

Statement by H.E. Winston G. Lackin, Special Envoy of the President of the Republic of Suriname at the High-Level segment of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Bonn, Germany, 15/16 November 2017

**President of COP 23, Prime Minister of Fiji,
His Excellency, Frank Bainimarama
Executive Secretary, Ms. Patricia Espinosa
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First of all, the delegation of the Republic of Suriname wishes to extend its appreciation to the Government and People of Germany for hosting this august meeting as well as to the Secretariat of the UNFCCC for the excellent meeting facilities.

At the outset, also on behalf of the President, People and Government of Suriname, my Delegation wishes to join previous speakers in expressing our deepest sympathy with the families of the victims of the recent natural disasters.

The non-discriminatory nature of the hurricanes, earthquakes and forest fires only confirms that a concerted approach, as foreseen in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, is the most suitable way forward.

Mister President,

Located in South America and part of the Amazon region, Suriname is the most Amazonian country of the Amazon. Because of its forest cover of over 93%, Suriname has been classified by the World Bank as the country with the highest forest cover in the world.

Our forests currently store approximately 219 tons of carbon per hectare. The forests of Suriname stores 12 gigatons of forest carbon per year. My small country was already contributing to climate change mitigation even before the existence of the Climate Change Conventions, and we will continue to do so. Suriname takes pride in being a net-carbon sequestration because of sound forest

management policies that enjoy international acknowledgement; 13% of our territory consists of protected areas and the Central Suriname Nature Reserve, comprising 1.6 million hectares of primary tropical forest, has been placed on the world heritage list.

But at the same time, despite its significant contribution to the world environment, Suriname is also on the Top10 most endangered countries in the world due to sea level rise as a result of Global Warming. The consequences of global warming has a direct health effect and the health of this and our future generations depends on the actions we take now!

We have initiated a mangrove rehabilitation project to protect our low-lying coastline.

We are obliged to assess the necessity for sea defence options to protect our coastal area where we produce our food and where the majority of our people live. Scarce resources are being diverted from health, education and social inclusion programs, to address these urgent climate change challenges that are not of our making.

On another note, small-scale gold mining and logging also present serious challenges to our pursuit for sustainable development in harmony with nature. Suriname's economy relies heavily on the extraction of gold and oil, accounting for approximately 85% of exports and 27% of Government's revenues. The significant drop in international prices for these commodities and the cessation of bauxite and alumina production in Suriname have drastically reduced revenues and national income over the years. Nonetheless, Suriname continues to be classified as a middle-income country by international monetary institutions, which hampers our access to concessional loans and creates unnecessary barriers to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Republic of Suriname is committed to maintaining a forest cover of 93% as stated in the message of the President of Suriname to the President of the COP 23 and I quote:

“I am very proud of the contribution we have made to environmental sustainability in Suriname, and under my stewardship, Suriname is committed to maintain its leadership position as one of the world’s most carbon negative countries. I invite you, to join our efforts to cap our forest cover at 93%.

It is a commitment we make as a nation, meaning in fact an undertaking that will require science a technology, expertise, technical support, and above all, the necessary financial resources and the pollical will of the global community in a durable partnership”.

It is of great importance for the benefit of all mankind to secure the sustainability of our forests and its rich biodiversity. In this regard, it is our firm opinion that the international community has a moral obligation towards Suriname for its contribution to the mitigation of climate change. Financial support and technical assistance in the development of sustainable forest management and climate change resilience will substantially facilitate our efforts.

I thank you.