

Statement by His Excellency Dr, Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana delivered at the First Africa-CARICOM Summit of Heads of State and Government

via Videoconference
7 September 2021

His Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta
His Excellency Gaston Browne, Chair of CARICOM
Colleagues, Excellencies

I am honoured and pleased to be participating in this dialogue this morning.

Africa and the Caribbean are no strangers to each other. As expressed by my colleagues, the bonds that exist between us are based on blood, history, and culture. These ties are strong and enduring. Our regions represent creative and dynamic forces within the international community. As such, there is no reason why we should not initiate greater socio-economic collaboration.

The onus remains on us to forge a path forward based on shared interest and common objectives.

Excellencies,

This historic meeting occurs on the eve of two critical global events – the UN General Assembly and COP26. It is therefore an opportune time for us to determine some common ideas and messages which we wish to convey to the global community.

For us, the global pandemic awakens the harsh reality of the differentiating treatment between the developed and the developing world. It also reemphasises that fundamentally, it is the developing world that suffers the most under these circumstances.

I am therefore of the view that this forged collaboration must address:

1. The Covid19 pandemic and recovery.
2. Climate change, Mitigation, and Adaptation measures.
3. Food security; and
4. Cost of commodities and transportation.

Covid19 pandemic and recovery.

The COVID-19 pandemic and recovery require from us urgent action. In relation to the pandemic, we must have a forceful message on issues relating to rescheduling of loans, debt financing, access to capital in our rebuilding efforts, and an evaluation of the global vaccination system along with its failure to respond to the most vulnerable in the world.

Climate change, Mitigation and adaptation measures.

Climate change is a serious threat which is exacerbated and further weakens us. Developing countries like Guyana and our sister states in the Caribbean and Africa are facing great difficulties. We have not been historically responsible, but we suffer the greatest and are least equipped to respond. Our countries are bearing the brunt of increasing and more intense climate related events. We must, therefore, collectively advocate for greater financial flows to help us adapt to the impacts of the climate emergency including through the establishment of a global vulnerability fund. The largest polluters and developed countries which have already achieved economic diversification by transforming much of their natural assets into commercial activities carry a greater responsibility in this respect.

Here in Guyana, we remove more carbon dioxide than we emit. Something that most countries cannot claim. We therefore believe that we should benefit economically from this service that our forests are providing to the global ecosystem and to this end, we hope the discussions on the rule book under the Paris Agreement will advance at the upcoming COP26.

Guyana's development model is based on its Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS). The strategic outcome of the LCDS is to find a pathway to prosperity and development that is non-polluting. The LCDS aims to transform Guyana's economy to better deliver socio-economic benefits to our people by following a low carbon path while mainstreaming climate resilience, providing a model to the world of how low carbon, low deforestation, climate resilient development can be possible and beneficial for forested countries.

We must also emphasise a compensation system for the blue economy and safeguard the biodiversity.

Food security

The pandemic has reawakened our vulnerability to food supply, the fragility of our markets and sensitivity to price changes. It is therefore essential that issues surrounding food security, supply and availability form an important part of our actionable agenda.

Cost

Our region suffered immensely from the fallout in the rising cost of commodities and transportation services during the pandemic.

We must therefore address these issues through a common theme as we, the developing economies would find it even more difficult to cope with and rebuild post covid. Having regards for all of the above, achieving the SDGs as outlined in agenda 2030 is severely threatened and we must all point this out to the global community.

Guyana looks forward to a sustained and strengthened relationship between the Caribbean and Africa. We pledge our whole-hearted support to ensuring the success of this endeavour.

Africa and the Caribbean are no strangers to each other. We are brothers and sisters. Economic integration must be driven by people, technology, policies and partnership aimed at one objective, the prosperity of all our people.

I thank you.