrinsic value would be in the years to come.

Now, 20 years later, we owe it to ourselves to evaluate and question the impacts of this decision:

- Are the ecosystems in the Nature Reserve intact or enhanced as originally intended?
- Do the conservation efforts contribute to our economic development?
- Do we invest enough in our own capacity to be a player on the world environment stage?
- Do we make sufficient use of available multilateral funds and financial mechanisms?

And:

- To what extent does our fellow Surinamese man or woman benefit from having a Nature Reserve that comprises 11% of their land?

Regardless of the answers to these questions, we, Suriname's people, know the enormous value that nature means to us. Despite our various religious and cultural backgrounds, nature connects our lives, for cultural traditions, for traditional medicines and even for leisure. Nature connects us here, and connects Suriname with the world.

Financial arguments, however, dictate both international and national affairs. It is therefore important to know what it is one has, how much one is worth. That is why I am pleased with a recent study about the Central Suriname Nature Reserve, which also estimates the financial value of the natural assets. This study proves once again that standing forests are more valuable than logging forests.

Life on our planet depends on healthy ecosystems. Like Suriname, other HFLD countries represented here have vast amounts of intact forests.

For HFLD developing countries, nature and development are intrinsically connected. We are all confronted with the threats from unsustainable activities, while attempting to plan a sustainable development. I believe our challenge is to find a development model that balances our national interests while continuing to deliver eco-services to the world.

Suriname, for its part, will improve its legislation, align the policies to the aspirations and improve our ways.

It is with great satisfaction that I announce that Suriname has deposited the instrument of ratification to the Paris agreement yesterday, 13 February 2019

We look to the international community to assist us with appropriate financial instruments, technology and training, for only together we can attain our common objectives.

It is therefore with great joy that I announce the adoption of ***the Krutu of Paramaribo Joint Declaration on HFLD Climate Finance Mobilization***, yesterday, following in-depth discussions as HFLD developing countries.

The support we have received for organizing this conference is greatly appreciated and will certainly be necessary along the journey ahead of us.

On behalf of the Government of Suriname I wish to express my appreciation to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the UNDP and the local sponsors, and the delegates here as well as virtual participants in the world, for their support in realizing this conference.

The adoption of this document is important to jointly continue our efforts and focus on practical results, as it enables us to increase our cooperation at relevant international and multilateral mechanisms. I look forward to a united voice and innovative models that will shape our mutual interests. Suriname is honored to have received the mandate to bring the HFLD developing countries' effort to the international fora. We take this assignment very seriously and pledge our dedication.

We, as HFLD developing countries, have set ourselves on a new path. We offer to all of our friends and collaborators the *Krutu of Paramaribo* to lead the way.

Before I close allow me to salute the voice of our young people as heard this morning.

Het behoud van onze planeet hangt af van het diepe besef van ons leiderschap dat jongeren de toekomst zijn aan wie wij alle tools moeten bieden om **hun** leiderschaps rol te kunnen innemen. We zijn het aan **hun** en de toekomstige generaties verplicht!

I thank you very much for your attendance in Suriname.

And with that, I hereby formally close this conference.

Thank you.