



STATEMENT

by

Ambassador Miriam Mac Intosh

**Permanent Secretary for Geopolitical Affairs and
International Development Cooperation, on behalf of H.E.
Albert R. Ramdin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International
Business and International Cooperation of the Republic of
Suriname, on the occasion of the 38th Session of the
Economic and Social Commission of Latin America and the
Caribbean**

on the occasion of the 38th Session of the Economic and Social Commission
of Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Virtually

26 September 2020

Please check against delivery

Chair of 38th session of ECLAC, Excellency Rodolfo Solano Quirós
(Minister of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica)
ECLAC Executive Secretary, Alicia Bárcena
Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Head of Delegations,
Permanent Representatives,
Permanent Observers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I express regrets on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation, His Excellency Albert Ramdin, for not attending today's meeting, as he is currently traveling on his way back from Europe.

I furthermore express appreciation for the innovative way in which the ECLAC has dealt with the many challenges in order to virtually convene this session amidst the current COVID-19 pandemic. Special commendations to Alicia Bárcena and the ECLAC team.

Please allow me to also commend the efforts of Cuba as the outgoing Chair.

Mr. Chair,

The Latin American and Caribbean countries have not been spared the health, economic and social consequences of this pandemic.

It has negatively contributed to increasing inequality and loss of productivity and its related spinoffs in our countries. With the realization that solidarity, cooperation and global leadership are even more necessary to face the current crises, this session of ECLAC is timely and instrumental.

We have to admit that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the interdependence between national economies and therefore, multilateralism, global leadership and strong institutions are the best options we have in building a new future aimed at equality and sustainability, while leaving no one behind.

Our society's response will define that we cannot go "back to normal", but we should go to an "improved normal", conscious of the importance of health and sustainable economies in an interdependent world.

In this regard, industrial development and diversification of the economy, based on market demand, technology and comparative advantage, will be a requirement to overcome the inequality in our societies.

Mr. Chair,

I take this opportunity to share information on the COVID-19 situation in Suriname and necessary measures taken by the Government and stakeholders to be able to effectively manage the further spread of this contagious virus.

Suriname diagnosed its first case on March 13, 2020 and, as an immediate response, the Government had taken strict measures such as closing all its borders for regular passenger traffic except for flights for repatriation, closing of schools, introducing a curfew, awareness raising campaigns to alert the public regarding prevention, as well as social protection systems.

As of October 25, yesterday, a cumulative total of 5,170 confirmed cases are reported, which is less than 1% of Suriname's population; under the category of community transmission. Unfortunately there is a loss of 109 persons, which is about 2.1% of the total confirmed cases.

More than two-third of the reported positive cases are in the working class, while the fatality ratio is the highest (more than 50%) in the age groups above 70 years.

Since September the test positivity rate has been declining steadily, with recent ratios of less than 10% in comparison with ratios of more than 30% in its peak months of July and August.

The Government is continuously monitoring, evaluating and adjusting the measures to find the proper balance between the health of the people and the economy. This, despite the national and international financial constraints, in particular high national debt and the challenges in relation to access to concessional financing.

In this context, slowly and cautious reopening of the economy, is well-considered, taking into account the relevant protocols for each sector.

The Government appreciates the solidarity and support it has received thus far from international partners in the field of medical services and technical cooperation to enable all stakeholders to address the COVID-19 situation in Suriname.

Mr. Chair,

Governments are facing challenging times because of the tension between securing health and the recovery of the economy.

The pandemic has exacerbated the existing vulnerabilities and inequalities in small economies affecting mainly: the education system, unemployment rates, violence against women and children, digital limitations for especially the elderly and remote areas.

In October, the Ministry of Education was able to start the new school year, taking into account the international protocols. Innovative solutions were used by the Ministry, teachers and parents to ensure the enjoyment of the right to education.

In closing, Mr. Chair, on behalf of Minister Albert Ramdin, I wish to advise that the Government of Suriname will take the necessary steps to align the results of this session with national policies, towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international commitments. We look forward to successful deliberations.

I thank you.