



**Address by His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali,
President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, to the
79th Session of the General Assembly of the United
Nations**

25 September 2024

Mr President,

I congratulate you on your election as President of the 79th Session of the General Assembly. I also thank His Excellency Dennis Francis of Trinidad and Tobago for his presidency of the last session.

Mr President, Excellencies

If it is, we all agree on ending and preventing wars;

If it is, we all agree that the Security Council requires reform;

If it is, we all agree that the international financial system is unfair and unjust to the developing world; and

If it is we all believe in climate, food and energy security; then what is stopping us from acting!

We will all be doomed in the court of conscience for knowing what is right while ignoring what is wrong.

Mr. President

Of the myriad challenges confronting our world, climate change threatens our very existence, adversely affecting development across all countries.

Rising sea levels and temperatures, severe natural disasters, and shifting and extreme weather patterns disrupt agriculture and food security, threaten water supply, and displace communities. These impacts are particularly devastating for small island developing states.

Each year, we make the annual pilgrimage to COP, filled with hope for tangible outcomes. And each year we are regaled with renewed unkept promises.

This cycle of hope followed by disappointment cannot continue if the Sustainable Development Goals are to be met. We must break free from this pattern of empty pledges. We must, unequivocally and immediately, fulfil all pledges for the sake of our planet and the future of all its inhabitants.

Let me tell you about my country, Guyana; a country that is 83,000 square miles, 86 percent of which is tropical forest. Guyana has the second highest percentage forest cover on earth and one of the lowest deforestation rates. Our forest stores 19.5 gigatons of carbon and sequesters 153 million tons annually.

According to WWF, Guyana is one of the world's most important countries for biodiversity density. It straddles two of the richest biodiversity zones, the Guiana Shield and the Amazon. As a country, we are dedicated to the preservation of this vital global asset. I especially salute the Indigenous Peoples of Guyana, the Amerindians, who are the foremost stewards of this great natural heritage. We recognise their leadership and 15% of all revenues earned from carbon sales are directly transferred to our Indigenous communities.

Mr. President

Even with our new-found natural resource - oil and gas, it would require less than 20 percent of sequestered carbon to offset our emissions at maximum output. We have preserved our biodiversity and know its value. We believe it is only fair and just that this global asset be monetized in a fair carbon market.

Today, I am pleased to announce the launch of a Global Biodiversity Alliance. We will convene the first Global Biodiversity Alliance Summit in 2025 which will focus on -

- Creating a market for biodiversity credits,
- Scaling biodiversity conservation debt swaps,
- Accelerating biodiversity bonds,
- Establishing a blueprint for biodiversity taxonomies, and
- Promoting nature positive action

We do not make this announcement by mere words. Guyana is also committed to doubling its protected areas by December 2025 and achieving the global biodiversity target of 30% by 2030.

These are real solutions that Guyana is putting forward to address the global problem of biodiversity loss. We do not lecture; we lead by example without arrogance.

Mr. President,

Alt paragraph - According to the UN Food Security and Nutrition Report, in 2023, an estimated 28.9% of the global population,

2.3billion people were moderately or severely insecure. The primary causes were conflict and insecurity, extreme weather events, including those related to El Niño, and climate change and economic shocks.

To effectively address food insecurity, we must take more concerted action to address its root causes: reducing conflict, mitigating climate change, and enhancing food production and trade in food commodities. By prioritizing peace and climate action, we can create environments where food systems, crops and livelihoods are not threatened by conflict and weather extremes. In turn, enhancing food production and ensuring fair and efficient trade in food commodities can reduce food insecurity. So too, can the full involvement of women and youth.

In Guyana's national agriculture policy, at least 35% of our agro businesses will be owned by women and 60% by young people.

While I have spoken of food insecurity, the global malnutrition rates are also alarming and must be addressed. Nutritious, safe and sufficient food are crucial to a healthy population.

Mr. President

The United Nations must continue to be a beacon of hope amidst a turbulent global environment.

The theme of this year's Assembly – *“Leaving no one behind: acting together for the advancement of peace, sustainable development, and human dignity for present and future generations”* – resonates with the vision set out in the United Nations Charter.

This vision demands decisive action and enlightened multilateralism.

Today, we find ourselves in a world where the quest for peace is met with the defiant echo of conflict, where the promise of sustainable development is eclipsed by the dangerous spectre

of climate change and food insecurity, and where the dignity of millions of people is trampled upon with impunity.

In Ukraine, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a nation are being violated. Yet, decisive action by the United Nations Security Council remains fettered by the veto. Justice demands that we defend the territorial integrity of all States – large, small, powerful and weak.

Equally concerning is the conflict in Sudan which rages on with devastating consequences for the people of that country, including famine and mass displacement. This conflict will continue to undermine efforts to achieve lasting peace and sustainable development.

This Assembly must also condemn the continued oppression and persecution by the Taliban of women and girls in Afghanistan who face, not just lack of access to education and restrictions on

their movements, but now even their voices cannot be heard in public.

Closer to my home, CARICOM has been actively supporting a Haitian-led process for the restoration of democracy, peace and stability in Haiti. We welcome the deployment of the UN authorized Multinational Security Support Mission, led by Kenya, as a crucial step towards stabilizing the security situation. We call on the international community to urgently scale up financing for the MSS and secure its renewed authorization so that the Mission can succeed.

We must also address the dire humanitarian situation where almost half of Haiti's population suffers from acute hunger, mass displacement, and women and girls are enduring brutal violence, including sexual violence.

Guyana is leading CARICOM's efforts in mobilizing humanitarian support for Haiti. Excellencies, I will be reaching out to you for your support. We must stay the course with our Haitian brothers

and sisters in their quest for durable peace and sustainable development. The people of Haiti deserve nothing less.

Mr. President,

Peace, stability and safety are no more imperilled than in Gaza. Guyana reiterates its strong condemnation of the October 7 attacks by Hamas on Israel. However, the collective punishment of an entire population, including the indiscriminate slaughter of civilians, most of whom are women and children, has long gone beyond the realm of self-defence.

As the world watches on helplessly, Israel continues to flout its international obligations, including the orders of the ICJ and successive Security Council resolutions. Instead, the right of self-defence is being used as a weapon of mass extermination, stoking legitimate fears of genocide. No State, large or small, should feel comfortable and safe when such atrocities are allowed to continue with impunity.

The war in Gaza must end now. We reiterate our demand for an immediate ceasefire and the release of all hostages and Palestinians illegally detained.

Mr. President

For more than 75 years the Palestinian people have been denied their inalienable right to self-determination. We must advance the two-State solution as this remains the only viable option for a future where Palestinians and Israelis live in peace and security.

Turning to our brothers and sisters in Cuba, their right to development continues to be stymied by the economic embargo. Guyana renews its call for revocation of the embargo and the removal of Cuba from the list of State sponsors of terrorism.

Mr. President

The United Nations has a special responsibility for the security of small states. Small States look to multilateralism and the rule of international law to protect them from foreign aggression.

Guyana is a small State that has had to contend with aggression from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for all 58 years of our nationhood. International law and its strict application have been our armour and our shield in our determination to protect ourselves from this aggression.

We remind this august Assembly that the border between Guyana and Venezuela was fully, finally and perfectly settled in an 1899 award by an international tribunal. Venezuela was fully represented in that tribunal whose award it proclaimed in its own Congress and welcomed for more than six decades, before reopening the issue on the eve of Guyana's independence, claiming two-thirds of our territory.

This controversy, initiated by Venezuela, was submitted by Guyana to the International Court of Justice (the ICJ) in accordance with a decision of the United Nations Secretary General and consistent with our position to settle this matter by legal and peaceful means.

In 2023, in light of intensified acts of aggression by Venezuela, the ICJ issued provisional measures stating that:

“Pending a final decision in the case, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela shall refrain from taking any action which would modify the situation that currently prevails in the territory in dispute, whereby the Co-operative Republic of Guyana administers and exercises control over that area”.

After years of refusing to participate in the proceedings of the ICJ and stating that it does not recognize the jurisdiction of the Court, the Venezuelan government has now submitted a counter memorial to Guyana’s submission.

We welcome Venezuela’s decision to participate in the Court’s proceedings, and express the hope that Venezuela will accept the decision of the Court, as Guyana has long pledged to do.

I reaffirm Guyana's unwavering commitment to a peaceful resolution of this long-standing controversy in full conformity with international law and the principles set forth in the United Nations Charter.

Mr. President,

Peace, development and human rights are pillars of the United Nations. We all aspire for a form of multilateralism that is equitable, inclusive, and ensures that no one is left behind. Women's participation and leadership in private and public sectors are integral to this.

There is a growing movement in the developing world calling for the democratization of global political and economic relations. The disproportionate concentration of power favours a few powerful nations while marginalizing the voices and concerns of the broader international community.

Developing countries are justly demanding more inclusive and representative decision-making processes in institutions and organs such as the UN Security Council, the World Bank, and the IMF. The World Trade Organization must also be reformed to ensure fairer trade for developing countries. These reforms must go beyond fair representation and ensure that the policies and practices of these institutions align with the developmental needs and aspirations of all countries.

In this emerging global order, we must ensure the United Nations remains at the forefront of global governance. If multilateralism is to trump unilateralism, the UN's role, as the world's foremost multilateral organization, is pivotal. With the necessary resources and resolve, the UN can ensure a future of peace, sustainable development, and human dignity.

The future we seek—a future where no one is left behind—demands courageous action. The UN must fulfil its role as the custodian of greater global peace, the foremost promoter of

sustainable development and an unflinching protector of human rights, human dignity and international law. And since the UN is all of us - this body of Nations, this is a collective responsibility for us all.

Let us not be found wanting. Let us act together, for the advancement of peace, for the achievement of sustainable development, and for the preservation of human dignity, now and for generations to come.

I thank you.