

DE PRESIDENT VAN DE REPUBLIEK SURINAME | SPEAKING NOTES
Meeting of Presidents of the countries of South America (UNASUR)
Brasilia, 30 May 2023

Your Excellency Luiz Ignácio Lula da Silva,
Colleague Head of States,
Heads of Delegations,
Ministers and delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

I am very pleased to be at this summit with fellow leaders of the South American continent, a continent of great promise and with enormous opportunities.

President Lula,
at the outset permit me to commend you for taking this initiative to convene the South American leaders, here today, in Brasilia.

No doubt, today's gathering and outcome will prove to be historic in many ways.

Colleagues and friends,
this forum provides an excellent opportunity to continue the dialogue on matters of interest to our nations and people and to the world.

We all are keenly aware that the world has changed due to a virus we could not even see; relations between people are different today than before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Inter-state relations have also gone through a process of recalibration; we are experiencing longstanding challenges; new ones have been added since and still today we are grappling with finding the new course.

Indeed, we live in uncertain times.

We don't know the outcome of our actions in the long run.

That creates insecurity at all levels of society and the world, it breeds anxiety.

But it can't remain like that. We all have the obligation to provide certainty and security, a sense of peace and prospect to our people.

This is a responsibility we must take on us.

We owe it to this generation and more so to future generations.

It is in this context that I consider this meeting important.

Colleagues,

South America is a promising region and must play its role in the global economy.

And we must play that role together.

Regional integration and coordination should be advanced as necessary tools to assist us to contribute to our sustainable development goals to achieve that certainty and security.

Therefore, we should create or in this case, re-activate and invigorate existing mechanisms, in particular those mechanisms that have a good track record as it relates to functional cooperation and coordination.

Suriname believes that to start as new, we need to put aside ideological differences and focus on alliances based on our shared commitments and shared values to achieve sustainable development while fostering the resilience of our societies.

So, today, let us acknowledge South America as our place, not only geographically, but with our own identity, and shared destiny.

A region of peace and cooperation where hemispheric and South–South cooperation are of the utmost importance to advance sustainable development.

Mr. President,

Distinguished colleagues,

The world is facing numerous challenges such as climate change, the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity and social and income inequalities.

Add to that the debt crisis in many countries, the inadequate financing for development resources, a global financial architecture that requires revision, the unwanted, but globally impactful war against Ukraine.

Just to focus on one of these issues, climate change or better climate crisis; Suriname is one of the three countries in the world that is carbon negative, which we want to maintain.

Question is: how do we maintain that status in the midst of all the financial and economic challenges.

We need a common view on this topic as well.

The world needs a new paradigm for international relations, our global institutional framework needs to be reframed and possibly repositioned in the global scheme of things.

Colleagues, UNASUR, as an inter-governmental mechanism cannot ignore these important changes in the world, it must in its strategic visioning take those on-board and address them with concrete and measurable plans for a better future in South America.

For this political will is not enough, it will require active leadership and commitment ownership and dedication.

It will require principled commitments to stand together with the other in problems, it will require the commitment to resolve issues through peaceful means, dialogue, diplomacy and negotiations.

While UNASUR was a consensus mechanism dedicated to integration and long-term, economic and social development, we failed this mechanism due to insufficient institution-building, ideological shifts, and lack of consensus.

Let us learn from the past.

A renewed UNASUR will be a collective task, requiring significant institutional and normative changes.

We must ensure that UNASUR is more sustainable, effective, and resilient, and capable of withstanding political and ideological shifts, to guarantee the continuity of integration in the long term.

This is a collective responsibility, in the interest of all of us.

We need to act now, to reform and rebuild.

The collective power of our countries can elevate South America. It must become a single geographic space which is connected with each other and provides an opportunity for our peoples to meet each other and share their stories.

Connectivity by road, sea and air routes is of critical importance.

Suriname and Guyana are in the process of completing the preparations for the building of a bridge over the Corantijn River offering a fixed connection between the two neighbors.

Equally so are there plans for a fixed connection on the other side of Suriname with French Guiana once a bridge is built over the Marowijne River.

Improved connectivity will facilitate economic development, trade and investments.

We already see the benefits of these when Surinamese businessmen import goods from northern Brazil via the road connection to Guyana.

New found natural resources in Suriname and Guyana will undoubtedly pave the way for economic growth in the region and our energy mix and supply will be enhanced, creating more opportunities for complex industries based on cheap energy supply.

UNASUR should champion our peoples' interests and raise the matter of equitable development, peace, global justice, and climate change, at the multilateral and international level.

In closing, I reiterate that Suriname is committed, to working together in the spirit of partnership and that coordination and regional cooperation are necessary elements for a successful South American integration process.

Suriname is formally still a member of UNASUR and supports the revitalization of this regional mechanism, based on a balanced approach.

We noted, the recent ratification by Brazil, and other South American nations of the Constitutive Treaty of UNASUR.

And in this regard, I look forward to the outcomes of this meeting and are ready to support the proposed consensus document.

I Thank you and God bless you all!
