I salute you all.

Suriname, like many countries, is also in the recovery phase after five covid 19 waves. In the recovery phase, it is noticeable that there are unexpected developments within the health sector. We are currently in the phase of incorporation of all Covid-19 related issues into the regular care. This requires immediate action since there is a serious neglect of mainstream health care.

Hereby I would also like to thank, wholeheartedly several countries that provided Covid related support, in particular Barbados, India, China, Canada, the United States of America, Japan and the Netherlands. Besides these countries I am also very grateful for the support from Paho.

The relationship with the Netherlands, our former mother country, has improved greatly in the past two years. In the field of health care, we have not only received vaccines, medicines, medical teams and oxygen concentrators, but the cabinet is also supported by Dr. Marc Sprenger, the former WHO AMR-director, as an advisor to Suriname. Together with Dr. Marc, we have worked on a National Comprehensive Plan for health reforms, which has been embraced by our President. I feel privileged to emphasize the benefits of such a strategic cooperation with the Netherlands. I call on each country to cooperate and identify strategic partners. Suriname is also prepared to support these partnerships.

Unfortunately, I have to mention a very worrying development in the recovery process: the phenomenon of 'brain drain' has strongly affected Suriname. We observe an increased migration of specialized healthcare workers to other countries where wages and employment conditions are better than in Suriname, because of their economic prosperity. Hence, I advocate for calls for strong adherence to codes of ethics when recruiting specialized health professionals from developing countries. This is jeopardizing seriously the quality of specialized health care in Suriname.

In the past malaria has affected Suriname. Therefore, we hosted an international symposium on Malaria, organized by PAHO/WHO. Several experts from Asian, African and Latin American countries presented their experiences regarding malaria interventions in hard-to-reach and mobile populations. The success of malaria control in Suriname was recognized and emphasized by the participants. If you are interested in malaria control, please have a look at the WHO TDR website

Suriname is currently being ravaged by a natural disaster, possibly related to climate change. Due to the heavy rainfall, rivers are bursting their banks and large parts of our interior must contend with serious
flooding. The health threats are serious, and the situation is being monitored. The latest assessment shows that the flooding has a huge impact on the mental health of the people affected. The government is in contact with the community and the Ministry of Health with assistance from relevant international organizations will try as much as possible to prevent the situation from escalating.

Finally, I wish to emphasize that PAHO is a crucial partner in tackling various health issues in Suriname. We are very grateful to PAHO for this support.

Amar Ramadhin

Minister of Health / Suriname