Fighting COVID-19 Through

Solidarity and Cooperation

Reinforcing Health for All and ensuring vaccine affordability and availability in all regions.

Statement by Dr. Robert Mohamed
Head of the Delegation of the Republic of Suriname
At The 73rd World Health Assembly
Paramaribo, 18 May 2020

President of the World Health Assembly,
Director General of the World Health Organization,
Dear Delegates,

To begin with, I wish to compliment the WHO for organizing this World Health Assembly even at such a critical moment in human history.

The Republic of Suriname mourns for every life lost and expresses condolences to all bereaved families. Around the world we have been pulled together as one and with love and compassion, we fight against COVID-19.

Madam President,

Suriname is considered a country at risk, due to its ‘fragile’ health system. The first confirmed case was announced on the 13th of March 2020. As a result, Suriname immediately took drastic measures by providing community awareness regarding the COVID-19 measures through the media, in all local languages (this included washing hands, the reduction of social gatherings to ten people at a time and social distancing) and later, closing our airspace and borders and introducing a partial lockdown. A coordinated, whole of government approach is being taken as the impact of the disease
is being felt in every sector.

The first COVID-19 related death was reported on the 3rd of April; to date there are 11 confirmed cases with 9 recovered and one death.

Currently there are 576 people in quarantine, mostly repatriated citizens and residents from all over the world. Like many countries, the highest risk to Suriname is from importations.

Despite our challenges, Suriname provided equal access to health services and health products to all, regardless of social or economic standing. The national response on this epidemic, supported by the experiences from other countries and technical support from the PAHO, WHO, CARICOM and CARPHA has been successful.

Madam President,

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of strong and resilient health systems, adequate human resources for health and access to medicines and health technologies, all of which are priority strategic areas in the recently developed Suriname National Strategic Plan for Health and Wellness 2019-2028.

Like other countries, Suriname is calling for equitable access to vaccines and medicines for all persons in all countries once these become available and to be made accessible through tried and proven regional mechanisms like the PAHO Revolving Vaccine and Strategic Funds.

Suriname is working hard to strengthen surveillance systems and improve testing to keep the curve flattened while considering the staggered approach to lessening the public health and social measures to reopen and improve the economy.

Even though, Suriname has succeeded in preventing community spread thus far, there still remain challenges. The Surinamese health capacity is limited; there are a total of 30 ventilators between the five largest hospitals in the country, and we are also experiencing a shortage of PPE.

Suriname will need support in the aftermath of this disease. This includes strengthening our health systems, Human Resources for Health, and rebuilding our economy.

Suriname acknowledges and thanks partners like PAHO and CARPHA for their
technical guidance, support and provision of supplies like test kits and PPE as well as the Governments of China and Cuba for their solidarity and support with supplies and human resources amongst others.

Madam President,

Recalling the Strategic Partnership for Cooperation between the Republic of Suriname and the People’s Republic of China, whereby the Surinamese government reaffirms its adherence to the One-China Principle and reiterates that the government of the People’s Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China.

Therefore, the Republic of Suriname opposes to Taiwan’s participation to the WHA and WHO as an observer.

Thank you.