

**INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF H.E. DESIRÉ DELANO BOUTERSE,
THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME,
DURING THE EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY,
ON 12 AUGUST 2015, PARAMARIBO**

Honorable Chair of the National Assembly, Mrs. Jennifer Geerlings-Simons

[Invited guests...]

Esteemed Members of the National Assembly,

Esteemed invitees,

- Mrs. Jennifer Geerlings-Simons, Chair of the National Assembly
- H.E. Mr. Ashwin Adhin, Vicepresident of the Republic of Suriname
- H.E. Mr. Teodoro Obiang, President, and First Lady of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea
- H.E. Mr. Rafael Correa Delgado, President of the Republic of Ecuador
- H.E. Mr. David Granger, President, and First Lady of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana
- H.E. Mr. Moises Omar Halleslevens Acevedo, Vice President of the Republic of Nicaragua
- H.E. Mr. Salvador Antonio Valdes Mesa, Vice President of the Republic of Cuba
- H.E. Jorge Alberto Arreaza Monserrat, Vice President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela
- H.E. Mr. Irwin LaRocque, Secretary Generaal of CARICOM
- H.E., Mr. Ernesto Samper, Secretary General of UNASUR
- Your Excellencies, Ministers of Foreign Affairs
- Members of the Corps Diplomatique
- Members of the National Assembly
- Dignitaries
- Members of the press
- Ladies and gentlemen

Madame Chair,

Once again - and I speak on behalf of myself and the Vice-president - our heartfelt gratitude for the warm and efficient way in which you and your Assembly have facilitated the transition to the new government.

The atmosphere of cooperation, mutual understanding and critical guidance focused on the national interests, has been highly appreciated. I am convinced that this atmosphere of openness, aimed at offering equal opportunities to all Surinamers, will prevail over the next five years.

Indeed, for the first time in the history of Suriname, we as a people can seize the opportunity to uplift our nation to a threshold of heretofore-unknown prosperity, based on the exploitation of sustainable sectors managed by ourselves.

However, we do not operate alone in this world.

The current international environment within which Suriname coexists, displays an unparalleled intensity in the shifting of political and economic power blocs. The fierceness of these contradictions is often a cause for concern to us. Traditional power blocs that have developed in the course of the past three centuries are having difficulties in adapting to the new reality.

The conflicting powers, old and new, in Europe, the Middle-East, Africa and Asia have often led to bloody wars, conflicts and terror attacks, not only creating many victims, but are also at the roots of the migration of large groups of people to Europe and other parts of the world. This gloomy picture is completed with hereto-unknown natural disasters which also impacted Suriname recently.

Simultaneously we must also acknowledge the fact that the new groupings translated into non-traditional power blocs, such as the BRICS, are creating promising international relations. The emerging international economic models, the availability of technology and science, and increasing participation of peoples in the development of their respective communities, are bearing positive fruits. They have made it possible to effectively fight poverty, to improve on the distribution of public health, to have better and broader-based educational provisions, to make more energy available to people, increase the production of food, and an overall improvement of other forms of state-care. These positive trends signify clear strides towards an improved future.

The paradoxical reality of today's world forces us to remain alert. It should also help us to entertain a more relative view on developments in Suriname. In final analysis, we should consciously take full advantage of these positive reforms and innovations, in the service of the emancipation of our people.

It is indeed very good news that we are part of a region where peace reigns. This region has not experienced any wars in the past decades. South America and the Caribbean have remained free of nuclear weaponry. Our region has strived for peace based on mutual respect, having made the conscious decision to use dialogue and regional consultation as mechanisms for resolving differences and conflicts.

Suriname is convinced that – inasmuch as it rests within our hands – we will ensure that our sister nations in the region depart from the road of hostility and aggression, embracing, instead, the road of dialogue and consensus.

In this line of thought, I wish to congratulate the people of Suriname who for the first time in the country's political history, have chosen to give the mandate of power to a political ideation that views ethnicity as a source of wealth – and not as a basis for divisiveness and weak governments.

This testimony has been a long time coming. It has now taken shape, and I can assure you that it couldn't have come at a better time. It takes center stage with a historical challenge. As a people, we now have the unprecedented opportunity to no longer primarily base our economy on co-profiting from foreign driven investments and/or foreign-based trade and pricing policies, e.g. aluminum, oil and gold, beyond our sphere of influence.

Now is the time for Surinamers – from the public sector, the business sector, the trade unions and the civil society – to closely consult and cooperate in order to develop sectors that can guarantee the sustainability of our economic growth.

It is indeed time for us to do something with the nearly 6000 hectares of farmland, situated right across the bridge from Paramaribo, and that has not been utilized for more than 28 years.

It is about time that we do something with the trillions liters of water reserves, both for our own use and to be exported to the world at large.

The industrial processing of minerals, timber, agricultural and livestock produce, including produce from fishery and aquaculture, must be based, amongst others, on joint ventures between Surinamese entrepreneurs and foreign partners. Priority will be given to partnerships based on South-South cooperation.

When it comes to the availability of technology, special attention will be given to our University and other institutions of education and research. Moreover, we should assess and utilize the potential of persons of Surinamese descent who live abroad and who cherish the desire to face these challenges with us.

The increase of production through small and medium size enterprises will make exporting a necessity. As a consequence, special attention must be given to the availability and quality of services, provided by our ports, airports, banks and insurance firms, while making full use of information technology. Productivity is only feasible through connectivity. Thus, we must remain connected with the world trade systems.

The time has come for a systemic approach to e-Commerce and tourism, making it possible that these sectors increasingly, become a sustainable item in our Gross Domestic Product.

Energy from fossil fuels should be brought in balance with the deliberate development of energy from hydro installations, solar systems and biomass sources. In this regard, the development of energy as an export product is an option that merits careful consideration.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to mention the Surinamese people, and most notably the Surinamese youth as the main factor in guaranteeing sustainable development. Without the self-confidence, based on know-how and purposefulness of action, we stand no chance to succeed.

However, this positive stance in life does not come out of thin air. It is based on the qualitative training and mental and physical education of young Surinamers. This will result in the Surinamese people not only becoming the beneficiaries, but also the driving force behind everything we achieve nationally in the way of a sustainable socio-economic development.

Madame Chair,

The above-described national interests would be incomplete if we do not give proper attention to the natural environment. The aforementioned initiatives can only become sustainable when they are integrated into a well-designed environmental policy and program.

The consequences of climate change should be especially emphasized. Suriname and nine other countries share the assessment of being the most threatened areas for coastal inundation. We must acknowledge this fact and consciously ensure the maximum protection of our coast and our coastal zone, where 80% of our population resides.

We adopt a policy of basing future actions on scientific findings, developed by science centers in Guyana, France, Brazil, and Suriname, all of whom border on the Atlantic Ocean. Their findings will have to be enhanced with the results of international research that become available.

These analyses will serve as a foundation for political and diplomatic decision-making resulting in an up-to-date sub-regional approach to this issue. My government will give special attention to this challenge during our tenure.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to all members of my party, the National Democratic Party, who remain a driving force after the elections of May 25th, 2015.

I also wish to thank the coalition partners that have contributed to the establishment of the coalition agreement, as a starting point for government policies.

I also express thanks to the political parties comprising the opposition, the Surinamese private sector, the Surinamese trade unions, and the civil society for the readiness that they have displayed in advising on measures to be taken in the interest of dealing with the monetary gap.

I wish to thank the First Lady and the rest of my family, who have stood by me in everything we achieved.

Vice-president and ministers, I invite you to join me in accepting the honorable task given by our people to give substance to the message from our national anthem:

Wans ope tata komopo, wi mus seti kondre bun,
(Wherever our forefathers came from, we must organize the country well)

Stree de fu stree, un no sa frede
(Brace ourselves for the struggle, we shall be fearless [because])

Gado, de wi fesi man.
(God is our true leader)

Thank you, Madame Chair.