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REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME, CHANDRIKAPERSAD SANTOKHI

Good afternoon Distinguished Madam Chair,

Distinguished Ministers,

Heads of International and Regional Organizations,

Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor for me, to participate in this gathering of leaders of the Western Hemisphere. I express appreciation to the United States of America for hosting the ninth Summit of the Americas.

As leaders of the Western Hemisphere, we find ourselves at a crucial and opportune moment for reassessing, refocusing and recommitting our endeavors to ensure long term development and prosperity that all peoples of the Americas deserve.

Our societies are being threatened because of a lack of development, lack of education, poverty, inequality in the distribution of wealth and welfare, high debt burden, the exclusion of groups in our societies, the marginalization of segments of our community, unemployment, and also poor leadership. These all threaten the bedrock of our democratic institutions.

The theme for this Summit is indeed timely, given the current state of affairs on our continent, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially the detrimental effects of disinformation like (fake news), a massive economic downturn, increasing inequality, and the impact of the invasion of Russia in Ukraine.

Madam Chair, therefore, ALL countries must participate in hemispheric discussions on all issues and exert all efforts to work collaboratively towards addressing these issues affecting our hemisphere, our nations, and our people. I regret that some of our brothers and sisters are not here today.

And, therefore I call upon all of us, as leaders in government, to engage in meaningful and equitable dialogue to further peaceful coexistence and impactful cooperation in our hemisphere.

Let us commit, to authorize the relevant Inter-American institutions, to start this dialogue so that all countries in our hemisphere can be included in charting the path towards sustainable development for our nations and peoples.

Madam Chair, the impact of the climate crisis inhibits the building of a sustainable and resilient future. As Small Islands Developing and Low-lying Coastal States, we continue to stress the importance of the multidimensional vulnerability index.

Access to concessional funding remains critical. Most importantly, unfair, unrealistic, and counter-productive classification instruments should be reconsidered, because they place countries in a vulnerable and unfavorable position. The result is that many countries are excluded from global and regional financial instruments.

The time to act is now to correct these unfair and counterproductive practices and measures. Our needs, our crisis is immediate and we need ACTION NOW!

Currently, the interior of Suriname is experiencing severe flooding due to persistent and excessive rainfall, and in its wake there is massive destruction of property and livelihoods.

This disaster is in stark contrast to Suriname's commitment to maintain high levels of forest coverage of above 90% and act as an important carbon sink for the world.

In addition, Suriname is one of only three carbon-negative countries in the world and has taken bold steps to identify mitigation and adaptation measures to build resilience and reduce emissions while conserving our biodiversity and strengthening sustainable forest management.

But, how do we implement these measures as our country is faced with immense financial challenges? How do we maintain the demands for a prosperous life for our citizens, if these strategic objectives are not delivering economic prosperity and growth?

Madam Chair, Suriname is at the cusp of attracting substantial foreign direct investments, particularly in the extractive industry.

My Government is determined to create an economy, upon which future generations can build and from which they will derive a steady income. We are ready, we have started our transition to a sustainable economy with a goal 80% green energy by the year 2060.

At the same time, we are aware of the fact, that the onus is on us to make sure that we manage our oil and gas resources responsibly and in an environmental-friendly manner.

In charting the transition, we must recognize that others have gone there before us. They have profited from the earned revenues to develop a modern economy. Let us be fair and give the same opportunity to newcomers like Suriname and Guyana as well. We all will benefit from those efforts.

In this perspective the initiation of having strong cooperation between Brazil, Guyana and Suriname on the Presidential level is very important and there is still room to expand these high-level meetings with other countries.

Madam Chair, we have no choice then to scale up the implementation of the commitments made during previous Summits in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders.

I hope that what we have agreed on, in terms of follow up mechanisms, will be acted upon with sincerity and speed. In this regard, I also refer to the recent and important US-Caribbean dialogue, initiated by Vice-President Kamala Harris.

As the incoming Chairman of the fifteen nations of the Caribbean Community, I also commit to further the dialogue with the leaders of the Western Hemisphere in the pursuit of peace, democracy and the rule of law, as well as to contribute to strengthening a more cooperative, committed and impactful Inter-American multilateralism.

I thank you.

And God Bless You All!