

**Address by**  
**The Honourable Hugh Todd- Minister of Foreign Affairs and International**  
**Cooperation- on the occasion of the**  
**Thirty Eight Session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and**  
**the Caribbean**  
**26-28 October, 2020**

**H.E Rodolfo Solano Quiros- Chair of the 38<sup>th</sup> Session of ECLAC,**

**Ms. Alicia Barcena- Executive Director of ECLAC,**

***Fellow Ministers of Government,***

***Special invitees,***

***Ladies and Gentlemen.***

Please accept my Government's appreciation for the opportunity to be a part of this important gathering, and I look forward to an engaging and thoughtful discourse, as we seek to overcome the peculiar challenges facing our countries, the region and the international community as a whole.

I also wish to express the gratitude of my Government to Executive Secretary, Ms. Alicia Barcena, for the exceptional and relentless work, she continues to undertake to safeguard, the well-being and welfare of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean region.

I am very conscious of the fact that I have assumed the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of my country, at the very moment when the world is undergoing transformative changes at every level, occasioned among other

things, by technological developments, adjustments in the calculus of global power, and vast environmental changes. As if these challenges are not enough, we are now confronted by the forces unleashed by this global pandemic which threaten to accelerate these changes with consequences for the states of the international community, including my own country.

My task, and that of my government is to work with international and regional organizations like ECLAC to ensure that my country is not adversely affected by these developments, but leverage them to advance the nation's sustainable development in collaboration with the global community of nations, and International Development partners.

I am happy therefore to participate in this 38th Session of ECLAC in which we will review economic, social and other developments that are likely to have an impact on member states, among them, the COVID-19 pandemic, and how we can collectively pursue approaches to bolster our development, and in the process ensure the prosperity and good health of our peoples.

The statistics and facts are well known. This terrible disease is reshaping the world as we know it. According to the World Health Organization

(WHO), as of October 23, 2020 the total number of confirmed cases reported globally stood at 41,332,899, with the number of deaths at 1,132,879.

Of that number, the Latin American and Caribbean region had the highest number of cases amounting to 19,174,454. Indeed this paints a horrific picture, but the question remains, how are we going to fight this pandemic?

While all countries, developed and developing, are faced with the same threat from the pandemic, the developing countries in particular, are experiencing increased poverty, inequalities and vulnerabilities in all forms. This pandemic has exposed the fragility of developing nations; the tourist industry upon which many economies of developing countries of the region depend, has been devastated, the underdeveloped health infrastructures and inadequate medical facilities to care for persons affected by COVID-19 have been hard hit, the working class displaced, unemployment is on the rise, and businesses have had to close their doors. Among others, the pandemic has taught us that it cannot be business as usual. We have to respond to the challenges it has thrown up by prudent but robust policies. Difficult as the situation is, we are presented with an opportunity to rethink our approaches and strategies.

The impact of COVID -19 in the Caribbean region in particular, has wreaked havoc on health care systems, supply chains, and on tourism and trade in particular. Another challenge within the Caribbean and the region as a whole, is the procurement of medical supplies to treat our citizens infected with the coronavirus. Within the Caribbean region this pandemic has exacerbated poverty, inequalities and vulnerabilities, while eradicating poverty in all its forms remains the greatest challenge, and an essential requirement for sustainable development.

**Chair,**

The countries of the region, including the Caribbean are in need of the flexibility necessary to accelerate financial and technical support in order to contain the spread of the disease, sustain economic activity, protect jobs and alleviate liquidity constraints. In the context of the pandemic, policies and agreements must serve as a compass to ensure that recovery strategies are in line with medium and long term development.

In this regard, it may be opportune for consideration to be given to novel approaches for Financing for Development, several of which have been advanced at International Fora, such as the **“High-Level Event, (HLE) on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and**

**beyond**”, earlier this year. This is even more imperative, given that several of our countries, by virtue of the skewed criteria used for graduating countries economically, are classified as Middle-Income countries. As you are aware, this inhibits some deserving countries from accessing much needed assistance in the fight to overcome vulnerabilities, and in the process establish their resilience.

With COVID-19 the paradigm has shifted. The region is not only looking at a national or regional crisis— it is faced with the most far-reaching global crisis in history.

Regionally, we have been dealt a devastating blow in all sectors across the region, adversely impacting several of the mainly small and open economies. As regional governments move to stem the tide of this pandemic and counter its short and long-term impact across critical sectors, a multi-sectoral response is needed to meet immediate health and emergency care, and response needs, while ensuring that a social safety net is created to support people, whose income may drastically reduce during this crisis, while we protect the most vulnerable citizens.

This multi-faceted approach will necessitate mitigating shock and support recovery efforts, from a crisis that may further exacerbate and expose the

region's weaknesses, resulting in loss of the gains, of past years, in our quest towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Chair,**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on my country both medically and economically. As a small developing country whose medical systems are still maturing we have suffered many deaths in relation to the size of our population, and increasing numbers of confirmed cases.

The Government of Guyana, is conscious of its responsibilities and obligations to its citizens and the most susceptible in particular, and in this regard, has taken a number of economic and social measures to mitigate the direct impact and devastating effects of this pandemic.

Therefore in battling this pandemic, due consideration must be given to the increased challenges faced by the Latin American and the Caribbean region, in the areas of Climate Change, Environmental Damage, Disaster Risk Management, and Financing for Development, so as to ensure that an effective development response, including non-predatory financing and lending practices to address these effects are implemented. There is also the need for urgent and effective measures to eliminate the use of unilateral coercive economic measures against developing countries.

In conclusion, this is a time for the international community, developed and developing countries alike to demonstrate our capacity to work together, in solidarity, to mitigate the impact of the current pandemic, while at the same time building the resilience that we need to successfully overcome the obstacles to our long-term development.

**I Thank You**

