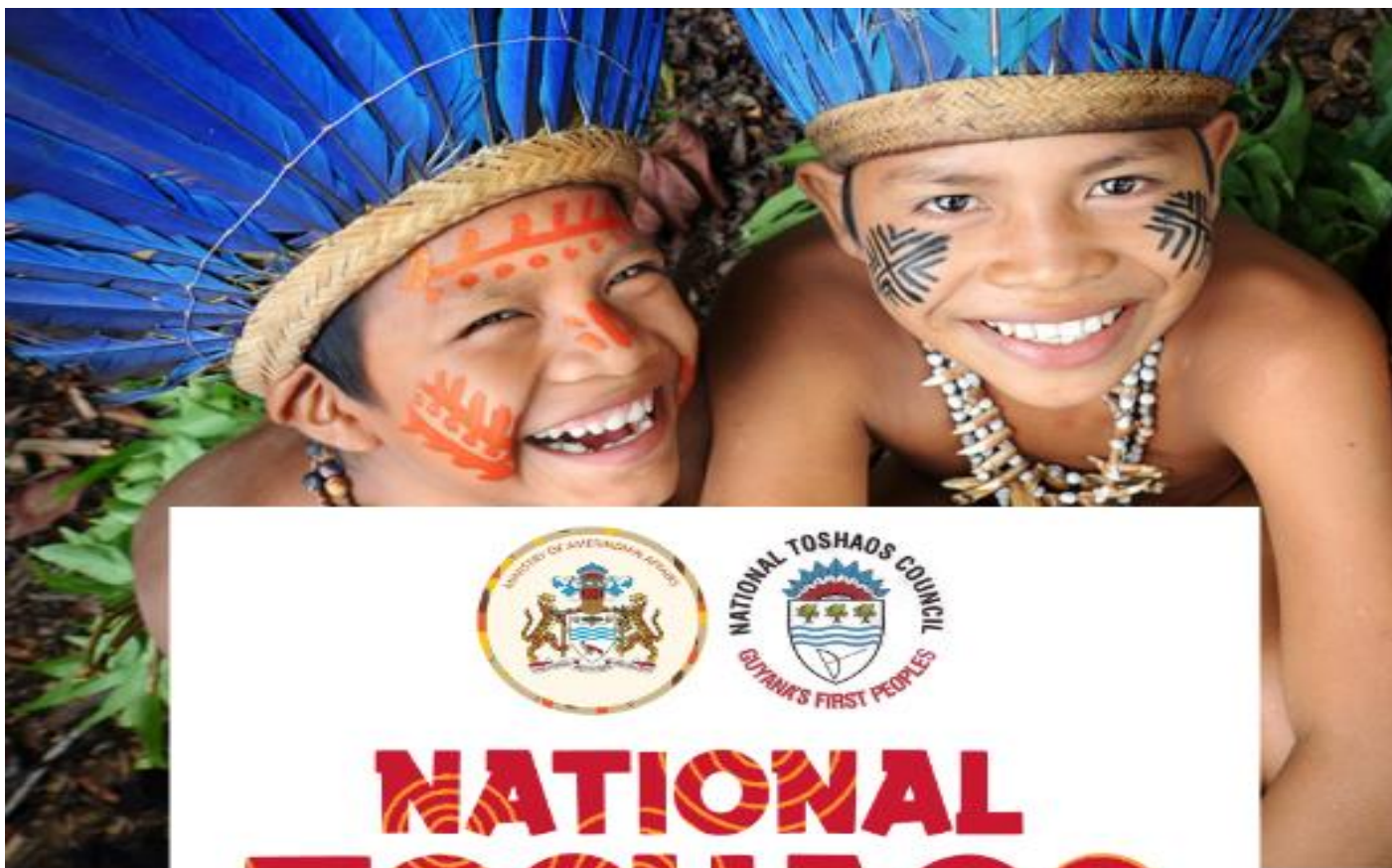




The 14th Annual National Toshaos' Council Conference

REPORT



NATIONAL TOSHAOS COUNCIL CONFERENCE

ARTHUR CHUNG CONFERENCE CENTRE

JULY 11 – 15, 2022

THEME:

**“Good Governance and Fast-tracking
Amerindian Development”**

**COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS BETWEEN THE
MINISTRY OF AMERINDIAN AFFAIRS AND THE NATIONAL TOSHAOS COUNCIL (NTC)**

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronyms and Abbreviations	Meaning
ALT	Amerindian Land Titling
APA	Amerindian Peoples Association
AOAG	Aircraft Owners Association of Guyana
APNU/AFC	A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change
ASDU	Agriculture Sector Development Unit
ATV	All-terrain vehicle
BIT	Board of Industrial Training
BNTF	Basic Needs Trust Fund
CANU	Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCJ	Caribbean Court of Justice
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CDC	Civil Defence Commission
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CEW	Community Enhancement Workers
CSOs	Community Support Officers
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
CSME	CARICOM Single Market and Economy
CTVET	Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualification
CXC	Caribbean Examination Council
CPCE	Cyril Potter College of Education
CHW	Community Health Workers
CIIP	Community Infrastructure Improvement Project
CPG	Community Policing Group
CGX	Canadian oil and Gas Exploration
EU	European Union
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
GLC	Guyana Learning Channel
GMI	Guyana Manganese Inc.
GROW	Get Ready for Opportunities to Work
GRO	General Registrar's Office
GPOC	Guyana Post Office Corporation
GWl	Guyana Water Inc.
GED	General Education Development
GLDA	Guyana Livestock Development Authority

GL&SC	Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission
GPF	Guyana Police Force
GDF	Guyana Defence Force
GTA	Guyana Tourism Authority
GoG	Guyana of Guyana
GRIF	Guyana REDD+ Investment Fund
GPHC	Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation
GGMC	Guyana Geology and Mines Commission
GFC	Guyana Forestry Commission
GEA	Guyana Energy Agency
GPL	Guyana Power and Light Inc.
HECI	Hinterland Electrification Company Inc.
HEP	Hinterland Electrification Programme
HESADP	Hinterland Environmentally Sustainable Agricultural Development Project
ICT	Information and communications technology
IT	Information Technology
ISA	International Solar Alliance
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IACAC	Inter-American Convention Against Corruption
ICU	Intensive Care Unit
IAST	Institute of Applied Science and Technology
IPC	Indigenous Peoples' Commission
JSC	Judicial Service Commission
JP	Justice of the Peace
KM	Kilometres
LCDS	Low Carbon Development Strategy
LED	Light-emitting diode
MOAA	Ministry of Amerindian Affairs
MARAD	Maritime Administration Department
MRV	Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MDOs	Management Development Officers
MMU	Materials Management Unit
NTC	National Toshias Council
NDMA	National Data Management Authority
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NAREI	National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute
NISA	National Intelligence and Security Agency
NCIN	National Security Information Network
NGSA	National Grade Six Assessment
OLP	Office of the Leader of the Opposition

OAS	Organization of American States
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PSAT	Public Service Appellate Tribunal
PSC	Police Service Commission
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Programme
PV	Photovoltaic
REO	Regional Executive Officer
RC	Rural Constable
RCC	Rights of the Child Commission
RDC	Regional Democratic Council
RAID	Rural Agriculture Infrastructure Development
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SLED	Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Development
TAMOG	The Amerindian Action Movement of Guyana
TTC	Trained Teacher Certificate
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAT	Value-Added Tax
XRAY	Electromagnetic Radiation

Table of Contents

Pages

Acronyms and Abbreviations	1-3
Table of Contents	4-5
Introduction	6
Purpose	6
1. Executive Summary.....	6-7
2. Official Opening Ceremony	8
3. Call to Order.....	8
➤ Welcome and Opening Remarks	8
➤ Presentation by Toshao Derrick John, Moraikobai	9-11
➤ Presentation by the Minister of Amerindian Affairs, Ms. Pauline Sukhai.....	12-14
➤ Presentation by His Excellency the President, Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali.....	16-28
➤ Distribution of Land Titles.....	28
➤ Presentation of gift to the President.....	28
➤ Vote of thanks.....	28
➤ Afternoon session.....	28
➤ Presentation by the Vice-President, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo	29-38
➤ Elections of the National Toshao Council Executive Body.....	38-41
➤ Election of the Core Executive of the National Toshaos Council	41
➤ Brief Remarks by Incoming Chairman, Mr. Derrick John.....	41
➤ Presentation on Amerindian Land Titling (ALT) Project.....	41-42
➤ Presentation on the Low Carbon Development Strategy.....	42-45
➤ Adoption of the NTC Agenda.....	45
➤ Conclusion.....	45
4. Day 2 – Tuesday 12th July, 2022 Call to Order.....	46
➤ Sectoral Issues – Dialogue with Cabinet Members.....	46
➤ Presentation by Prime Minister, Hon. Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips.....	46-48
➤ Presentation by Dr. Mahender Sharma, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Guyana Energy Agency (GEA).....	49-53
➤ Presentation by Mr. Christopher Deen, General Manager of the National Data Management Authority (NDMA).....	53-54
➤ Questions and Answers.....	54-58
➤ Presentation by Hon. Priya Manickchand, Minister of Education.....	59-62
➤ Questions and Answers.....	62-67
➤ Presentation by Dr. Frank Anthony. Hon. Minister of Health	68-72
➤ Questions and Answers.....	73-78
➤ Presentation by the Hon. Vickram Bharrat, Minister of Natural Resources.....	78-104
5. Day 3 – 13th July, 2022 Call to Order.....	105
➤ Presentation by the Minister of Housing and Water, Hon. Collin Croal.....	105-109
➤ Presentation by the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Hon. Nigel Dharamlall.....	110-111
➤ Presentation by Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Zulfikar Mustapha	111-114
➤ Presentation by the Minister of Human Services and Social Security, Hon. Vindhya Persaud.....	115-117
➤ Presentation by the Minister of the Public Service, Hon. Sonia Parag.....	117-120
➤ Question and Responses	120-146
➤ His Excellency the President, Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali.....	138-142
➤ Vice-President, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo	143-145

6. Day 4 – Thursday 14th July, 2022 Call to Order	146
➤ His Excellency, the President, Dr. Mohammed Irfaan Ali	146-149
➤ Responses by Toshaos and other Leaders	149-153
➤ <i>See appendix for Resolutions to recognise the NTC as the legal body</i>	150
➤ Response by His Excellency, the President, Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali	154-155
➤ Response by Vice-President, Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo	156-157
➤ Afternoon session	157
➤ NTC 2022 Resolutions	157
➤ (See Appendix for full resolution)	157
➤ (See Appendix for full resolution)	158
➤ Presentation by Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Hon. Oneidge Walrond	158-160
➤ Presentation by the Minister of Labour, Hon. Joseph Hamilton	161-162
➤ Presentation by the Minister of Public Works, Hon. Bishop Edghill	163-165
➤ Presentation by Minister of Home Affairs Hon. Robeson Benn	165-168
➤ Presentation by Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, Hon. Gail Teixeira	168-171
➤ Presentation by Chief Statistician, Ministry of Finance, Mr. Errol La Cruz	172-173
➤ Presentation by Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports Hon. Charles Ramson	174-176
➤ Presentation of Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Corporation, Hon. Hugh Todd	177-178
➤ Questions and Responses	179-190
7. Day 5 – Friday 15th July, 2022 Call to Order	191
➤ Presentation by Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, Hon. Mohabir Anil Nandlall	192-194
➤ Closing Remarks by the Minister of Amerindian Affairs, Hon. Pauline Sukhai	195-202
➤ Presentations by Aircraft Operators - The Minister within the Ministry of Public Works, Mr. Deodat Indar	202
➤ Presentation by Captain Gerald Gouveia Jr., President of Aircraft Owners Association	203
➤ Questions and Answers	204-205
➤ Remarks by Air Services Limited representative Ms. Annette Arjoon-Martins	206
➤ Remarks by Air Services Limited (Guyana) representative Captain Emil Jahan	207
➤ Remarks by Aircraft Owners Association representative Mr. Kit Nascimento	208
➤ Questions and Answers	209-210
➤ Swearing in of Justices of the Peace	210-211
➤ <i>See Appendix for the full list</i>	211
➤ <i>See Appendix for detailed list</i>	211
➤ Presentation by Mr. Budhram, Assistant Commissioner of Police performing the functions of Deputy Commissioner, Operations	212
➤ Presentation by Director, National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA), Col. Omar Khan	213
➤ Questions and Answers	214
➤ Vote of Thanks	214
8. Appendices	215-261
➤ Resolution on the Status of the National Toshaos Council	250
➤ Off-grid Solar PV Mini-grids for Public Buildings in Hinterland Villages	230
➤ Areas in which ICT Hubs had been installed	231
➤ Toshaos sworn in as JPs	255
➤ Toshaos sworn in as Rural Constables 2022 without region 9	256
➤ Resolution of the National Toshao's Council Conference - Guyana's (LCDS) 2030	257-261
9. Agenda	262-267

Introduction

The National Toshias' Council (NTC) Conference was established under the Amerindian Act No.6/2006. The Act:

“...provides for the recognition and protection of collective rights of Amerindian Villages and Communities in Guyana and the promotion of good governance.”

The Conference was held under the theme *Good Governance and Fast-Tracking Amerindian Development* during the period 11th to 15th July, 2022, at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre, Liliendaal, East Coast Demerara. The NTC Conference was a collaborative effort between the Government of Guyana and the National Toshias' Council.

Purpose

The purpose of the Conference was to provide Indigenous leaders with an opportunity to engage in consultative conversation with the Government, to share their village development agendas and priorities, highlight challenges which they faced, make suggestions on the way forward, craft plans and make projections for the development of Indigenous and hinterland communities and villages.

Executive Summary

This summary provides a synopsis of the proceedings of the National Toshias' Council Conference which is authorised under law. The Opening Ceremony of the Conference was attended by the President, Prime Minister, Vice-President, Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Members of Cabinet and Members of Government, dignitaries of the Diplomatic Community, other members of the various government agencies and departments, and a delegation from Belize.

The Conference commenced with a prayer in the Makushi Language followed by remarks by Toshao Derick John of Moraikobai. The formal opening ceremony saw a presentation of cultural items in the form of a dance, a poem and a song which was then followed by brief opening remarks by the Minister of Amerindian Affairs, Ms. Pauline Sukhai.

The Feature Address was delivered to the Conference by His Excellency the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali. This was followed by the handing over of titles for two land extensions and five certificates of titles to Toshias of Amerindian villages.

The afternoon session saw presentations by the Vice-President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo; and the election of the 20-member Executive Council of the NTC. This was followed by the election of the core Executive of the NTC.

The incoming Chairman of the NTC, Mr. Derrick John, delivered brief remarks to the Conference which was followed by presentations on the Amerindian Land Titling (ATL) Project and the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030 and the adoption of the agenda of the National Toshaos' Council Conference.

The second to the fourth day of the NTC Conference saw presentations by the Prime Minister; the Vice-President; Ministers of Education; Health; Natural Resources; Housing and Water; Public Works; Local Government and Regional Development; Agriculture; Tourism, Industry and Commerce; Labour; Human Services and Social Protection; Home Affairs; Parliamentary Affairs and Governance; Legal Affairs; Culture, Youth and Sport; Foreign Affairs and International Corporation; and the Chief Statistician on behalf of the Minister of Finance. The presentations were followed by interactive discussions where issues were highlighted, questions were asked, requests and suggestions were made by Amerindian leaders and commitments were made by Ministers.

On the third day, the President addressed the concerns which were raised by Amerindian leaders during the interactive discussions and made commitments on behalf the Government.

The final day of the NTC Conference concluded with presentations from the Aircraft Owners Association and the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA), and the swearing in of Toshaos as Justices of the Peace (JP) and as Rural Constables (RC).

Official Opening Ceremony

Following the arrival of His Excellency the President, Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali; Prime Minister, Brigadier (Ret'd), Mark Phillips; and Vice-President (VP), Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, the Official Opening Ceremony of the 14th Annual National Toshaos' Council Conference was convened on at 10.14 am on 11th July, 2022, at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre under the theme: *Good Governance and Fast-Tracking Amerindian Development*.

In attendance also were Members of Cabinet, other members of Government, Speaker of the National Assembly, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, other Members of Parliament, and members of the Diplomatic Corp.

Call to Order

A prayer was recited in the Makushi Language by Toshao Grennison Rogers followed by the recital of the National Pledge by all.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

The National Toshaos' Council Conference was called to order by the Mistress of Ceremonies, Ms. Michella Abraham-Ali, who welcomed all attendees. She gave special recognition to the Indigenous Members of Parliament, Members of Government, the outgoing Chairman of the National Toshaos' Council, the outgoing Executive of the NTC, the Toshaos and Senior Councillors from the sub-regions and sub-districts of the over 200 Indigenous villages across the 10 administrative regions. She welcomed, also, members of the various Amerindian groups and associations, special invitees, members of the media, and persons who were tuned in online, on radio and on television.

The Mistress of Ceremonies stated that the NTC was the highest representative body for the Indigenous peoples of Guyana. She noted that, due to the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the NTC Conference had last been convened in 2019. Acknowledging that the 2022 Conference was the first for the President since his assumption to Office, she expressed confidence that the President would address all issues raised at the Conference.

Presentation by Toshao Derrick John, Moraikobai

“Thank you, Madam Chair. His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Republic of Guyana; Hon. Mark Phillips, Prime Minister of Guyana; Hon. Vice-President, Dr. Bharat Jagdeo; Hon. Minister of Amerindian Affairs, Ms. Pauline Sukhai; other members of the Cabinet; members of the Diplomatic Corp; fellow Toshaos and other village representatives; Members of the Opposition; regional representatives; special invitees; ladies and gentlemen, a special good morning and welcome to yet another National Toshaos’ Council Conference 2022.

As the madam had spoken, it was after a break of two years we are here again, not because we did not want to be here, but because we all know that the effect of the global pandemic had disrupted the world. However, we are here today gathered in this building under the theme: *Good Governance and Fast-Tracking Amerindian Development*.

When we look at the theme, I believe it sets the tone for this gathering. Good governance is the key for development. I just want to take this break in trying to define what good governance is. Good governance is the process of measuring how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources. I believe that we cannot see development if we as Indigenous leaders and leaders of all scope do not practice good governance. Good governance is the catalyst for true development. I believe that should be the motto for all of us as Toshaos who are here. This is because we have a limited time in office. Let us use this opportunity to practice good governance as we navigate the rest of our tenure here in office. We were elected just over a year, so we probably have two more years. I believe that all of us have great dreams and great visions for our people.

Our people have confidence in us, our people have invested in us and, as we gather here in these five days, let us make full use of this period that we will be spending here so that when we go back, we can go back with the gospel, the good news to our people. We could go back and tell them that we have achieved our objective. This is because, when we look around the world today, in no other country except for Guyana, we can have Indigenous leaders sitting with the Government – with His Excellency and Ministers – for five days. That tells us that we have a Government that wants to listen to us, that we have a Government that cares for us, and that we have a Government that is willing to support us. The Government is our greatest partner in developing our communities.

Fellow Toshias, let us count ourselves very fortunate with other Indigenous peoples across the globe. We are here today and for the rest of the week. We have a lot of issues and some of our issues are common to all of us, but some are unique based on the village. Let us be civilised and mature as we dialogue so that we could be able to resolve and bring solutions to the problems and the challenges we face as Indigenous people in our villages.

I want to take the opportunity in thanking His Excellency for navigating our country through a lot of disasters since he took Office. We saw what happened when we had Elections 2020. For several months, there was a battle that was fought. Just after that, we had a natural crisis where we experienced severe floods throughout our country. Before that had finished, we had the global pandemic. With all of these challenges, with the good stewardship of our President, we can still say that we were successful, and we are moving ahead as a country. We want to say a big thank you to our President. We have a leader who cares and we have a leader who is there for us.

As we look around right across our country, we have seen the vast transformation that is taking place. I am appealing to you, let us be part of this national transformation. I know that we can do it and we will do it because we have great leaders among us. We have men and women who have toiled day and night. I am saying that because I am a fellow Toshias and I know the sacrifice and challenges we face on a daily basis. Being a leader is not an easy task. I have been there, and I am here, and I am willing to serve my people. I encourage all of us who are gathered here today to let us fashion a pathway that we as Indigenous people can truly benefit from the resources that our country has. We have seen already, benefits coming into our various communities and villages, but we are here because we want to see more. That is why we have to use this platform as we make proposals and recommendations, that we will be able to work with the Government and that we can see our dreams being realised. We must leave a pathway for future generations to come. As the great Mahatma Ghandi once said:

“If you want to see change, you must be the change in this world”.

We are given the chance, let us use our opportunity to make the change.

May God bless our President, may God bless our Ministers, may God bless the Government, may God bless all Toshias. Thank you so much.”

The Mistress of Ceremonies remarked that the NTC was a semi-autonomous body with an Executive comprising one Toshao from each of the 10 administrative regions in Guyana with the responsibility to promote good governance; prepare strategies and plans for protection, conservation and sustainable management of village lands and natural resources; security; reduction of poverty; and improve access to health, education and other critical services, as it worked with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and the Government.

She stated that a new Executive would be elected later in the day and expressed best wishes to the contestants.

She then expressed regret that the outgoing Chairman, Toshao Fredericks of Shulinab, was not present to give the final remarks and acknowledged the presence of the other Executives.

Mr. Leon Couchman and the St. Cuthbert’s Cultural Group gave the audience a glimpse into the life of Guyana’s First People with a performance of the song ‘Amerindian Man’, which was accompanied by a dance.

The Mistress of Ceremonies thanked the presenters for the cultural presentation. She reminded the Conference that they were still in the Decade of Indigenous Languages and that there would be an opportunity to talk more about the preservation and promotion of Indigenous languages during the Conference.

The Mistress of Ceremonies acknowledged Dr. Adrian Gomes of Mururanau, Region 9, who was conferred with his Doctorate from the Leyland University earlier this year. His dissertation was on the Wapisana/English bilingual programme. She stated that all could look forward to more work being done in the South Rupununi in the bilingual education programme.

The Mistress of Ceremonies also acknowledged Guyana’s first Plastic Surgeon from Region 9, Dr. Joseph Torres from Wowetta, Region 9. She then extended congratulations to Mr. Romario Hastings who was recently awarded a Small Island Developing States (SIDS) scholarship in the area of water and sustainable development in the Netherlands.

The Mistress of Ceremonies introduced the Minister of Amerindian Affairs, Ms. Pauline Sukhai, by stating that she recently attended the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at its Headquarters in New York. She indicated that the Minister was able to share with the Forum what was taking place in the Indigenous areas of Guyana in the areas of education, health, infrastructure, agriculture, internet connectivity and much more, so as to enable the areas to be closer to being like the coastland. She stated that the Minister and her team continuously sought to bridge national and international relations while building ‘One Guyana’.

Presentation by the Minister of Amerindian Affairs, Ms. Pauline Sukhai

“The Minister acknowledged the presence of the President, Vice-President of Guyana and of all dignitaries by name.

Welcome everyone to the Opening Ceremony of the National Toshaos Council Conference 2022, especially you the Amerindian Leaders, for travelling the long journey over road, water and air, to be here at the NTC Conference which is hosted and funded by the Government of Guyana.

The NTC Conference reflects the political commitment of the PPP/C Government, which readily supported and approved the recommendation for the NTC to be established and legislated. Today, after two years, the leaders are meeting, once again, in the beautiful city of Georgetown. We all know that we have not met due to COVID-19 pandemic, but here we are today, and I am very pleased and happy to welcome all of you.

The meeting is significant since it affords the opportunity to have a consultative conversation between the Government and you the Leaders on the challenges which affect your people and villages, while you share your village development agendas and priorities. As such, I expect that the five days will be truly interactive.

All of Guyana is aware of the aftermath of the attempts to derail democracy, the legacy of under-achievements in all sectors of our country which demanded adjustments and required the development and deployment of resources to bring immediate relief to our nation’s population, and to reverse such stark situations. The Amerindian villages and its people did not escape the onslaught of neglect over the five years we were not in Government. And, yes, our Government’s response to arrest

the situation was required. Our Government responded immediately, as we took the reins of power in our country.

The theme of the Conference signals the approach for securing Amerindian development in the current fast-paced transformation to modernise Guyana towards a sustainable prosperous future under the philosophy of His Excellency's 'One Guyana'.

The Amerindian Development Fund continues to provide financial resources to fund productive and income generation projects to support projects which impact women, youths, eco-tourism, agriculture, culture and languages, and social and productive infrastructure, thereby supporting the village-economic transformation. The situation is fast changing, and it is evident and visible as one travels across the hinterland.

Land titling remains paramount on our Government's agenda, and today will evidence that, in less than eight months, titles for two land extensions and five certificates of title will be delivered to the villages leaders. This speaks volumes to the efforts to address land titling and demarcation of lands to Amerindians across our country. The Ministry is pursuing the approval for two years' extension for accomplishing, once and for all, the completion of titling and demarcation of Amerindian lands.

Guyana is a frontrunner in addressing the development and unique needs of our Indigenous people. We have legislated a special regime of rights contained in Amerindian Act No. 6 of 2006. Advocates of Amerindian rights are calling for a review of the Amerindian Act while failing to recognise the special regimes of rights already enshrined in the Act. Our Government's position on the revision of the Amerindian Act is clear. Consultation on the revision of the Act will be conducted in every Amerindian area across Guyana, including other stakeholders. The revision will take into consideration the increased benefits and secure rights and will not consider the dilution of any such rights and must result in increased benefits and more secured rights for our people.

This year the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs budget includes an allocation of \$10 million to commence the consultation process by setting up the committee, the modalities of the consultations and the training of the facilitators which will take on this huge important task on behalf of our people. It will include, specifically, in collaboration with, the National Toshias Council (NTC) and you the leaders. The Ministry is also very pleased with the pace of consultation on the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) and the inclusion in this consultation with our leaders and the villagers.

Leaders are encouraged to participate, fully, and contribute meaningfully to the draft strategy since it is a work in progress. To match the growing needs for knowledge and information, our Government has re-established the information and

communications technology (ICT) project, which will see, by 2023, 200 villages and communities having access to internet connectivity. Many leaders have constructed their internet facilities, successfully, while some have been awaiting their connection. This huge advancement of internet connection will open doors for increased opportunities for marketing, education, *et cetera*, and will benefit the entire village population.

Essentially, to meet the growing needs for improved administration of village affairs and accountability, and to minimise the increase and financial mismanagement training and empowerment sessions... were targeted as soon as we came into Office. Last year, training was done, and this year, our budget has allocation to continue training of leaders.

Similarly, the Communities Service Officers (CSO), who were unceremoniously sent home in 2015 by the now Opposition, our Government has, today, reinstated the positions. Each village has a minimum of 10 to 15 youths participating in community development under the guidance of the village councils. The CSOs have benefitted from training in information technology (IT), solar installation and maintenance and certified drivers. The focus for this year training is on garment construction, moto vehicle and small engine repair and, of course, tourism and hospitality in conjunction with the Ministry of Tourism Industry and Commerce, and other agencies. These areas of training will complement the economic activities which are being conducted in the villages across the country.

As we dialogue in this week, as partners with the Government of Guyana, I ask you the leaders to ensure that you place your issues, your priorities and your vision for development for clarity.

With us is a delegation from Belize. The leaders met with the delegation at the dinner which was held on the evening of 10th July, 2022. They are here to learn from us as a country. Guyana is in the forefront of protecting, delivering and ensuring that our Indigenous people are a priority. The Government of Belize, in November, 2020, appointed a Minister of Indigenous Peoples Affairs and is setting up the Ministry. Therefore, at this Conference, in collaboration with all of you, we expect that delegation will learn from you and learn from Guyana.

As we proceed to work together as partners, Government and Amerindian leaders, I want to assure you that I am in support of all of the engagements and I do wish you a warm welcome to the opening ceremony of this NTC Meeting, which is long overdue. I also wish you a very successful five days of dialogue. Thank you.”

The Mistress of Ceremonies requested that Toshaos and representatives indicate, by a wave of hands, as their respective administrative regions were called. She requested, further, that the Dome bid a warm welcome to the delegation from Belize and the regional heads, in the persons of the Regional Chairmen, who were also present at the Conference.

The Mistress of Ceremonies introduced Ms. Daniela Araujo who recited a poem titled *The Indigenous Culture*. She encouraged all Toshaos, village leaders and representatives to capitalise on the opportunity to engage with Ms. Araujo.

Ms. Araujo informed the Conference that the poem was part of her story about being an indigenous girl who lived in the city and her mother who lived in Region 9.

Ms. Araujo recited her poem.

The Mistress of Ceremonies informed the Conference that the Carnegie School of Economics would be compiling a cookbook of healthy indigenous recipes and had issued a call for submissions from villages and Indigenous persons countrywide. She noted that it was a great initiative and that it will highlight how many Guyanese dishes could be made from ingredients which were native to Guyana, especially from Regions 1 and 9.

The Mistress of Ceremonies invited the 2019 and reigning Indigenous Heritage Queen, Ms. Ester Marslowe – whom she stated was now a semi-finalist in the Miss World 2022 Pageant and a student at the University of Guyana perusing studies in Environment Studies – to introduce His Excellency the President.

Ms. Ester Marslowe delivered brief remarks about His Excellency the President, Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, and invited him to the podium to deliver the Feature Address to the National Toshaos Conference 2022.

Presentation by His Excellency the President, Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali

“Thank you very much. That was very kind of you. Hon. Prime Minister, Vice-President, Members of Cabinet, Members of the Diplomatic Community, but most importantly this morning, Toshaos, Leaders of our forest people, put your hands together for yourselves.

I want to also thank the technicians who are here. Before I do so, it is important since we are meeting on the very first occasion – we are not out of COVID-19 as yet, still a lot of challenges globally... Since we are reaching on the first occasion together, we must spend just a brief moment, standing and remembering those who would have passed from our communities in this pandemic, in silent prayer. Please join me for one minute of silent prayer for all those from our different communities who would have passed.

[One minute silence was observed]

Thank you. You know, many years ago – many sounds like a lot – I sat in this very room with a pen and a notepad in my hands, with many persons who are Ministers here today. Of course, Mr. Croal and Mr. Dharamlall came long after Dr. Singh and myself. The then President Jagdeo, now Vice-President, launched this incredible initiative to bring leaders from our Amerindian communities under one roof. It was not to tell you what to do, but to listen to you – listen to your ideas, needs, perspective – and, after listening to you, to put together a plan of action that would improve the life of every single Amerindian community and Amerindians in this country. That is how this forum was birthed.

We as technicians, had the job to record every single thought, idea and issue that were mentioned here. Just to give you a perspective, after five days when you went back to your communities, the then President called us to his office. We then have weeks of work to convert those ideas, work on resolving those issues and visit your communities. Added with budget constraints, we had to find the resources so that your lives could be made better. We knew it from the first day, the difficulties and challenges in the communities, the circumstances that you lived under. The commitment of the Government since then - every successive PPP/C Government - was to do the best we can do for Amerindian communities and people. It was not just because we want to do it, but because you are no different from the rest of the population and you must be treated with the same respect, with the same dignity and honour like all of the population. Those are the fundamental principles that we adhere to, that we support.

Like my dear sister said in her poetry, we will preserve what is rightfully ours. Those are very powerful words and that is what this Government has done from day one. We have worked in preserving everything that could uplift and can give you a better life which can give you a better community. In preserving all that is in the earth and all that we have, we have to also ensure that we sustainably use what we have as a country to transform your lives. Like her poetry said, there was a time when you spent... the women in these communities, especially, sacrificed so much. They had to spend their days getting water and tending to farms. They did not have the luxury of time to get an education. It was not because they were not brilliant, but it was because the circumstances did not allow them.

That is why balance is important. We had to use the revenues from the very earth, environment and this very country to make the necessary investment that allows you now to see the continuous improvement of your lives, to celebrate having children in top schools in this country, in universities, and in having high levels of primary and secondary education. Your lives and preservation of your culture does not mean in any way, shape, or form that the transformation of your communities and families must be static. It cannot be static. The preservation of culture and identity do not mean that it will be done at the expense of the best quality of life you can have. And that best quality of life requires resources, it requires us to understand the delicate balance that is needed to create a sustainable environment. What you can be assured of is a Government that will work with you every single day to uphold that delicate balance in promoting the livelihood, securing your cultural identity and environment in which you live.

Our message is the same every day of the year. It will not change if the country gets more revenue from oil or if we advance Low Carbon Development Strategy. Our message has always been consistent. You would never find a Minister in this Government or any PPP/C Government standing in Parliament saying that you should not be part of the revenues from oil and gas. If they say it, they will be fired

the next day. I assure you that. Because you have equity in this country. We fought hard so that you can have equity and that you can be a part of the process of development.

I stand here and I look at the theme of your Conference, and it speaks about governance. We have people in this country who today will write in the newspapers and lecture to all of you and all of us in this room about governance. But really the ones who should be the greatest example for governance is in the parliamentary and Government system at the central level.

For five months, with the help of our international partners, we had to fight to promote and secure democracy; secure your votes; the will of the people; and, today, some of them want to tell us about what good governance is. You will see, for the five days you are here, lengthy letters by some. Today, we are here with you. The entire Cabinet will be here for five days and if you read some of the articles, you will be shocked. For weeks, this Cabinet has sat under one instruction – to work on ensuring we have all of the information available for the leaders when they come; put together our plans so they can scrutinise it because they are not here for any fanciful exploration. They will be actively participating, bringing their plans to you so you can scrutinise it. You can take them to task, ask them questions in the full room and in the presence of everyone. That is what you call an open and transparent approach to governance and accountability. Accountability to you the people.

If you read some of the newspapers today - I am shocked – because the whole government is making itself available to you, the government is opening itself to you, some say that the Government is taking over the agenda of this Conference. If the Government was absent today, the news and headlines would be that Government has no concern about the Toshias; no concern for you.

Let me be clear, we have no interest in taking over any agenda. Our only interest is to promote and advance your agenda. To advance the cause of the people of your communities because you have to go back and answer to them and we have to answer to you. That is why the Government must be integrally involved here, since we are answerable to you, my dear friends.

This is not a political forum. Everything in life – every statement... If the Ambassadors or High Commissioners make a simple statement and you have someone who want to be creative, they can create it into a political statement. Anything in life you can create into a political statement. It depends on what you are seeking to achieve. Let me be very clear, the objective of this Conference from day one was to listen to you, to understand your perspective, generate ideas and to come together with a common plan and platform; that is it.

The Minister spoke about the rights of our Amerindian brothers and sisters. Let me be very clear, your rights must and will always be respected by this Government, and

your rights will always be advanced under this Government; this I assure you all. In the principle of good governance, we have to consult with people, listen to people – you yourselves as Toshaos. I am always so impressed that you will have a community meeting with the people and then you will have a document prepared on what the people's needs are. It cannot be different when you are looking at an Act or a piece of law that affects their lives. They have to be consulted.

Very soon, we will be starting a much larger consultation where we will commence work on the consultation for constitutional reform. This will be very, very shortly. When that commences, you will see a multifaceted representation of various stakeholders coming to every single community and every single corner of this country to consult. This is because these are documents that must reflect the will of the people. Your future must be no different from the future of anyone else's in this country. Your aspirations must not be any different from anyone else's in this country.

I am sure that by the time we get to the end of this conference – because the President will host you for a dinner and because we will have events to create networking and to bring you together – you will see, maybe, another headline. Do not be shocked; do not be surprised. The creators of these headlines and those who live on the coast would not put a headline every time we have an event of a national or international nature that brings them together, whether you call it cocktail, 'beef tail' or 'side tail'. You would hear nothing. But suddenly, the leaders of the Indigenous people – the First People – come and they are treated with the same level of respect, the same level of honour and the same level of dignity and it is a different narrative. We are all smart people. Let us examine why. Let us understand why. This has nothing to do with 'CPA', 'LPA', 'NPA'. This has to do with dignity, honour and respect. This has nothing to do with representation of anyone. Let me be clear. These events are hosted because we honour you, we respect you, and we have dignity for the work you do in this country.

I think I have addressed some side issues and some side shows.

When we came to you in 2020, we promised to improve your education, your health, your housing, your community infrastructure and your access to water. We promised you better governance. We promised you a Government that would listen to you. We promised you ease and efficiency in the delivery of pensions. We promised you better conditions in the delivery of health services and access to medical supplies. We promised you that we would be there in the good times and in the hard times. We promised you that the Government would be committed to working with you in your communities, to visiting you and to listening to you.

As I stand here, in just two years, having to face all of the challenges that we had to face...When travel was completely restricted for more than a year after we came into Government, the Cabinet still managed to visit 97% of every single Amerindian

community in this country. That is directly from the Cabinet. If we did not have that one year in which we had so much travel restrictions, I can assure you that we would have visited every single community and visited more than once.

In my Address to the Twelfth Parliament of the Republic, I acknowledged the special place which our first people occupy in our nation, and I said that is a circumstance we must never forget and must forever honour. I noted then that Indigenous knowledge, culture and traditional practices contribute to sustainable development. I highlighted often your stewardship of the environment and your underestimated and undervalued contribution to our nation's development. I committed, during my tenure, to improving the lives of Amerindians.

Specifically, as I said, we have promised through consultation to update the Amerindian Act and update and expand the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) so that the value you provide in securing the environment and the value you provide in environmental services must be linked to an economic value that goes towards improvement of your livelihood, your circumstances and your communities solely at the discretion of yourself to be part of this. The Low Carbon Development Strategy is the only strategy globally that not only highlights a development path, taking into consideration the environment and our forest, but goes further to state specifically how the actions of the LCDS and the implementation of the LCDS would improve your communities and your lives and how those resources would be invested to give you a better quality of life. It is the only strategy, and we should be proud. Sometimes, we believe that the LCDS consultations only started with this second phase for expansion. The first LCDS, which remains the foundational document on which this LCDS was built, had the widest consultation – more than any other strategy would have had by any other country. Hands down, it had the widest consultation.

For the leaders who are here, let me tell you how accountable this consultation was. I do not know if Ms. Predeepa Bholnath is here, but if she is here, she would tell you that you could go now on the website and you could see every single comment, every single idea and every single consultation that was held. It is downloaded on the website. There is nothing to hide. So, when people tell you that they raised this and that and did not get answer, you can go on this website and see all that was raised. There are all the questions that were asked and all of the answers that were given. How much more open can we be? There is nothing in the dark. Everything is uploaded on that site. Every single important stakeholder is part of the steering committee and I chair the steering committee. We are talking about the National Tshaos Council (NTC) and the Amerindian Peoples Association (APA). Every single stakeholder is on that steering committee with equal rights. But with equal rights come equal responsibility. That is the part of the equation that people sometimes do not remember. With equal rights come equal responsibility. Sometimes, we forget that part of the equation.

Toshaos, you are the centre of attraction in this country over the next five days. I say to you, do not be distracted. Stay focused on what you are here for. You are here to represent the people of your communities. You are here to advance the development of your communities. You are here to work on a master plan of sharing your ideas with the Government that is ready to work with you on the implementation of those ideas. Let us stay focused on that. Let us have robust discussions. Do not be afraid. Let your views be made clear to the Cabinet members. There should be absolutely no fear in the room. Speak frankly and openly. Let us have an honest, well targeted and focused discussion in advancing your welfare, the leaders and the communities that you serve.

We are working under the umbrella of a singular Guyana – ‘One Guyana’. The message is not only about us uniting. It is about empowering together and building an equitable platform for development. It is forward-looking, transformative and focused. That is what the ‘One Guyana’ is about. It is not only the coming together of people. It is the coming together of ideas. It is the putting together of plans and development strategies. It is the upholding of the transformation that we are talking about.

When you take the current and capital expenditure, in less than two years, your Government has invested more than \$50 billion in Amerindian communities and Amerindian people. If you look at that as a percentage of the whole budget, you would be blown away. As I said, at a different forum, we will do the political comparison. However, if you look at that as a percentage of what was invested between 2015 and 2020, you will be mesmerised. Then, you can make a determination as to who has your interests and your communities’ interest in their hearts. That is not the analysis we have to make. The facts are there.

If you look at water – I will give you just a few examples – we have been able to increase our coverage in terms of access to water in hinterland communities from 46% to 63% in less than two years. The target is to take it to 75% by the end of this year. Our plan is that, by 2025, we must have 100% access to safe and clean water by every single Amerindian community. That is the plan. I was in Region 7 recently and almost every single community spoke about the improvement in the water sector. What was more heartening was that they spoke about a new approach in the consultation and the caring nature. This was just from Region 7.

In less than two years, we have completed 20 new wells, and by the end of this year, we will complete another 30 new wells. This by itself is a headline story for any international media because this is what makes good news.

My dear respected brothers and sisters, Amerindian leaders, I assure you that in the next days you are here, you will never see this in the headline. Ask yourselves why. As a country, sometimes it is important to reflect. In quiet moments sometimes reflect and think and we will see many answers coming before us. We are willing to sit and speak with every single representative group, as we have done before, and outline

these very things. The question is after that: Are they willing to come back to the communities and say this is what has been done and this is what the plans are? I am just asking these questions.

Our target for water is very simple. It is to ensure that you have safe, reliable water that improves your quality of life and that empowers women. As a child I too went through water crisis. I remember that the persons who were worst affected were the women – the mothers, the girls – because they had to wake up at 4 a.m. to go and get the water to do the cooking. They had to spend hours every day just to secure safe water for the family. When we can take away that loss time from women and girls, they can then use that time to empower themselves; they can use that time to get an education; they can then be more equitably contributing and be part of our society. Those are the aspects of these investments that sometimes we lose because we only look at the numbers. When we speak about the quality of life, this is what we are talking about. This is what enhances the quality of life.

For the hinterland communities, let me be very clear that I am not talking about the economic centres now, I am talking about hinterland communities and villages themselves. I was from the poverty reduction strategy consultation, with the then President Jagdeo. I even think the Prime Minister was at some of those consultations in the role he played then. We have made it clear that, for Amerindian villages, water will remain a social good. What that means is that for your villages, as long as we are here, you will not have to pay for water. That will be a cost that the Government will absorb for you, ... for you and your communities are treated primarily for its social good and its social bad, not as an economic commodity.

In **AGRICULTURE**, by the end of this year, we will expend more than \$2 billion. What is the goal in agriculture? We have listened to you. We have started working with you from the time we started the initiative of giving tractors, years ago, to communities with very limited budgeted resources. In those days, the resources were very, very tight, but every single time the President and Cabinet then – I was not in Cabinet then but we were there as technicians – sat down I recall them setting aside a specific initiative for Amerindians and hinterland development not to be treated in the whole construct of the budget because Government then, as of now, always wanted your development to advance whether it required special attention.

As soon as we came back, we embarked on a project to give every single community tractor, trailers and the implements that come with it to advance food production. I remember that did not come about by guesswork. It came about during the period 2015 to 2020 when we were talking to communities. We were hearing that there was no maintenance of tractors. You do not have tractors, you do not have transportation, whether it is ATVs... We began to make that infrastructure investment; that investment that is transformative for you. The goal of this agriculture programme is to make you food secure. That is the first thing. We must work on making every single community food secure. We are going to invest in research and development

to see what is best for every community and you have to help us here at this Conference. Let us identify one item that we will work on with the Government. Let us identify food security and come up with a hinterland food security plan that we will invest in to secure your food. Let us look at that. Let us spend some dedicated time to come up with that so we can then work on defining the timeframe as to how and when we can together say the hinterland communities will be fully food secured; how that food will feed into the education programme of our children; how that food will feed into processing; and how the excess food will feed into the rest of the market. Those are the weighty conversations we are ready to have with you; and those are the weighty discussions we are ready to have with you in advancing your livelihood and your life. That is why this meeting is so important. It is the transformation that is required and how you will advance this transformation, because, at the end of it, we have to have buy-in from you the leaders, and from the people. We have to do it in a sustainable way. We cannot just say 'no, cut and burn'. We have to work with you and say what is the most appropriate technology we could use to make you food secure, which will give you the production, which will give you the resilience that is needed for climate change and that, at the same time, will safeguard the environment. This is the type of weighty conversation. When people ask you how you benefit from the oil and gas resources, this is the answer: the revenues must be used in an implementable timeframe to make every community food secure. The investment will be made from revenues that will come. That is how you are integrated into it; that is how you are part of it; that is how it will benefit you. That is just one example.

Our agriculture programme must be aimed at making you food secure. It must be aimed at making food affordable and aimed at economic empowerment, the creation of jobs, the creation of opportunities, and the upliftment of your lives, which is very important.

Our **HEALTH** programme is very simple. It is to give you very good primary healthcare in the immediate to medium term and then moving to excellent primary healthcare as we move forward. To achieve this, we need to invest in healthcare workers – the human resource capacity. We have already started. We have trained hundreds of young Amerindians across the country as healthcare providers and as health workers, and we will train even more. If we have to train 1,000, we will train 1,000, to provide nursing services for us as a country. This is how you are going to be involved in the transformative agenda of the health sector. Not only will you see a health centre being built, but young Amerindians will be playing an integral part in the delivery of that healthcare and health services. We started years ago by having many Amerindians, for the first time, going on scholarships to be trained as doctors, many of whom are back in your communities, and back in the public healthcare system, serving the people of this country. It is not only in healthcare, but in every single sector you will see specific targeted work to ensure that the young people,

especially from your communities, are incorporated into education and training programmes of the country nationally. So, it is the human resource aspect.

Very important to healthcare is the system. We had a broken system, and we continue to have challenges in the system. We know that the system is not where we want it to be right now, because you still have *ad hoc* supplies and you still have issues with the service levels, but the issue here is that we have to fix it. We have to fix the system now so that you do not have to suffer from shortages, from late supplies, from late delivery and from expired drugs. We are working on fixing that for you right to now. We can have the best health infrastructure but if we do not have the system to support that infrastructure, then we will be wasting a lot of time.

LINKAGES AND THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY – we are not only investing in the hubs – I know I am going on too long already and the sectors will speak – we are not only investing in technological services, the internet and the Wi-Fi for the hubs so that you can go online. It is going to be part of a master plan that will bring the use of technology in supporting local medical personnel in the delivery of health services – tele-medicine. All of these are a smart approach to the delivery of health services. These are not dreams; these are active plans that we are working on to enhance life there.

The **MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND SOCIAL SECURITY** has launched a series of training programmes, empowerment programmes, and is working now on ensuring the system of delivering of pension in the villages works. Recently, we found out that some of the staff who are supposed to take the pension to the villages were still going to a central location and calling the Toshaos to pick up the pensions. We have launched an investigation that into that because the instruction is clear – the pensioners must be paid in the villages. That is the instruction. Toshaos, I want you to understand that.

Very important work and initiatives are ongoing in supporting differently abled people, in supporting communities for women empowerment, and for youth involvement. The Ministry of the Public Service has been instructed to work in every single community to identify talent and to identify areas in which we can recruit people to be part of the national training programme to be part of the whole economy. This is the type of work that we are doing.

In healthcare, so far, we have spent, maybe, more than \$13 million in less than two years.

In **EDUCATION**, our focus is very simple. The education plan is to allow you to be the best you can be. Every single citizen of the hinterland communities must have the opportunity to be the best they can be. that is the output of the education plan. To do this, we have to invest in Infrastructure – build more secondary schools, expand the primary schools. There was a time when I was about 21 years of age when we went to outreaches in the hinterland – Dr. Singh and the Vice-President are here and they

can tell you about some of those – when the discussion was whether a little room, not a school, could be provided for nursery education; and whether a benab could be converted into a classroom. Those were some of the early discussions. Today, I am pleased when I visit these communities and hear the discussion being whether the nursery school could be expanded, whether a second floor of the primary school could be built; whether the secondary school could be expanded; whether a technical institute could be constructed; and whether a specialised school could be provided to train persons in agriculture. The conversation has changed because of the investments successive PPP/C Governments has made. It is very simple. Do not take my word for it; go and fact check.

I want to recognise the work of all of those people who I know worked tremendously hard in bringing us to this point – the Vice-President and then President, Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo; successive Ministers starting with Minister DeSouza, Minister Fox, Minister Rodrigues; Cabinets, and technicians.

There is one special technical persons whom I want to recognise and honour today. I am sure the Vice-President would be very appreciative of this. I want to recognise a man who has done tremendously well for the people of this country. I knew how much he loved you and the Amerindian Community because I worked with him. I want to recognise the late Clyde Raymond Roopchand, Chief Planning Officer (CPO). I had the honour to work with this man, and I know that, today, he would have been very proud. In his entire career he never had a single good headline. Even when he was in his final stage in his professional life, the headline was about his pension – a man who give his entire life. He eventually was called to a higher place without having the opportunity to enjoy that pension. Today, I want to honour the work of Clyde Raymond Roopchand and for what he did for this country under the great leadership of our Vice-President Jagdeo.

Our plan is a very simple plan. It is a plan that seeks to involve you in determining what is best for you and in chartering a course, with your involvement, which is best and which would deliver the best quality of life for you.

In **TOURISM** – I want you to be assured that we see tourism as a very catalytical part of your development. In my view, the tourism sector will be one of the fastest growing sectors in this country. The tourism and agriculture sectors are two sectors which we are going to invest in heavily. We are working every day to open up new markets and to ensure we have linkages to those markets. I hope that, before the end of this year, we will have much more good news to share with Guyanese on how the results of opening up new markets worked.

Our tourism development is aimed at economic empowerment and job creation. We are working on a master plan to ensure that the people in the sector are trained. We have a very different product from the rest of the world. Whilst we are doing the theoretical training with top institutions across the world – and many of your young people will be involve – we realise that it is very important that we do specific

training in the type of tourism that you will offer the community, whether it be for bird watching, sport fishing, or hiking. That type of work has started at the Ministry of Tourism. We are building the infrastructure, the road network and the connectivity to allow for that tourism to take off, to support mining and to support community development. I could go on all morning to speak to you about the investment of more than \$6 billion that the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs is making directly.

The investment we are making from the Office of the Prime Minister is to ensure that you have access to power supply and to ensure that you have access to ICT hubs. Thirty thousand new solar household units will be coming into the country, and we will be building off grid systems and small hydropower projects. There are billions of dollars in investment to improve quality of life across hinterland communities.

The **PUBLIC WORKS** road programme, Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development – tens of billions of dollars are invested in giving you better infrastructure.

There are also some direct things which we have done. The old age pension, which benefits almost 5,600 persons in the hinterland, has been increased to \$28,000 in less than two years. I want to assure you that the promise we made will be kept and you will receive that increase.

We have increased and reinstituted the school uniform grant, which is now \$5000 per child. There is the sum of more than \$200 million transfer in the uniform grant for children in the hinterland communities. We have restored the \$25,000 grant to every single schoolchild, which is an investment of more than \$2 billion in less than two years.

We have distributed almost \$1 billion for the public assistance programme in hinterland communities. We have distributed more 1,200 empowerment grants – small loans and small grants – to assist hinterland communities.

Under the Women's Innovation and Investment Network (WINN) programme, close 150 Indigenous persons were trained. We are now training people in skills development programmes.

In the **HOUSING** programme, we are spending billions of dollars. We are expanding the hinterland housing programme. We are supporting persons with difficult circumstances in the hinterland communities.

We have rehired the 2,000 Community Service Officers (CSO) the last Government sent home. This might be important for those who keep records. Out the 2,000 Community Service Workers, more than 1,500 are females. That is another headline we should celebrate.

We distributed more \$300 million in Presidential Grants, which benefitted 220 hinterland communities this year alone. The sum \$1.7 billion was transferred to

hinterland communities for economic empowerment projects. All of this happened in less than two years. I could go through every single sector.

To help you and your transportation needs, whether it be all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), tractors, pickups or ambulances, we have invested more than \$1 billion in less than two years.

Outside of all of this, we have transferred more than \$700 million directly to more than 28,000 families in the \$25,000 COVID-19 cash grant. Outside of all of this, we have transferred hundreds of millions of dollars in flood relief. We are presently distributing another \$25,000 per every hinterland and riverine households. These are the types of investments that we have made, and these are the investments we will continue to make in order to make your life better and to give you a better quality of life.

STIPEND FOR TOSHAOS – I know that this will come up, so I want to deal with it. We had promised this in the budget as well. I want to now announce that we will move the Toshias stipend from \$30,000 to \$45,000. It is \$5,000 less than what was requested. As the Vice-President will remind you that we have still have quite a few Toshias conferences to go.

The Deputy Toshias' stipend will be moved from \$20,000 to \$30,000, which is a 50% increase. In this case, it is not the Cabinet Members who will receive 50% and 100% increase; it is the Toshias, the leaders of your communities.

Senior Councillors' stipend will be increased from \$15,000 to \$25,000. To avoid a barrage of letters in the newspapers because when we give the \$25,000 stipend to the hinterland and riverine communities, you would not believe the number of letters I will receive. Let me clear that, in order to continue to improve our systems and to make people more accountable, and in keeping with what we have committed to do, every single regional councillor in the administrative regions of this country will see an improvement in their stipend from \$10,000 to \$30,000. These are commitments we have made and commitments we have fulfilled.

Toshias, before I leave this podium, I want to say to all of you that you are not pushing a big rock or a mountain; you are pushing with a team that is honoured and humbled to be your Government. You are pushing with us together in breaking down the barriers and the walls that separate development from you and the people of your communities. This load of development is a heavy load that we must pull. It is not the responsibility of the Government to pull this load alone. It is the responsibility of all of us to put our hands together on the chain that links us together as one humanity and to pull the burden of that load of development together, to pull the burden of challenges together and to look forward with bright and optimistic faces that, once we stick to that chain that links us together, tightly – pulling together only in one direction, a forward direction – all of us, all of your communities, all of Guyana would have a better, more sustainable and secured path of development.

I thank you and God bless all of you.”

The Mistress of Ceremonies after thanking His Excellency reiterated what the President said in his speech and encouraged her fellow brothers and sisters to see the bigger picture.

The Mighty Pakuri performed a song titled ‘Matapi’ which was accompanied by a dance by the St. Cuthbert’s Cultural Group.

Distribution of Land Titles

Please see appendix.

Presentation of gift to the President

Ms. Olivia Garrido, Assistant Accountant in the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs presented the President with a portrait of himself.

Vote of thanks

The vote of thanks was delivered by Member of Parliament, Hon. Alister Charlie who expressed gratitude to the President for his presence, participation and delivery of an eloquent Feature Address. He also thanked the Minister of Amerindian Affairs and the Toshaos for their participation as well.

This brought an end to the opening session of the National Toshaos Council Conference.

Afternoon session

The afternoon session was chaired by Ms. Sarah Browne, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. She welcomed the participants to the second session of the day and noted that the President, in his Feature Address, had set the tone for the five-day Conference. Ms. Browne pointed to the unprecedented move of having all Ministers of Government present for the duration of the Conference. She thereafter invited the Hon. Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, Vice-President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana to address the Conference.

Presentation by the Vice-President, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo

“Thank you very much. Colleagues, friends, brothers and sisters, it is so good to see you all here again today, face-to-face. On the campaign trail and in the five years that we were in Opposition, we met many of you in your villages. We listened to your concerns and we told you that we would work hard to ensure that development in your communities resumed. Now, with your support and with the support of the Guyanese people, we are back in Office and we will take our promises seriously. If there is anything that you know or need to learn about the People’s Progressive Party/ Civic it is that we take the promises that we make to you, when we travel around the country, seriously.

We had the opportunity to listen to the President and he has reaffirmed that commitment – a commitment we made in our manifesto and a commitment we looked you in the eyes, when we visited, and made. The President, as Ms. Sarah Browne pointed out, has set the tone for the engagements that will take place over the course of the next five days. I want to assure you, as he did, that you are going to have the full attention of the entire Cabinet.

I recall meeting with some of you – and just downstairs I met with some of you – and when we spoke of those years in Opposition when many of you came to the Office of the Leader of the Opposition (OLP), you spoke of a lack of attention. The President came, popped in, made a perfunctory speech, and left. It was hard to even get a Minister to sit here throughout the engagements and listen to you. Here, you have the entire Cabinet of the country. We did this in the past when we established the NTC and we had promised that we would have done it again. So, you have the full attention of the Government for five days.

Toshaos Derrick John spoke about the theme, *Good Governance and Fast-tracking Amerindian Development*. Many of you are aware that good governance is not just about at the village level. It has to have a national context. The Amerindian Act that we passed in 2006, which many of you are familiar with, created the basis for the recognition and protection of the collective rights of Amerindian villages and, secondly, promoted good governance. If you look at the Explanatory Memorandum of that 2006 Act, you will see that is exactly what it did. It outlined all of the conditions for governance – from village elections right up to accountability at the village level. It also, for the very first time, gave Amerindian communities the right to a subsurface right and the only group of people who have subsurface rights on their lands now for small and medium scale mining. That Act also spoke about a process through which you could secure land title. It is one of the most advanced pieces of legislation anywhere in the world for Indigenous people, and I dare anybody to say differently. If any country in the developed world or many others who have Indigenous peoples can show me an Act comparable to that one, then we will concede that we have not done enough. But we are not content there.

That is why when the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) in the last five years...You would recall that they were saying that they wanted to revise the Amerindian Act. In Opposition, we said we would support any revision that enhanced Amerindian rights and brought benefits to them, but should they try to erode any of the provisions of that Act, then they were going to face vigorous opposition from the PPP/C. They wanted to do it in a manner that was not consultative, and we insisted they had to go to every community. They dropped it because they were hoping to erode your rights, and I will come to that in a moment.

That Act provides for governance in the communities. It gives certain rights to the Indigenous people that we passed in 2006. It was in that Act that we established this body called the National Toshaos Council, in 2006, and from which you are all here to represent your communities.

Governance, as I said before, cannot happen in a vacuum. Even if you have the best governance systems in your villages, there is a direct link between national governance and democracy and development. Many of you are of a younger generation – but the Toshaos senior council is here – and may not be familiar with the period, from the 1960s all the way to the early 1990s, when elections were stolen in this country. If you look back at that period, you could see that was the period when our country had the least development. In fact, we moved backwards. We retrogressed.

Amerindian communities were even more neglected than coastal communities, but the whole country was neglected. So, there is a direct link among democracy, freedom and development.

We had a hell of a battle to preserve our freedom in this country in 2020. There was a severe attempt – a five-month attempt – to steal the elections, and we had to fight,

with the help of the international community – Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the United States of America (USA), Canada, the European Union (EU), the Commonwealth and Organization of American States (OAS). All these organisations stood with us, and the APNU/AFC stood on the other side and tried to steal the elections. All these organisations said that the People's Progressive Party/Civic had won the elections, but they hung on to power, and would not let go. It was only when we had the recount and there was a threat of sanctions...the United States said that if the Government got sworn in, it would have sanctioned Guyana, such as what Venezuela is facing now. That is how we succeeded, and you need to understand that. That was a huge battle, and we came out of a major struggle. Many leaders from the Amerindian communities stood up for that too.

Secondly, people speak about preservation. I heard the young lady who read the poem – a beautiful poem – say that we must all fight to preserve what is rightfully ours. I agree and accept that. We must preserve the culture of our Indigenous brothers and sisters. It was out of that recognition that the People's Progressive Party, under Dr. Jagan, set aside a month-long celebration of Indigenous peoples' culture in this country, so much so that from a situation, in the early 90s, when there was a disparaging view of Indigenous culture, people, today, are proud of that culture. You cannot preserve what is not created. Many of the things that you see today and that you benefit from were not always there. In fact, when they were put there, there was an attempt to remove them.

So, let us talk about what was created from the 1990s when the People's Progressive Party took office because I am the General Secretary of the PPP/C and I have a duty to point out to you the difference between our party and the other parties. It was through the programmes, and you can judge for yourselves. You are smart a people and you can judge for yourselves who is genuinely interested in the development of Amerindian communities.

Let us talk about the promises that were made in 2015. There were a lot of promises made to communities. What were the first things done? Sometimes, because people live in the...they do not get much information. You, in the hinterland communities, would recall what happened immediately after the Government changed. I would just enumerate them.

Firstly, weeks after, 2,000 Amerindians, in fact 1,972 Amerindians, lost their jobs. If you consider that as a proportion of the population of Indigenous people in this country, it was the biggest act of discrimination against Indigenous people in this Western Hemisphere, maybe for the last three decades – just terminating them.

Secondly, we had all these solar panels bought for the hinterland, but they were never sent to the hinterland. They were taken away, put on the State House and different buildings in Georgetown.

Thirdly, the ICT programme that we had set aside US\$17 million for, we had already bought 2,000 computers for 100 villages, but none of those computers made their way to the hinterland. They made their way the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) and other places; they stayed on the coast. They did not send them to the hinterland. That is almost immediately after that.

Then there was the establishment of something called a land commission, that we vigorously opposed, because APNU/AFC got a committee appointed and said that this committee would look at ancestral lands for Afro-Guyanese and Amerindian lands together. We said, no, you can look at ancestral lands for afro-Guyanese separately, but Amerindian peoples' lands have been an age-old promise and it must be treated separately in accordance with the Amerindian Act and in accordance with the commitment we made to people. We fought that commission; the PPP/C stood alone. If you remember, we were going to the villages fighting alone and then the NTC started fighting with us. Some Indigenous peoples' organisations were quiet, totally quiet, when that was a fundamental shift – the land commission. Eventually we managed to fight it off.

You would recall the Indigenous People's Commission (IPC) that we signed when I was President. I signed that into the Constitution. They tried to dilute representation of Indigenous people on the Commission and we fought that too in Opposition during the five years. We were in the forefront of it.

Then there was the Amerindian land titling unit in the Ministry, and we had set aside US \$10 million to continue the land titling programme. They abandoned that; closed down the unit. I remember meeting with the NTC when we were in the Opposition and they told us how despairingly they were treated by the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission when they went there to enquire about indigenous peoples' lands. So, the PPP/C fought that too. We said that it should continue. Then, to make matters worse, the Minister, as the President pointed out, stood up in the National Assembly and said that the Amerindian people have too much land and if they get more land, they must not get any resources from oil and gas; they must not get any money. The hurtful thing was that you had several leaders standing on the other side and not one of them objected. There was a Vice-President, who was Mr. Sydney Allicock, who stood on the other side when that statement was made. Where do you think the objection came from? It was from the People's Progressive Party/Civic. We need to look at these things because if we do not understand our history, constantly, our people will face this and they will erode even the things that we create, not preserve them. They will take them away, as they have shown they could take away when they took away the grant from the school kids – the \$10,000 per child. This year, by the end of July/early August, you will see it has now gone to \$25,000 and another \$5,000 for school uniform; and, by 2025, it will be \$50,000. That is the promise we made for every child, every year. We promised to double old age pension, and that would happen too. All these things were taken away from people.

The Presidential Grant, the whole process to give the communities... was slowed down. One person who was linked to APNU/AFC got \$165 million to set up some committees – look at the SLED programme in Region 9. He is now a Member of Parliament for the other side. Find out who got the money. That is more than what all the communities together in Region 9 got – he got in his hand alone. How could that be good governance? One person got \$165 million then they set up organisations and transfer grant to many of them.

This is what happened. Value-added tax (VAT) was placed on a number of items. They talked about opening up the hinterland and then put a tax on hinterland travel – a 14% tax on flying into the hinterland or carrying freight into the hinterland.

I recall when the Toshaos from Chenapou came out, and traditionally Chenapou did not support the PPP/C... They arrested women and men without any clothes on and flew them out. How heart-wrenching it was. People need to remember that too. We fought hard to reverse this. We made a lot of promises. We said that we are going to return to development as soon as we get back into Office; we are going to reverse these things. We have reversed the taxes; we have reversed hinterland travel; VAT on water, education and a whole range of food.

We had a hard time in the last 20-something months that we have been in Office because of the COVID-19. When we came into Office, after the hard fight to preserve democracy, and managed to get them out, the country was in lock-down, totally shut down – 30,000 people had already lost jobs because of their taxation policy, and probably another 35,000/40,000 when the country was in lock-down. We had to rebuild, to get people working again. Even with COVID-19, we reopened our country; we managed to build capability at the hospital that they spent over \$1 billion on, which had no bed, no oxygen, nothing. Today, we have advanced capability; we can do 5,000 tests per day; it used to be about 40 tests per day when we got into Office. It was tough. We managed to get vaccines from around the world. The developed countries helped. That is why the President pointed out that we had to keep our communities safe.

We did not want people travelling into your villages because we did not want them to take the pandemic into the villages, so it was very difficult. We wanted to go to the villages, but we did not want people to carry COVID-19 into the communities. So, we tried through all sorts of means to get help to the villages but, at the same time, to keep you safe in those areas. That is why there was the COVID-19 grant. We know it was small – \$25,000 – but we tried to get that to every home so that it could assist people.

Now, with this cost of living, there will be another \$25,000 grant because, although COVID-19 has receded and we now can meet again, we are suffering from a huge cost of living increase around the world because the price of oil has gone up since the war between Ukraine and Russia. It has moved from US\$28 per barrel, in 2018, to US\$120 per barrel for oil. You know that, once oil goes up, everything goes up. It is

the same thing with food. Because many of the factories abroad, in China and other places, which supply countries with building material, were closed, they are not producing. Now, the cost has gone up for food and other stuff. We are now battling this cost-of-living increase, but things will, hopefully, go back to normalcy. I am sure that many of you face that, and you are going to want to raise it with us because, in many areas, you have seen the price of goods go up because of this pandemic. I want to say to you that we are acutely aware of it because we have our ears on the ground; we are a caring party and Government. We are going to try to work with you over the course of the next few days in addressing that.

Today, I want to quickly take you through, as the President did, what we promised. These were things we heard from the communities. Therefore, when we developed our plan for 2020, we made plans to implement all of these.

Water – you have heard from the President already that, over the years, 100% of the communities will be with potable water by 2025. We have allocated over \$2 billion so far to do wells. You heard how many wells are being done. I know that many of you may still have water related issues, but they are part of the planning for the next few years. We cannot do all the wells at once, but we will ensure that every community has potable water. That is number one.

On **healthcare**, you have heard about improvements in the supply of drugs, the health huts, and training more people in the communities. We are also looking at the quality of healthcare and improving that. This is one place that we want to spend some of the oil resources. In each of the four hinterland regions, Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9, we will now build a massive diagnostic centre with all the world class capabilities to do tele-medicine in each of these areas so that persons can access some of the best care in every region. That is where we anticipate those hospitals or those massive diagnostic centres will cost over US\$100 million in these areas – over \$20 billion – but that is part of the plan on healthcare, apart from training people, *et cetera*.

On **education**, this is linked to information and communications technology (ICT). We have promised free university education by 2025, which we will do. We also promise 20,000 online scholarships. We have already done 6,000 in the first year. This year another 5,000 will be given. We can go up to 50,000. Anybody who wants a scholarship... The problem now for the hinterland kids is that they do not have access to the internet so they cannot benefit as much as children on the coast. We have to find a way of fixing this.

The \$17 million that we left, the APNU/AFC did use some of the money and that was through the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), the Norwegian fund, to put in some of the hubs that we had planned. But, the quality of the internet is poor and, secondly, we have not completed the hubs in all 215 communities and we need to do that. Many of you have already received grants to start building the facilities in which to put the computers.

Let me tell you where they spent the money. They spent about US\$5 million of this money, but they just bought the computers and some of the solar panels and packed them in containers without fixing the place to put them in. So, now, we have a big problem because those computers were bought since 2018 and I suspect the reason. That is easy to do – just buying computers. The hard thing is working to build the places to put them into the hinterland. Since 2018, those computers were in containers; they may not even be good by now. We now have to spend... We will talk in the course of the week more about the ICT programmes and how it will be rolled out. The internet is very expensive for satellite. There are 250 villages and we would have to do that. We would have to find a way, even if it is in a smaller basis, to start moving the ICT programme and internet connectivity in these areas so that children could benefit from online scholarship programmes, which is through the education. When we come to education, we will talk about that.

You have heard a lot about funding sources. Before the A Partnership for National Unity/ Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) came into Office, we were working. There was the Presidential Grant, which you will see increasing every year, and you will get more money there. In the pandemic, the President pointed out that we had given the communities more moneys in the two years than APNU/AFC did in its five years. Every community will get tractors and trailers. Those who have not gotten as yet, will get. We have another 80 tractors and trailers which we have ordered from the factories that are producing them. They are taking time to come because many of those factories were closed as a result of COVID-19. We received over 100, but we need to receive over 200 in order to get to every community. For the riverine communities, we are going to focus more on transportation outside of the tractors and trailers. We will discuss that within the course of the week. That is in moving forward.

The Presidential Grants will continue, and we will return to the village development plans/community development plans which we had communities working on before 2015. The community development plans are for two purposes; they must have two sets of activities. Firstly, food security in the villages and communities, as the President pointed out, which is crucial. We have to help you find the financing to ensure that you can feed the villagers. Secondly, how do we, in each of these villages, create an avenue to create jobs and income for the villages? We started off with many projects. We had some experiments like in the forested areas – building hives because the demand for honey is practically unlimited. We can get all of the honey. We started off with black pepper and turmeric – non-perishable crops. During the course of the week, we will return to this discussion on the village development plans. Once you get those plans in place, you will get funding outside of the Presidential Grant. So, it is the Presidential Grants, the village development plans and thirdly, the LCDS.

Now, you heard a lot of talks about the Low Carbon Development Strategy. Some of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which are very critical of us should be

happy with this Government because of our strong stance on preserving our forest. Unlike many countries which are cutting down their trees wantonly, we have had one of the lowest deforestation rates in the entire world. This means that we cut less trees than 99% of the countries in the world. Our country has the second largest forest cover in the world, with Suriname being number one, which has about 92% of its country covered with forest. In Guyana's case, 86% of our country is covered with forest. This is largely because we have held on, and we have instituted strong robust systems for management in the forestry sector. We have a strong satellite monitoring, reporting and evaluation (MRV) system which tracks any changes in these areas. As a result of that, we managed to earn some moneys from Norway – US\$10 million, which we used to support the land titling activity in the last 10 years and there is another US\$17 million to put ICT in the villages. Those are directly.

We are now back in Government, and there is a possibility of earning more. We have said already that we want 15% of all that is earned to go directly to Indigenous communities. This is outside of moneys that you will get for anything else. We will decide how the 15% will be allocated. We believe that it should be shared among all the villages, whether they have forest or not because only the villages with forest will get money if we leave out those who live in the savannah and elsewhere. We will talk a bit more about that, but you will also get funding through that window. Once we sell the forest carbon, you will get 15% of anything that we earn, and this will go directly to the Amerindian villages. That will be a large sum of money. It is not like we are advocating for the cutting of the trees, we are preserving the trees and then earning from selling the carbon – what they do to extract carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

None of the NGOs could tell us how we will get money otherwise. Some have gone to some communities to try to *put a spoke in the wheel* of the LCDS, but they would not tell us how we could get US\$15 million per year into the Amerindian communities. That is how much we will probably get to be shared among the villages outside of the Presidential Grant and outside of the community development plans where we are hoping to use some of the oil moneys to fund. These are all funding sources.

The LCDS Steering Committee has all the NGOs and will have a representative from the National Tshao Council. We do not have a representative yet, but that will be included. You will oversee this entire process.

One thing I wanted to say to you is that the NTC, which is an NGO, which is made up of all of you in this room, sometimes get less funding. In fact, the NTC gets significantly less funding than a single NGO which says that it represents Indigenous people. Something has to be fundamentally wrong with that. When you meet the international community, you should say that the NTC is the biggest NGO which represents all of the villages of the country. If you are getting funding, it should come to the NTC body to be used in your communities. That is a point we needed to make.

On **land** tenure, we made a commitment. We have resumed the land titling activity. We have established the unit APNU/AFC closed. In fact, a very prominent activist wrote in the newspapers stating that APNU/AFC established the land titling unit. I recall in the early days that it was done under Dr. Cheddi Jagan when the PPP/C got into Office. Under the PPP/C, titled lands moved from about 6% of Guyana to about 14% of Guyana, which was a huge change. We are now busy working to title additional communities. As I pointed out, the Act mandates that. You are going to see much more being done in this area.

On the solar panels, APNU/AFC took it away and we have already ordered 30,000 units at 115 watts to go into the riverine and the hinterland communities. They are much bigger than the first set we had given. Because of COVID-19, the supplies take a long time to come since the factories abroad may not be working. Whilst I am at this, I want to say that you are going to get support for the village development.

I met with some of the Toshaos from two villages in Region 10. They came to see me a couple of days ago – maybe last Thursday. They were speaking about the flooding. With climate change, we are constantly going to have this. In the past, on average, in January, we would get seven inches of rainfall. Now, we can get seven inches in a single night. Imagine what happens with all that water. For this year, it seems as though there was no dry season yet. It is raining all the time, the *backlands* are flooding, the coastal areas and in the riverine areas as well. It is basically destroying infrastructure – the roads, washing away bridges and even children are not being able to go to school or access health facilities. I said to them that, as a matter of priority, if in all the riverine areas schools and health clinics are flooded, we will move them to higher grounds. That is a priority right now. We will talk about this for your respective areas that are flooded. We have to prepare for the this in the long run. Every year we do this. Some people do not want to move because they are settled on the bank, and two years later, when the flood comes, it washes away everything. We have to start to look at their communities to see how we could prevent flooding because flooding is here to stay with climate change and with what has been happening globally. I just wanted to say that to you.

The President pointed out how much we have spent so far in these communities, but we still need to do much more. There are lots of things that I have on my agenda, which I wanted to talk to you about today, but I will have the whole week to do so. I just wanted you to know that we are going to ensure that the rights of Indigenous people, which we fought to put in place, and which were not always there, through the law, through the Constitution, through the Amerindian Act, through the establishment of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, and through the establishment of the National Toshaos Council – all were done under the PPP/C – are preserved and grown.

Secondly, we will ensure that we resume development in your community, fastly, in the key areas – education; health; livelihood, such as food security and the creation

of jobs which are priorities; water; community infrastructure; and roads. We have started, in Region 1 and other regions, to do major roads such as from Moruca to Kwebana or from Wauna to Mabaruma. We will now have concrete roads which will go deeper into these areas. It will go into the South Rupununi. We have to do the big roads in a major way first, and then before we come to the smaller roads. It is costing hundreds of dollars, but we have to do to them permanently now. We want to promise you that.

We want to promise you engagement. You do not have anybody coming to your community and lording over you. I have seen the horror stories under APNU/AFC. You do not have to fight for access anymore because you have a Government that is open. These are some of the things that we want.

As the President said, people are saying that we want to dominate the agenda; I saw some of them. When I look at who said that to the newspapers, some of them were with the Opposition. We do not see this as dominating because we are here to listen. If we are not here, we cannot solve the problems.

As General Secretary of the PPP/C, I want to thank you for all that you have done. I know this is a Government forum and I am speaking as Vice-President, but I must say thank you for all the support, too, to the People's Progressive Party/Civic over the years. Thank you very much."

The Mistress of Ceremonies thanked the Vice-President for his presentation.

Elections of the National Toshaos' Council Executive Body



Mr. Carl Singh, Regional Executive Officer (REO), Region 9, was tasked with presiding over the nominations and elections of the Executive body of the NTC.

Mr. Singh reported that they had completed the work for the different clusters and called the names of the representatives for the regions as follows:

Region 1

Jeremey Boyal, Warapoka, Moruca Sub Region
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Desmond James, Red Hill, Mabaruma

Campton Thompson, Sebai, Matarkai (Port Kaituma)
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Region 2

Rudolph Wilson,	Wakapoa, Pomerook-Supenaam
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Sonia Latchman,	Bethany, Pomerook-Supenaam
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Region 3

Hilton Williams	Santa Mission
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Region 4

Timothy Andrews	St. Cuthbert's Mission
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Region 5

Derrick John	Moraikabai
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Region 6

Lewis Devair	Orealla
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Region 7

Mario Hastings	Kako
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Alvin Joseph	Tasserene
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Shane Cornelius	Karrau
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Region 8

Basil Pablo	Kopinang
Candacy Evans	Karisparu
Lincoln Singh	Monkey Mountain

Region 9

Lenny Moses	North Rupununi
Shamir Khan	Yupukari
Michael Thomas	Aishalton

Region 10

Melana Pollard	Riversview
Orlayne Williams	Malali

Mr. Singh noted that the Amerindian Act stipulated that there must be, at least, one representative from every region. Those representatives comprised the NTC, which was a 20-member body. Those representatives were then tasked with electing the Core Executive of the NTC.

Mr. Singh stated that, according to the Amerindian Act, the Minister of Amerindian Affairs was an ex-officio member of the National Tshaos Council and could be present at all meetings of the Executive. He stated that it was customary that, after the representatives were selected from the regions, they would hold their first meeting at which they would elect the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary and, if the need arises, any other office bearer as necessary.

Mr. Singh congratulated the representatives. He reminded that the life of the NTC was three years and stated that the Government would work hard to ensure the dreams and aspirations of all Amerindian people were met, as highlighted by the President. Mr. Singh expressed the hope that *a new page would be turned* and that everyone would work in the best interest of all Amerindians and Guyanese people.

Mr. Singh asked that the 20 representatives be excused from the Dome so that they could conduct the elections of Core Executive of the NTC. He stated that, following those elections, the Council would be adopted and proceed to continue with the forum.

The Conference took a short break at 3.32 p.m. to facilitate the elections of the core executive body of the NTC

Election of the Core Executive of the National Tshaos Council

Following the election of the 20 Executive members, they were tasked with electing the core executive of the NTC. The results of the elections were as follows:

Chairman	
Mr. Derrick John	
Secretary	
Shane Cornelius	
Treasurer	
Michael Thomas	

Brief Remarks by Incoming Chairman, Mr. Derrick John

The newly elected Chairman, Mr. Derrick John, noted there was a challenge in electing a Deputy Chairman since two rounds of nominations resulted in a tie on both occasions. He revealed that the Executive would be meeting again to decide on the way forward in relation to the position of Deputy Chairman.

Mr. John noted that the life of the Executive was less than two years and, therefore, there was a need for them to take the agenda forward. He urged the Tshaos to work over the five-day period to resolve issues and concerns. He informed the Tshaos that the Executive was looking forward to their continued support as they sought to transform the lives of the Amerindian people.

Presentation on Amerindian Land Titling (ALT) Project

Ms. Monica Sharma, Project Manager of the Amerindian Land Titling Project Unit, addressed the Conference on the objectives, progress and work to be done under the Amerindian Land Titling Project.

Ms. Sharma reminded the Conference that the idea, commitment and realisation of achieving climate service revenue for Guyana were derived from the Low Carbon Development Strategy. She stated that, in recognition of 85% of Guyana's land mass being covered in forest and with historically low rates of deforestation, the Government of Guyana had always placed the protection and sustainable management of its forest resources as a major national priority. She stated that the LCDS was launched 13 years ago in an effort to reduce emissions while attracting payments from developed countries for the climate services that our country's forest provided to the world. She reminded the Conference that, later that year, Guyana

signed an historic agreement with the Kingdom of Norway for up to \$250 million euros. Ms. Sharma stated that the agreement represented the first international commitment of financial support to the LCDS and was the first partnership of its kind between a developed and developing country.

Ms. Sharma explained the role of the GRIF Fund in balancing the country's national sovereignty with investment priorities, in ensuring that the given to Guyana adhered to financial, environmental and social safeguards of an agreed international partner entity. She stated that, in the case of the Amerindian Land Titling project, the partner entity was the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Ms. Sharma noted that, with the homegrown vision of securing climate financing commitment, both internationally and locally, the Government had been delivering on its promise of having Guyana's Indigenous population being the first beneficiary of development projects funded through moneys earned by Guyana's standing forest. She reminded the Conference of the Vice-President earlier presentation that the Government was serious about its promises.

Ms. Sharma stated that the Amerindian Land Titling Project was conceptualized around the aim of securing land tenure for Amerindians. Ms. Sharma explained that the contract for the ALT project was signed in 2013 for a three-year period. The implementation started 2014 with project outcomes being clearly stated as securing land tenures for Amerindian villages and communities; increased use of existing and alternative mechanisms to resolve land titling disputes; and informing relevant stakeholders about Amerindian Land Titling mechanism.

Ms. Sharma presented details and supporting figures related to the Amerindian Land Titling project outputs, targets, and achievements for both previous and projected years. She highlighted for the Conference the aims of the projects for the other villages in years ahead.

The Chairman thanked the presenter from the Amerindian Land Titling Department and referred to the extensive work which was evident. He noted that a lot of work still remained to be done. He said that, because land was priority for them, they will continue to work with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and the department for land titling to accomplish more.

Presentation on the Low Carbon Development Strategy

Ms. Predeepa Bholnath, Senior Director, Climate Change, Ministry of Natural Resources stated that her presentation would focus Guyana's new Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030, and that she would be assisted by Ms. Vanessa Benn, who would focus on consultations for the LCDS.

Ms. Bholnath stated that the presentation would give insight into the journey that led to the point at which they were, what had happened over the last eight months in terms of stakeholder engagements across Guyana on LCDS and what lay ahead for

the next eight years with respect to the implementation of the LCDS. She said that the presentation would also show how what was being done collectively in Guyana connects with the global climate conversation, and the implications for the development agenda and our development as a people and at the village level.

Ms. Bolonaugh reminded the Conference of some of the Toshaos who had been involved in the work of the LCDS, the successful bilateral agreement with Norway and its benefits to Guyana. Those she stated would set the stage for movement in this area to 2030. She detailed the benefits gained from the previous bilateral arrangements and the benefits which would aid to us to move to a market-based mechanism. She noted that the forest was doing a tremendous service for the Guyana and the world.

Ms. Bholnath, presented to the Conference the Low Carbon Development Strategy Toward 2030 and noted that the structure of the presentation would be as follows:

1. The background to the LCDS 2030;
2. Summary of the eight-month series of consultation which took place; and
3. The next steps and the opportunities for revenue sharing which were informed by inputs and views of stakeholders.

Ms. Bholnath highlighted for the presentation the contents for the LCDS document and Guyana's early success in low carbon development. The presentation focussed on areas including:

1. The achievements of the LCDS relative to the support for micro and small enterprise, Amerindian Land Titling, ICT access and e-services for hinterland, poor and remote communities and solar power;
2. A clear value proposition on Guyana Forest Carbon Credits;
3. Guyana's current vision and the creation of new incentives for a low carbon economy;
4. Guyana's Monitoring, Reporting and Verification system and its alignment with global climate and biodiversity goals;
5. Creating new incentives for a low carbon economy;
6. Protecting against climate change and biodiversity loss; and
7. Stimulating future low carbon growth and the development of human capital in a low carbon economy.

Ms. Benn, Coordinator, LCDS Stakeholder Consultations, Office of the President, extended congratulations to the new elected Executive of the National Toshaos's Council. She reminded the Conference that the LCDS 2030 was launched by President Ali on 28th October, 2021. Ms. Bond noted that, at that launch of the LCDS, four months had been allotted for the process of building awareness of citizens across Guyana on the LCDS and to receive feedbacks, recommendations and suggestions on how the document could be refined and how the beneficiaries could be clearly determined.

Ms. Benn informed the Conference that, despite COVID-19 pandemic, the process of consultation commenced in November, 2021, by utilising the *Zoom* platform and other virtual forms of media to engage persons from various representative groups. She indicated that, subsequently, the consultative process included a face-to-face aspect. The process was then taken to communities and villages across Guyana by utilising a cluster approach.

Ms. Benn presented to the Conference, thereafter, the details of the stakeholder engagements and consultations on the LCDS which took place over past eight months. Ms. Benn highlighted the following:

1. Some of what was being done to raise public awareness on the Low Carbon Development Strategy;
2. The LCDS intent;
3. The beneficiaries of the LCDS; and
4. How the LCDS will be implemented.

Ms. Benn highlighted a photograph that was taken with students of the University of Guyana along with a delegation made up of dignitaries from the Kingdom of Norway. She made special mention of Mr. Ovid Williams, the Logistics Coordinator, who facilitated the LCDS 2030 document being translated into the nine Indigenous languages.

Ms. Bholanath continued the presentation with focus on the following areas:

1. Next steps and the opportunities for revenue sharing, informed by inputs and views of stakeholders;
2. Investing in the Future: Carbon Markets:
 - Guyana's objectives;
 - Untitled Communities and forest-based communities;
 - Engagement with the chosen market standard;
 - Sale of Guyana's credits; and
 - Ensuring a fair sharing of revenues.
3. Investing payments and sharing benefits/revenues;
4. Factors to consider for mechanism investing earnings from REDD+ at IPLC:
 - Titled, untitled communities and forest-based communities;
 - Forest lands, savannah lands, wetlands and other ecosystems;
 - Investments in broad range of livelihood programmes (including on education); and
 - Focus on unique circumstances of each village or community.
5. Opting into the ART-TREES revenue sharing mechanism; and

6. Feedback from stakeholders during the eight-month consultation LCDS 2030 priorities for Indigenous peoples and local communities.

Dr. Singh, Minister of Finance, thanked Ms. Predeepa Bholanath and Ms. Vanessa Benn for their presentations to the NTC Conference. He noted that the presentations were very comprehensive and that there was a lot of information which were contained in the presentations which helped to clear up potential misinformation and misunderstanding.

Dr. Singh posited that the Government wanted to ensure that everyone, including Indigenous leaders and each Toshao, who were political and villages leaders, understood the LCDS. He added that he had heard, occasionally, reference to the revenues which were earned under the LCDS and noted that it was usually said that it was Norway's money or that it was a Norwegian aid. Dr. Singh clarified that some of the projects were managed through development partners such as the UNDP in the case of the ALT. He emphasised that the forest of Guyana was providing a service to the world in terms of storage and absorption of carbon dioxide.

Dr. Singh clarified further for the Conference how Guyana was earning its revenues under its partnership with Norway and the new LCDS under the market-base mechanisms which were being pursued, including the sale of carbon credits through market mechanisms. He clarified also for the Conference the misconceptions about the Guyana REDD+ Investment Fund (GRIF) and the sale of carbon credits under the LCDS. Dr. Singh noted that the revenues belonged to Guyana and were to be spent using Guyana's national systems.

Dr. Singh thanked all presenters for their presentations made to the Conference and thanked, also, all the Tshaos for the attention which they paid to the presentations.

Adoption of the NTC Agenda

The NTC Conference 2022 agenda was adopted by Mr. Cornelius, Secretary of the NTC.

See Appendix for full Agenda

Conclusion

The Chairman of the NTC concluded day 1 of the Conference by indicating that the Tshaos looked forward for continued dialogue with the Government and other stakeholders for the remainder of the Conference. He thanked the presenters, the President and Members of Cabinet for being present at the Conference.

Day 1 adjourned at 6.14 p.m.

Day 2 – Tuesday 12th July, 2022**Call to Order**

The second day of the National Toshias Conference was called to order at 8.57 a.m. by the Chairman of the National Toshias Council (NTC), Mr. Derrick John. The National Pledge was recited by all.

Mr. Chairman noted the density of the agenda of Day 2 and informed the Conference that, for the day, dialogue with Cabinet Ministers would commence. Mr. John invited the Prime Minister to address the Conference.

Sectoral Issues – Dialogue with Cabinet Members**Presentation by Prime Minister, Hon. Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips**

“Good morning, Cabinet colleagues, Toshias from all 10 administrative regions of Guyana and Regional Chairmen. All protocols observed. As you heard, I am the Prime Minister, Mark Phillips, and I am here to *start the ball rolling* this morning with some presentations from the agencies under my responsibility. In the military, I would have said ‘under my command’.

The Prime Minister is responsible for many areas. With regard to the areas which impact your communities, I will focus our presentation on those areas.

Firstly, the Guyana Post Office Corporation (GPOC) comes under the Prime Minister and also the Civil Defence Commission (CDC). Both agencies would have done positive work with all your communities. The work of the CDC, especially during times of disaster, brings relief to your communities. In addition to the two that I mentioned, there are some other agencies which are responsible for delivering on the PPP/C’s manifesto to you. I can quickly recall that, in the 2020 manifesto, with which we went to the General and Regional Elections, we promised to deliver in

many sectors and on many areas during the period 2020 to 2025. Two of those important areas fall under the purview of the Prime Minister.

The first is energy. If I should go to the manifesto, it states clearly that:

“Energy is key for the economic growth of Guyana and for an improved quality of life for all Guyanese. The PPP/C is committed to providing affordable, stable and reliable energy to benefit both households and businesses. We will implement a programme with an energy-mix that includes hydropower, solar and wind, which will lead to more than 400 Megawatts of newly-installed capacity for residential and commercial-industrial users.”

We listed some areas and these commitments, of course, will impact our communities.

1. Complete the Amaila Falls Hydro Project, moving towards clean, reliable, affordable power supply;
2. Produce in excess of 200 MW in the interim, from natural gas; and
3. Invest in solar and wind systems for off-grid areas.”

For many of you, your communities are located in off-grid areas. They are not part of the Demerara-Berbice interconnected System. So, we are investing heavily, as you will hear in the next presentation, in ensuring that we bridge the energy divide. Everyone knows about the digital divide, and I call this the energy divide in Guyana. It is to ensure that you and your communities get electrical power.

4. Expand the Hinterland Electrification Programme

This is a programme which has been there since the last PPP/C Government and we will continue to expand and ensure that areas throughout Guyana receive electricity under that programme, even though it is fossil fuel based.

5. Replace and upgrade solar panels in the hinterland.

I would not go into much detail because that will come out in the next presentation.

6. Take urgent action to improve and upgrade the national grid (transmission and distribution)

Those are the areas that will impact positively on your communities. With regard to ICT, we recognise that:

“Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is key to building an economy for the future and supporting national development.”

Through its manifesto and as we govern today:

“The PPP/C is committed to developing the infrastructure and providing the enabling environment to promote the use of ICT across Guyana.”

This includes all of your communities, villages, *et cetera*:

“This will enable optimal household use of ICT and eliminate the digital gap and unequal access within Guyana and between Guyana and other countries. ICT will be used to catalyse development in education, health, industry and agriculture by reducing transaction costs, and improving effectiveness, efficiency and productivity.”

We will:

“Promote e-Governance, which will improve the productivity of businesses and delivery of government services through the introduction of e-health, e-education, e-security, e-agriculture, electronic permit and licence processing, etc.”

In less than three months after taking Office, we did something which we consider very important and very transformational for Guyana. We have liberalised the telecommunications sector. This means that anyone who wanted to invest in the telecommunications sector can do with easier access than before. We are allowing more fibre optic cables to [inaudible] in Guyana, which will, in itself, help to improve the service throughout Guyana.

Another important thing we have done is that in the first budget we presented, we removed value-added tax (VAT) on data. We recognise that ICT is an enabler not for providing services, only, to the people, but for job creation. The ICT sector, therefore, if properly incentivised, can generate thousands of new jobs through co-investment providing infrastructure support, State-sponsored training and employment opportunities for the disabled.

Information and Communications Technology and energy, as I mentioned earlier, fall under the purview of the Prime Minister. I just give you an outline as to our approach from a policy direction for the promotion and expansion of ICT and energy throughout Guyana to ensure all the people of Guyana, wherever they are located, benefited from the two areas.

At this stage, I will invite some presentations, starting with the presentation by Dr. Sharma, then we will have a presentation by Mr. Ronald Harsawack and then Mr. Deen on ICT. We will deal with the energy sector first and all that is being done in terms of bridging the energy divide and then we will do the ICT.”

Presentation by Dr. Mahender Sharma, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Guyana Energy Agency (GEA)



Dr. Sharma stated that the Prime Minister had set the tone in envisioning Guyana's energy mix. He posited that the President's vision, the party's vision and the Government's vision were focused on the promotion of energy security and having a mix of hydro-solar wind gas to meet Guyana's growing energy needs. Dr. Sharma posited, further, that the policy framework was premised on that vision and that it examined decoupling economic growth from the use of fossil fuel for Guyana.

Dr. Sharma indicated that Government's Hinterland Electrification Programme (HEP) incorporated the utilisation of the most technically and economically feasible solutions, provision of energy to the hinterland regions and enhancing mini-grids, provision of long-term sustainability of those mini-grids and a provision of a programme to be implemented.

Dr. Sharma highlighted for the Conference some of the initiatives which were being undertaken:

1. A solar photovoltaic (PV) system at Bartica Hospital;
2. The 0.4 megawatts solar farm at Mabaruma, Region 1; and
3. The 1-megawatt solar farm at Lethem, Region 9, which was in its testing stage.

He noted that the testing commissioning procedure was in its finalisation stage and that it was expected to be online in the current week or early in the upcoming week.

4. 1.5 solar farm at Bartica, Region 7, which was close to completion.

He highlighted the trouble which was being experienced with global supply logistics chain. Dr. Sharma pointed out that the pandemic had affected manufacturing, production of key components – panes, batteries, inverters, conductors, cables, transmission line components. He stated that the manufacturing of a key

communication cable to run between the farm and the power station was not yet completed. Dr. Sharma noted that the manufacturing timeline continued to be shifted. He noted, also, the difficulty which could be experienced with getting the cables into the shipping queue after manufacture.

Dr. Sharma updated the Conference that the GEA had recently completed a number of solar PV installations on Region 1:

1. Mabruma radio station
2. Red Hill health post
3. Barima Health Centre; and
4. Wauna Primary School;
5. Moruca Health Covid Centre;
6. Arakaka Primary; and
7. Santa Rosa.

Dr. Sharma stated that the GEA was examining solar powered street lighting. He stated that those had been installed in various locations. He stated, further, that the GEA had been actively assisting with repair of PV systems across the country. He encouraged Toshao, villages leaders and representatives to inform the GEA about defunct solar PV systems in communities so that they could be addressed.

Dr. Sharma stated that they had been supporting the installation of the information and communications technology (ICT) hubs. He informed the conference that in excess of 36 installations had been done in various locations to date at the following areas:

- Karia Karia
- Laluni
- Siparuta
- Karrau
- Kartabo
- Batavia
- Maicobe
- Princeville
- Kwatamang
- Saurama
- Annai
- Mururanau
- Shulinab
- Toka
- Riversview

Please see appendix for full list of all locations.

He stated that they had also received a small grant from the International Solar Alliance (ISA) which was utilised for an installation of an ICT hub at the Orealla Health Centre, which was nearing completion.

Dr. Sharma reported that work was ongoing on 13 government buildings across Regions 2, 3, 7, 9 and 10 at primary schools and health centres. The work should be completed by the end of the year. *Please see appendix for list of all locations.*

Further, the Hinterland Electrification Company Inc. (HECI) had completed nine solar powered mini grids. In addition, the GEA was implementing another programme to install 19 mini grids to power public and community buildings at a cost of \$718 million. The expected time of completion was in the next 5 months and some 231 buildings were expected to benefit. *Please see appendix for list of locations.*

Dr. Sharma highlighted that another major programme was the procurement of 30,000 solar home systems for hinterland and riverine communities through financing agreement with the Government of India. He noted, however, that the procurement would be completed in the first quarter of 2023.

Dr. Sharma informed the conference that the Guyana Power and Light (GPL) Inc had tendered for 33 megawatt solar farms which had culminated into quite a number of solar photovoltaic installations over the next two years.

Dr. Sharma posited that the initiative for solar-powered freezers in some communities was very useful since they were able to generate revenue. He noted that it was an example of how renewable energy could be used for production opportunities in hinterland communities.

The Head of the GEA shared with the conference that the GEA had designed, piloted and constructed a solar food dryer at a cost of approximately \$500,000. He noted that the initiative had been piloted in a number of communities and had resulted in the reduction of time used to dry food and the increase in access to international markets.

The communities of Kwakwani, Lethem, Mabaruma, Mahdia, Port Kaituma and Matthew's Ridge benefited from free light-emitting diode (LED) changeouts, and the programme would be expanded in 2022 to include the communities of Bartica, Linden, Wakenaam and Leguan, the GEA Head explained.

Dr. Sharma stated that the first batch of solar powered batteries given to households were improperly disposed of and recommended that the batteries be recycled. The Prime Minister agreed with the recommendation and stated that efforts would be made to have same implemented.

Mr. Ronald Harsawack, Project Manager of the ICT Access and eServices Project for Hinterland, Poor and Remote Communities pointed to the aptness of the theme for Amerindian communities across Guyana. He noted that his research had revealed that there was a direct link between good governance and higher levels of development. He emphasised on the remarks made by the President and Vice-

President on the first day of the Conference in which they had pointed out that the investments the Government had made in Amerindian communities in the past two years totalled approximately \$50 billion for infrastructural works.

Mr. Harsawack informed the Conference that prior to 2015, the Government had embarked on an ICT programme to benefit the hinterland communities. He stated that the participants may have experienced the difficulties in accessing government services, travelling to government ministries, among others, and the redesigned ICT programme would address some of these challenges. He stated that the programme would also bridge the digital divide between the coast and the hinterland and ensure that Government services were equally accessible to all Guyanese. Mr. Harsawack pointed out that during 2015 to 2020 period, much was not done on the project.

Mr. Ronald Harsawack disclosed that a significant amount of money had been granted to village councils for the construction of hubs and that while many of those hubs have been constructed there has been a notable delay since 2015. He disclosed further that many of those hubs have gone into a state of disrepair and were unusable for the intended purpose.

Mr. Harsawack informed the Conference that following the project's redesign, it was decided that the project would be reinvigorated. Conditional assessments were done whereby communities and councils were visited so as to ascertain the state of the ICT hubs. He offered to share the schedule of the team's visits with the Conference.

Mr. Harsawack stated that the intention of the team was to ensure that the buildings or facilities met the required criteria to house the ICT hubs. A methodology was developed to engage the authorities to construct the buildings and a decision was taken to have the council construct hubs so as to ensure that technical capacity was built in the various communities, employment was created, and the village economies were stimulated. He posited that were mixed results and a few issues and challenges that were being addressed with the councils as it related to the construction of the hubs. He provided details in relation to the number of hinterland, poor and remote communities that were being dealt with and disclosed that grants of varying monetary values were issued to 90 of those communities. Mr. Harsawack listed the grants issued to the various regions.

The Conference was informed that, currently, 65 sites had ongoing construction with a 75% completion rate being estimated and an end of July deadline was given. Following those 65 hubs' completions, the next stage of installation would commence. To date, 25 hubs were fully operational with ICT equipment being deployed. Thirty-six sites have been fully powered with photovoltaic equipment and renewable power. Training would also commence with all the village councils on a continual basis. Mr. Harsawack explained the process for that training and the expected outcome which would produce persons to fix, maintain, manage and operate the hubs. At the end of the training, certificates would be issued. There was also a component which dealt with language preservation and consultations were ongoing with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs to use ICT to document, promote and archive the language. This was expected to commence in August.

On the issue of connectivity and connecting the hubs to the internet, the Office of the President and the Prime Minister have been engaged on the best solution to connectivity. Cost effective ways were being examined on sustaining the connectivity throughout the end of the project. Mr. Harsawack stated that the options available for internet connectivity for the various communities would be made available.

Mr. Harsawack displayed for the Conference pictures of the stages of installation of the ICT hubs in the various regions. He then opened the floor for questions from participants and disclosed that specific requests would be facilitated at a later date.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Harsawack for his presentation. He informed the Conference that the money identified for the solar panels to be distributed to 30,000 households was available. He noted that the issue was not money but was related to the supply chain.

Presentation by Mr. Christopher Deen, General Manager of the National Data Management Authority (NDMA)



Mr. Christopher Deen, General Manager, National Data Management Authority (NDMA) presented to the Conference the mandate of the Government to bridge the digital divide, which was a basic human right. The NDMA, through its various initiatives, has been addressing the need to be connected in the hinterland communities with the establishment of 130 locations to provide connectivity.

Mr. Deen stated that connectivity was being provided through the NDMA to over 50,000 residents across the region and entailed the provision of free internet access to public spaces or mobile internet solutions. One essential ingredient to the success of any of the NDMA's projects undertaken was the sense of ownership by individuals and communities. Mr. Deen noted that a more innovative approach was needed by establishing a system of first responders and the training of technical persons in the communities. He pointed to the benefits of these approaches and posited that the NDMA was willing to work with communities under the ICT project, especially on maintaining the NDMA's satellites installation within the various villages.

Mr. Deen stated that the NDMA had been working, despite the challenges of COVID-19, to continue with its provision of services. He provided details of the services that the NDMA was providing to the various villages and communities and the benefits of those services in having access to Government agencies and families and friends.

Mr. Deen informed the conference that focus was placed on improving the ability to provide more services to the various communities within the hinterland and, as was mentioned by his colleague, they had been working on satellite ground stations and other alternate technologies. Mr. Deen extended an invitation for dialogue to the communities in which the NDMA did not have a presence so as to begin working closely together to bridge the digital divide whilst making connectivity possible.

Mr. Sharouk Husain relayed that the Office of the Prime Minister through the Industry and Innovation unit “had a mandate to create an enabling environment that will support the infusion of Information Communication Technology as a functional tool for development to equip Indigenous brothers and sisters with the requisite knowledge to bridge the ICT gap to facilitate development and change.

The unit had embarked on a human capital development programme to encourage employment and entrepreneurship for Guyanese. In this regard, train the trainer workshops were held in Region 1 – Moruca and Region 9 – Annai, which consisted of the following modules:

- ✓ Computer fundamentals
- ✓ Intermediate and Advance Word Processing
- ✓ Advance Internet Computing
- ✓ Cyber Security and Internet Safety
- ✓ Programming
- ✓ Training Methodologies

The outcome of the training was to train others in the communities to become proficient in ICT. In both regions, a combined total of 62 persons were trained, 62% females and 38% males. The expansion of this training in many other villages would be done in 2023 to address the urgent need for ICT training. This will be accomplished through the collaborative efforts of Mr. Harsawack’s ICT Access project, NDMA and the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. Various social media platforms would also be employed to disseminate technology-related information.

The Prime Minister thanked Mr. Husain for presenting and invited questions and or comments from the Conference. He also disclosed that they had earmarked and expended huge amounts of moneys between the period August 02, 2020 to present, to bridge the energy and digital divide. They also committed to ensuring all projects and programmes be completed so that all of Guyana could benefit.

Questions and Answers

Toshao Michael Williams of Annai Village, Region 9, after thanking the Prime Minister and team for their presentations, spoke about the Orealla solar farm, which

was being funded through the Indian Foundation and Government of Guyana. However, he had not heard anything about Annai Central, which was awarded a similar project, sought clarity on the issue.

Dr. Sharma, in responding to the question on Orealla's and Annai's solar farms, indicated he had mentioned the health center at Orealla and that there was no tender for any solar farms. The installation at Orealla pertained to a 9 kilowatts system at the health centre, and for Annai, a solar mini grid powering the public and community buildings.

Toshao Michael Wilson Jnr, Rupunau, Region 9, thanked the Prime Minister for the investment funds given to each community before reporting that Rupunau and Waymore were in the process of constructing their ICT hub and he enquired whether the ICT hub would contain its own system or needed to rely on the internet currently available. He stated that Waymore, a satellite village located 7 miles away from Rupunau, would require a general system to be installed to facilitate such.

Secondly, because of its remoteness, Rupunau required reliable internet access which was not operational at the moment. A request was made for persons from the Office of the Prime Minister to visit the community to check on the condition of the ICT hub to ensure reliable internet and, at the same time, there was a need for more solar panels to supply more electricity.

The Prime Minister responded by saying the NDMA was in the process of effecting repairs to ICT hubs in Region 9 through its ongoing programme. This was made difficult at times due to COVID-19, among other issues, over the last year. However, a commitment was made to reach that community as soon as possible.

Mr. Deen stated that the National Data Management Authority had been collaborating with village councils to build retrofit or upgrade ICT hubs. He noted that Region 9 hubs may have been completed, but that air conditioning needed to be assessed in order to determine what else could be done to upgrade the hub to the required standard. He noted, further, that they were currently addressing the communities in North and Central Rupununi and stated that, within a few weeks, South- Central and South Rupununi would be addressed.

Relative to the issue of the solar panels, Mr. Deen stated that the ICT hub would have a standalone system where 5,000 watts of power would be provided to that building. He stated that the existing panels could be repurposed for another community building within the said community. He noted that the Prime Minister had addressed the issue and that NDMA was taking note of the repairs which needed to be done. Mr. Deen posited that there were 89 such sites in the hinterland and that aggressive works were being undertaken to have the sites operational.

Ms. Sharon Phillips, CDC Chairman of Matthews Ridge, Region 1, noted that she was unaware about an ICT hub which pertained to Matthews Ridge. She noted that training was done, but not in Matthews Ridge. Ms. Phillips enquired whether Matthews Ridge was included in the list of places to receive ICT hubs.

Ms. Phillips requested an update on the extension to Minab and Upper Pakera electricity on the grid. She pointed to an area which was earmarked for the establishment of a solar farm and requested an update.

The Prime Minister responded in the positive to the issue raised concerning ICT. He noted that NDMA would be examining how best to improve and expand the free Wi-Fi for Matthews Ridge. The Prime Minister noted, also, that Matthews Ridge was a huge area which would be consisted of several hubs and stated that the hubs in that community would be expanded.

Mr. Deen stated the NDMA had an installation at Matthews Ridge, but that it could examine others. He requested that leaders reach out to NDMA for a dialogue to be convened.

In relation to Rupunau, the Prime Minister noted that attempts were made to conduct services in this village, but that the flood waters had prevented the team from visiting. He requested that the leaders of Rupunau inform NDMA as soon as the situation had abated. He stated that the locations needed to be known for an assessment to be conducted.

In relation to the power expansion to Minab and Pakera Region 1, Mr. Horace Williams indicated that the procurement for the materials had commenced. He pointed to some of issues being experienced with delays, manufacturing, and shipping. He noted that, as a result of those delays, it was anticipated that the project would not be completed by the end of year. Mr. Williams stated that efforts were being made to have the areas electrified in early 2023.

Mr. Troy Peters, Toshao, Kwebanna, Region 1, complemented the Government for the excellent job being done since they took Office. He enquired about the electrification for public buildings and whether Kwebanna was included for 2022. He enquired, further, if persons who completed training for ICT hubs would receive stipend or a salary. The response was that there was a mini grid for Kwebanna which should be completed by the end of 2022. He stated that power would be provided to 14 public and community buildings.

Mr. Harasawack informed the Conference that the project did not incorporate a component which dealt with remuneration, salary or stipend. He noted that the persons trained would be certified subsequent to undertaking the training. He noted that efforts could be made to utilise someone who was already receiving a stipend to undertake those functions. The Prime Minister added that the issue of stipend would be discussed at a higher level and that the outcome/decisions of the discussion would be conveyed.

The Minister of Amerindian Affairs stated that herself and Mr. Harasawack had been in collaboration and that the Community Service Officers (CSOs) who were already receiving a stipend were the targeted population for training and management of the ICT hubs. She noted that that there was a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Housing and Water. The Minister posited noted that the already

stipend CSOs were being trained in management and maintenance of the water system in the communities.

The Prime Minister thanked the Conference for listening to the presentations and for asking questions and requesting answers and responses.

Ms. Malena Pollard, Toshao, Riversview, Region 10, commended the Government for the great work that it had been doing and noted that Riversview was not an exception. She drew the Conference's attention the national data system in the village, the ICT hub and soon to be constructed solar mini-grid. She noted that, at Falmouth, none of those infrastructure had been constructed and pointed to the distance from which the villagers had to travel by boat to get to Riversview Central in order to access facilities.

Ms. Pollard enquired whether an ICT hub would be constructed in Falmouth and whether the Office of the Prime Minister would be willing to outfit it with computers. She enquired, further, whether NDMA would be able to provide Wi-Fi to that hub.

The Prime Minister indicated that, immediately, he would direct the NDMA to visit Falmouth to conduct a survey and install internet. He enquired from Mr. Harasawack whether Falmouth was part of the list of projects. Mr. Harasawack indicated that the initial 200 projects catered for Riversview. He noted that Falmouth was considered a satellite village of Riversview and that it was not included on the list. He committed to reviewing the list of 200 projects and based on budgetary allocations and availability of funding, some addition could be made to the list. He agreed to a review in collaboration with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs to ascertain whether additional villages may require ICT hubs.

Mr. Wenceslaus Albert, Toshaos from Deep South Achawib, stated that the village was still awaiting a visit from Mr. Harasawack to examine the site and the equipment. Mr. Harasawack stated that the districts had been grouped and that Achawib would be visited when Rupunau was visited. He promised that the same services which were received by other communities would be delivered to Achawib.

Mr. Morris Torres of Santa Rosa, Region 1, suggested that a criterion be established for the selection process of those persons who would be trained to be ICT technicians. He requested that the village council be included in the selection process for persons to be trained as ICT technicians and not only the CSOs should be trained. He noted that, in some instances, the CSOs did not possess the competency for such training.

The Prime Minister responded that the selection process should not be done only through the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs but should involve the village councils in the discussion. The Minister of Amerindian Affairs clarified that the CSOs are selected by the village councils and not by the Ministry. She stated that, in relation to training, the Ministry collaborated with Mr. Harasawack on the persons to be selected. The Minister noted that it was the Ministry's expectation that all candidates for training were fairly selected. She indicated that the decision to train the CSOs was geared towards empowering vulnerable groups within the communities. The

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport conveyed the Government's confidence in the ability of the CSOs to be trained.

A Toshao enquired about the plans of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) for boosting the internet signal in remote areas. He enquired whether checks would be done on the internet service provider to ensure they were capable of providing the service.

The Prime Minister responded that the Office of the Prime Minister was currently exploring several options to provide the best internet and expanded bandwidth to the hinterland in order to ensure they fully accessed all Government services.

The Toshao expressed gratitude to the Government for its efforts in trying to bridge the communication gap between the hinterland and coastal communities.

Mr. Flagon Carter, Toshao for Rockstone, stated that he was informed that the team from the National Data Management Authority (NDMA) was scheduled to visit his area and enquired about the date and time of that scheduled visit.

Toshao Carter stated that access to cellular service continued to be an issue in his community and noted that any actions to address same would be welcomed. He stated, further, that the community had previously written the GEA for the setting up of solar power in the community but there had been no response. He requested that the village council be reimbursed for moneys overspent on the ICT hubs and enquired whether there were any plans to provide internet connectivity to the schools in the area since teachers were conducting online courses.

The Prime Minister informed Toshao Carter that the issues identified were currently being addressed. He noted that there was a cost attached to such an initiative and that the Government was exploring all options to provide the needed service at an acceptable cost to Government. The Prime Minister requested that time be given to address the issues.

Paul Ckekema, Toshao of Konashen, Deep South Rupununi, Region 9, stated that the ICT hubs had been completed but nothing had been done to the computers and no training had been done. He also enquired about internet access.

The Prime Minister pointed to the challenges in accessing the remote location. He noted that the Office of the Prime Minister would continue to monitor the climatic conditions and would have the NDMA on standby to fix the internet to aid in better communication.

The Chairman informed the Toshias that those who had been unable to raise their concerns due to time constraints could submit same to the Secretary of the National Toshias Council (NTC) for them to be forwarded to the relevant agencies.

Thereafter, the interaction with the Office of the Prime Minister was concluded.

Presentation by Hon. Priya Manickchand, Minister of Education

Ms. Priya Manickchand, Minister of Education, informed the conference that she was accompanied by her senior team from the Ministry in order to provide clarity to all issues and concerns. She, thereafter, made the following presentation.

“If I were to give you a brief introduction to the Ministry of Education, I would begin by saying that, for the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C), the party presently in Government, education is the strategic pathway through which we will change this country and we are not unclear about that. There are many interventions that are being taken for which you will see immediate results. If you build a bridge, you will get to use it right away. When we build or repair a road, we get to use it right away. We are very certain that the Guyana we want to build is going to be reflected in your educated children and we are very sure about that.

While heavy investments are being made infrastructurally and otherwise, there has been a long-standing commitment about providing education and doing that equitably and equally. In a huge part of our manifesto, if you were to relook at it, you would see that we speak... manifestos by their very nature are short. It is just a statement of intention. It is when we come into Government that we actually manifest that statement and implement it. We spoke very clearly about bringing equity and equality to the sector. What that really means, in very clear language, is that we will treat the hinterland and riverine areas as we treat the coastland. In Guyana, that is what equity means; nothing else. This is because everyone else is on the same platform. When we said that we were going to bring equity to the sector that was exactly what we meant.

Having come into Office for the first time in five years, we actually have a published sector plan. The first time this country went without a published sector plan from 1993 to now was between 2015-2020. For that sector plan, which is very bad by the way, we made sure we got together and determined the pathway the Ministry will

take in the next five years. We published that in 2021. A sector plan is a very straight forward document. This is what we want to achieve, and these are the routes we will take to get there. A main pillar of that is to bring about equity and equality in the sector. Again, when we say that, we specifically mean changing the way we deliver education to the hinterland and riverine regions, as well as seeing a better output and outcome. We are very clear what we want to do.

As a matter of pillars, we want to make sure every child has access. Whether they are at nursery, primary or secondary, every child all across this country could go to a nursery school, a primary school or a secondary school. That is what we mean by access. Once we get the children into the classrooms, which means we have to build schools, we have to extend schools and we have to put annexes and so on, then we want to make sure that the quality is equal and high in every classroom. To get better quality education, we are going to have to make significant investments in teachers' training. So, let us talk about that a little.

In 2021, we took the teachers' training college wholly online but not solely online. I will explain what that means. Before 2021, the highest number of intake that the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) has ever been able to accept was 535 persons. When we went online, we were immediately able to accept into the college 2,000 persons, five times the amount we were able to accept before. What we saw was that, traditionally, hinterland teachers who came to be trained or hinterland persons who came to be trained as teachers almost always took the Trained Teacher Certificate (TTC), that is a certificate course. As soon as we said to the country at large that you could all access this online, we saw the numbers for TTC, which is a reduced qualification, going down in the hinterland and the associate degree numbers going up. This was because teachers could now access that programme where they could never have done that before.

Our aim, and fingers crossed, is in four years to be able to say proudly as a nation that 100% of our teachers are trained or are in training. That is something we have never been able to achieve before. In fact, we will be one of the first countries in the region, both South America as well as the Caribbean Region, to achieve that.

Trained teachers in your children's classroom will change the quality. Textbooks for all your children will change their ability and their outcome.

In relation to Rupunau, I saw the Toshao was speaking earlier. Hello, sir. We had a student last year who took the textbooks we gave, removed herself from Rupunau because she did not have electricity and would have been limited in the number of hours she spent. She went to Lethem, and she was able to do that because all the schools were closed because of COVID-19. She did some online work that were available, and she is at Queen's College today. That, my friends, is what textbooks do for children today.

I see the People's National Congress (PNC), particularly, and the Alliance For Change (AFC) saying we should not attach conditions to the cash grants and that one should get the cash grant whether he or she brought back the textbooks or not. There are some other enlightened persons holding that view also. Let me say this, throughout

the history of this country, the return of textbooks has always precipitated the award of other services. I had to give back my textbooks before I got my Caribbean Examinations Council Examinations (CXC) results. I could not find one and they did not give me my slip until I got the book. The reason it was never attached to a cash grant was because we never had a cash grant before. I am saying to you, and I am very pleased to say that the majority of people in this country, including parents, are very interested in returning the textbooks and have been returning them. I am pointing out to you how very important it is to have those kinds of services in every home, in every classroom and the kind of outcome we get from it, once we do.

In cash grants last year to Regions 1,7,8 and 9, we distributed about \$618 million. This year, at \$30,000 per child, it is going to be just over \$1 billion. We will do that in the first week in August.

We announced recently the GROW Programme – Get Ready for Opportunities to Work. That is really a programme where we are saying to persons who were unable to access or finish their secondary education or finish it successfully, that they have another chance here to do what would be almost like CXC. It is the General Education Development (GED) programme, which is an American programme, that their children exit high school with or the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SEQF), which is a Scottish programme that allowed their children to exit high school. Once they do, children and adults who never had a future and could never access tertiary education, will be able to get into universities that recognise these exit qualifications. That is a second chance offered to your students. I think I see Ms. Sukhai looking at me crossly, so, perhaps, my 10 minutes is coming to an end.

There are two realities I want to leave with you here. To bring about equity in your villages, in our villages means that we have to invest more per capita. I want you to hear that. We do that without apology and without reservation. We actually have to put more into Rupunau than we would Kitty Primary to be able to get the same results from Rupunau we would at Kitty Primary because of distance and because of the small number of students. We actually will be and have been investing more into the hinterland communities to get to the point of equity.

The other reality is that because we have decentralised education, health and some other services, there is a hybrid system of responsibility for education in the region. It is shared between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. The Ministry of Education has responsibility for policies, curricula, training teachers and outcomes. The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development has a responsibility for administering education in the region, building, repairs and getting services to you. It is one Government and President Ali has been very clear about where he wants the Government to go. That is one of the realities that exists. Many of you do already because you have been making contact with me and we have been about to resolve many things. Before I sit, I will give you my number and invite you to not hesitate to send a WhatsApp to me any time you have any issues. I might not always answer your call. If my phone is ringing right now, I cannot answer it because I am speaking to you. There are many times that I

cannot actually answer, but once you send a WhatsApp message with a concern or a query, we will get back to you within 24 hours. That is my personal cell, so please feel free to use it.

We are very glad here today to be able to answer any questions you have or dreams you might want to see fulfilled. Let us talk about how we can get that going. I thank you.”

Questions and Answers

The Chairman opened the floor and invited Toshihos to make their comments and pose their questions. He reminded that Toshihos needed to state their names and villages before making their presentations.

Toshiho Jeremy Boyal, Warapoka, Moruca, Region 1, thanked the Minister for her presentation and thanked her for the provision of equity in education in Guyana through the Ministry of Education. He noted the excitement of the children with the provision of such an opportunity. He stated that with the current settings, the use of the television in classroom was distracting to other students and recommended, on behalf of the Moruca District, that schools be built with smart classrooms to facilitate exercises which involved the use of television.

Toshiho Boyal expressed another concern about the crowding of classrooms. He recommended the consideration of the population growth when building classrooms.

The Minister of Education, in her response, stated that the Planning Department of the Ministry would usually utilise a formula based on how children were born over the last five years and projections would be made. The Minister stated that the Ministry was currently working on a document containing information on where schools needed to be built, extended or repaired.

On the issue of televisions in classroom, the Minister reported that 54% of schools in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 had television sets and access to the Guyana Learning Channel (GLC).

The Minister of Education spoke on issues surrounding lessons for National Grade Six Assessment Examination (NGSA) and the Guyana Learning Channel with the hope that the project would be 100% completed by yearend. She also stated that all the villages and riverain areas would have access to the Guyana Learning Channel and a radio station dedicated to education and learning, which included news programmes and cable television-networks. When the programme was conceived, it was the desire for each class to have its own television set. However, one issue that was not catered for was the size of the schools and this led to too many sets being sent. The suggestion was made to allow the entire village to enjoy viewership and not limit the usage of the televisions for just school programmes. The kit being provided to all the schools in the regions included television sets and solar power along with satellite.

Toshiho Boyal spoke about not wanting to be misunderstood in terms of the \$30,000 cash grant. On the return of textbooks, he spoke of an incident whereby the books

suffered water damaged as a result of the boat capsizing while the children were on their way to school. The Minister admitted there needed to be order in the country where one ought not to take what does not belong to one. She indicated that the Ministry was willing to work with communities to resolve issues surrounding the issues of textbooks and the issuance of cash grants.

Toshao Trevor Mathison, Baramita, Matarkai, Region 1, revealed there was a shortage of teachers since only three trained teachers, who were not from the area, were being assisted by two CSOs due to the language barriers. He then recommended that the CSOs be trained as teachers.

The Minister scheduled a meeting with the Toshao to resolve the issue along with the submission of names of the two persons who were earmarked to be trained. She further clarified that in Region 1, 99 new appointments were added to the teaching service. Unfortunately, Baramita was not one of the areas chosen for the filling of vacancies. A promise was made to have it rectified.

Representative of Canal Bank, Region 1 and on Matarkai leaders' behalf, while indicating he was one of the newly appointed teachers in the region, highlighted the following issues:

- (1) The need for a welfare officer in the subregion to deal with frequent absence of children at schools;
- (2) The needed for a dorm parent to overlook dorms at the school in Port Kaituma as that function was being performed by a cleaner;
- (3) Cleaners for schools in the region as there were persons volunteering to assist. It was recommended that those persons be given the opportunity to be employed as cleaners;
- (4) Hot meal programme for secondary schools in the hinterland areas because those children needed that help too;
- (5) Extension of the Arakaka secondary school due to the growing population of students; and
- (6) Transportation for Canal Bank children of secondary school age who were travelling to Port Kaituma to attend school. At this juncture, he requested a bigger boat for the children due to the present school boat being too small and subjected to overcrowding. He thanked the Government for the television sets provided and explained it was aiding in the passing on of knowledge to the students.

The Minister of Education disclosed that the requests for dorm mother and cleaners would be addressed immediately. She recommended that there be adequate dormitory space at the schools already in existence. On the issue of a bigger boat, the Minister noted that the issue would be addressed as soon as information was available.

Toshao Royston Bumbury Four Miles Region 1, highlighted two concerns and presented his requests to the Minister.

- (1) Over 300 students travelling from Four Miles to Port Kaituma to attend primary school which was costly as well as difficult during the rainy season; and
- (2) The need for outdoor equipment for the nursey school at present. He requested a primary school be built to accommodate the number of children and for said equipment to be provided to the village.

The Minister enquired about the number of children travelling to and fro for attendance at primary school.

CdC Chair Gwendolyn Jeffrey stated that the primary school in Agatash, Region 7, could not accommodate the 216 pupils who attended and requested that a new school be built in Agatash. She requested internet connectivity for the primary school in order for the students to be able to conduct research.

The Minister of Education pointed out that Agatash was on the list for ICT and would receive same shortly. She noted the importance of ICT to the delivery of education. The Minister stated that her Ministry did not possess the expertise to set up the internet which was why it was being done by the Office of the Prime Minister.

CDC Chairman, One Mile, Port Kaituma, Region 1, thanked the Government and the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs for inclusion of representative from One Mile in the NTC Conference.

The Chairman indicated that the One Mile community depended on transportation which came from Four Miles in order for the children to be taken to school at Port Kaituma. He explained the difficulties the children were experiencing since busses were usually filled to capacity. He, thereafter, requested a bus for the community.

The Ministry noted the request made by the Chairman of CDC, One Mile, Port Kaituma Region 1.

Toshao Troy Peters of Kwebanna thanked the Ministry of Education for the provision of a smart television and for the upcoming cash grant. He noted that he was in possession of some documents to be furnished to the Minister.

A Toshao of Region 9 requested an update on the bilingual education programme and enquired whether the primary level would be included.

The Minister of Education stated that 14 nursery schools were included in the pilot project of teaching the native language of the village. She noted that, following the outcome of the pilot project, the primary level, especially at the early childhood year, would be included.

The Toshao requested that the headteachers quarters be renovated and requested renovation to the primary school building.

Senior Councillor Stavros Stanley, Santa Rosa, Region 9, stated that, under the PPP/C Administration, life had improved tremendously for his village. He thanked

the Government and the Ministry of Education for the restoration of the 'Because We Care' grant.

He requested a technical institute as he thanked Minister Hamilton for the assistance given via Board of Industrial Training (BIT) which facilitated the teaching of vocational skills. He stated that land had already been identified for the building.

Mr. Stanley also requested a research centre for his community to enable it to benefit from technology.

He stated that, post-pandemic, the school attendance has been low and requested the services of a school welfare officer.

Mr. Stanley detailed the transportation difficulties being experienced by schoolchildren and stated that the buses that are available do not have the capacity to transport all the schoolchildren in a timely manner.

The Deputy Chief Officer (ag), TVET, reported that construction of a state-of-the-art edifice was ongoing at the North West Secondary School, under the Caribbean Development Bank's (CDB's) skills development project, to provide skills training to persons in that locality and neighbouring areas. He detailed for the Conference a few skilled areas which would be taught.

He further stated that, at present, the TVET Secretariat was examining the possibility of a technical institute being constructed in that community so that students could benefit from skills training in that area.

Toshao Delph Isaacs, Waramadong, Region 7, reported to the Conference that there were 500 secondary school students at the school but that they were not adequately accommodated. He further reported that there was no equipment for the laboratory at the school and that the female dormitory was not in a good condition.

The Toshao stated that due to the requirement for students to take the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) vaccine, students from the Upper Mazaruni were not returning to school.

The Toshao noted that teachers and students needed internet connectivity in order to further their studies through the online mode of delivery. He stated also that there was need for the extension of the Waramadong Nursery school since it was overcrowded. The Youth Skills Training Centre needed finance to purchase equipment for music, carpentry, joinery, welding, garment construction and catering.

In response to the Toshao from Santa Rosa, the Minister of Education stated that there was a Skills Training Centre in Santa Rosa which would be made available. She committed to working with the Prime Minister to ensure there was stable electricity connection at the centre. In addition, she noted that all 15 satellite villages in Santa Rosa were equipped with ICT hubs, but all were not completed. She assured that they would be completed shortly.

In response to the Toshao from Waramadong, the Minister stated that plans were in the pipeline for the construction of another school in the Upper Mazaruni area to

accommodate students. She clarified that there was no vaccine mandate for students to attend schools. The Minister, however, pointed out that there was need for collaboration among the Ministry, village council and parents to increase the attendance rates at the schools. The Minister noted that the poor attendance had an impact on the consistent rate of delivery of education.

The Minister assured that the other issues would be addressed also.

Toshao Gilroy Roberts of Barima Koriabo, Mabaruma, Region 1, requested access to a secondary school in the area. He stated that their village was approximately 165 miles away from the Mabaruma Sub Region and that they sometimes encountered financial challenges in sending their children to school. The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development stated that it was the responsibility of the Regional Chairman to ensure that the transportation cost for the children was covered. He enquired why this was not being done.

The REO of Region 1 responded that the regional administration usually covered the cost of fuel for the vehicles to transport the children. Sherman Lewis, CDC Chairman of Smith Creek, Mabaruma, Region 1, stated that the fuel provided was inadequate to transport the children for the duration of the month. As a result, parents were required to contribute to fill the shortfall. He stated that Smith Creek was facing a similar issue as well.

The Minister of Education committed to a determination being made about the locations from which children were moving to travel to Mabaruma in order for the Government, through the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, to cover the cost of transportation.

Toshao Roberts stated that children were required to walk for one and a half hour to attend the primary school. He noted that the state of the road coupled with the rainy weather conditions had resulted in students reaching to school muddied and wet. He, requested, thereafter a bus to transport the children. The Minister of Education assured that the transportation needs would be addressed in collaboration with the village leaders.

Vivian Edwards, Toshao of Waramuri, Moruca, Region 1, requested an extension to the Waramuri Secondary School since it had reached capacity. He requested further that both compounds to the Waramuri Secondary and Waramuri Nursery be fenced. He requested also the construction of a nursery at Upper Mariabo. She further requested the installation of security guards for the buildings.

The Minister of Education enquired about the number of persons who had outstanding issues to raise with the Ministry of Education. With a majority of persons indicating that they had issues to raise, she suggested that an hour or two be set aside in the evenings to have issues addressed or a location be found outside the Dome where issues could be recorded, and efforts could be made to have those issues resolved.

The Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport indicated that his Ministry would be setting up a booth in the East Wing of the Conference Centre during the luncheon

suspension so that villages leaders could raise specific issues which they may not want to raise in the Dome. He stated that would be done every day for the duration of the Conference.

The Minister of Education suggested that representatives from the Ministry of Education would be available in the Lobby of the Conference Centre over the next two days, until all issues were recorded.

Toshao Orin Williams, Batavia, Lower Mazaruni, Region 7, thanked the Government for the benefits his village received over the last two years. He pointed to the growth of the village population and expressed concern about the overcrowding in the schools and the capacity of the schools to house the increase. He pointed also to the inadequate transportation to accommodate both teachers and students. The Toshao made an appeal for furniture and a teachers' quarters. Toshao Williams noted the renovations and the extension carried out on the school, but stressed that the school was still overcrowded. He pointed to the need for a separate building to house the nursery. He stated that the solar system was currently not working for over one year. He asked that it be examined because the generator being used was not adequate.

The Minister of Education offered to have those issues and all other addressed by the Ministry's representatives who were available in the lobby over the next two days.

The Chairman reminded the Conference that those Toshaos who did not get the opportunity to have their issues addressed could also forward same to the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs or to the Secretary of the National Toshaos Council, which would then be forwarded to the relevant Ministries.

The Chairman acknowledged that today was the Minister of the Public Service's birthday. He expressed gratitude to the Minister for attending the Conference on her special day.

Toshao Pearson led the Conference in song in celebrating the Minister of the Public Service's birthday.

The Minister of Human Services and Social Security informed the Conference that representatives from the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security were available in the Eastern Wing of the Conference Centre and would be available every day from 11.00 am – 3.00 pm. She urged participants to make use of the opportunity to have their issues addressed.

Presentation by Dr. Frank Anthony, Hon. Minister of Health

“Good morning, Hon. Prime Minister, Mark Phillips; colleagues Ministers; Toshaos; and village leaders. This morning, I have a little dilemma because, as was said before, Minister Sukhai has restricted us in terms of our synopsis that we need to present. I was saying to her that I had lots of things that I wanted to say. I hope that we would be able to at least put that in context and then we will open the floor for some questions.

I want to start by saying that when we came into Government, we came at a time when we had a raging pandemic and we had to do a lot to be able to control the disease which was spreading among our various communities, especially in the hinterland. Today, we are in a better place because we have the capacity to test for COVID-19. Medicines are available also – especially vaccines – that can work to prevent you from getting ill. But I want to appeal to you all here this morning because when we look at the number of people who are getting vaccinated, especially in the interior communities, it is way below the targets we expected.

So, let us look at what we were able to do yesterday. For persons 18 years and older, we did approximately 160 doses of vaccines, and that is not a lot. I look at what is happening in Region 1, for example. Yesterday, we only did 30 doses in that region. For Regions 7, 8 and 9, there were zero doses administered. While for Region 10, there were 6 persons who got their vaccine shots. We spent a lot of money to be able to get a lot of vaccines for children between the ages of 5 and 11. We are one of the very few countries that was able to source this vaccine at a very high cost. Do you know what is happening? Yesterday, we were only able to do 215 doses. It is not because we do not want to give the vaccine, but it is due to parents not encouraging their children to take the vaccine. This is a problem.

When we look at booster doses now, we have administered 69,000. So, here is the problem. I think a lot of you and a lot of people in this country believe that COVID-19

is over. It is not over. While we are all fed up with wearing masks while going about our business and so on, we have to remember the virus is still around and it is constantly mutating. In January, there was a virus called Omicron, which had five different strains. We have passed through the first strain or as it was known then as BA.1, then BA.2, BA.3 and we are now at BA.4 and BA.5. Even if you had any of the previous three strains, you could still become reinfected with the remainder of the mutants.

What is the solution? We do not wish for people to come into the hospital, for people to get sick and die. The only way we are going to prevent that is if we have persons vaccinated. That is the only way. Right now, we have 36 persons in the hospital with five in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), which could have been prevented had they been vaccinated. Though some of you did take your first and second doses of vaccines - if six months or more have elapsed - you will still need to get a booster dose. I have gotten my booster dose as well as many of my colleagues got theirs too. You as the villages leaders, as the important persons in your communities, have to lead by example. I can say to you that there are some villages where we have had a lot of push back and resistance. Do you think the Government is going to purchase a vaccine to harm you? No! There is a lot of nonsense being peddled on the internet and, sadly, we have some persons who believe this, and they have been imparting wrong information to their villages and convincing people not to take it. While that can be irresponsible, that can also lead to people dying from COVID-19.

I decided to start with this, because I want you all to understand this is very important. If we are going to change the outcome of this disease, then all of us would have to play a role in helping to push back against this disease. That means you must help us to increase these vaccination numbers. The Ministry of Health's staff are available. If you tell us which village you would like us to visit, we will send a team there to make sure every person who is eligible can receive the vaccine. I want to make this very clear so that we can all increase these numbers so that our people in our country can remain protected.

Despite COVID-19, what has this Government been able to do over the last two year? We have invested more than \$1.8 billion in renewing the health infrastructure, especially in Amerindian communities. And as I speak to you today, we have been able to effect repairs and so forth to almost every single health centre and health post in the different regions. This year, with a programme of \$1 billion, we have consulted with the regions and, based on their and the engineers' assessments, we have begun fixing these places.

At the hospital level, we have spent close to US\$ 1 million on the Mabaruma Hospital, to ensure it has a fully functional theatre and recovery rooms to enable persons to have their surgeries performed right there in Region 1. We also repaired the theatre at the Port Kaituma Hospital so that surgeries can now be performed there, as well as supplied an X-ray machine to this hospital where there was none before. We are adding a theatre in Moruca, so that surgeries can begin to be performed there as well.

In terms of the equipment, there are facilities and a lot of times there is no equipment located there. So, we have been able to purchase equipment for hospitals, health centres and posts, spending over the last two years, under this PPP/C government, close to \$554 million. You will see the difference. That is why we can do laboratory tests in many of the regions – something that was unheard of before. We have spent a lot of money to give people in the hinterland communities access to transportation, such as ATVs, boats and ambulances. All of these things we have been able to buy over the last two years.

Just to put it into perspective, in terms of ATVs, over the last two years, we have given out more than 19 such vehicles to different hinterland communities. We have also distributed six boats, 12 ambulances and 26 motorcycles in the hinterland communities. We continue to invest in these facilities and that is just in two years. We can have the best of facilities but, if we do not have people to man them, we will have problems. One way of addressing that was, we started training persons to be able to work at the various health centres and posts.

In Region 1, we were able to completely train approximately 62 Community Health Workers, who are now gainfully employed. In this region, every health centre or health post has approximately two Community Health Workers at least. Similarly, in Region 9, we have trained persons who returned to their communities to run the health centres or health posts. Again, we have trained approximately 70 or more persons who have returned to serve their villages.

It is not only community health workers, but we would also like to train Nursing Assistants. At the moment, we have begun a programme where we are training Nursing Assistants in Region 9 and we will expand this programme to the other regions – 1, 7, 8 – so that people can have access to these training. We want to ensure that we have people who can do laboratory testing, help to administer medicines – pharmacy assistants. We have a number of programmes like this where we will begin, in the next month or two, to train persons in the regions, to become pharmacy assistants, laboratory technicians and so forth. There are more than five or six different types of training.

One of the challenges we encounter is that we cannot find adequate persons to train in many of these training programmes. Although the person chosen may not have the prerequisite requirements, do not worry about that. We will recruit the person into the programme and begin with remedial training in order to elevate the trainee thus ensuring his/her complete success in the programme. This is one way of helping these communities.

Nursing: We would like to see more Registered Nurses, but our capacity is limited at the moment because we only have three public nursing schools with their output being close to about three hundred persons per year. The registered nursing programme takes about three years to complete and this we think is too slow. One of the initiatives of the President is ensuring we can increase the number of people being trained in nursing and, by the end of this year, we intend to start a hybrid programme whereby the theory would be done online, while for the practical

sessions, applicants would be brought to one of the simulation centres being constructed to do the practicals. We wish to begin with 500 applicants this year when the nursing training starts. Once again, there is an opportunity for persons from your community to be trained as nurses.

You have known about our programme for medicine. At the commencement of this Conference, we heard of one of the many doctors who was trained and did postgraduate training in plastic surgery. So, we have opportunities for people not only to be trained as medical doctors but in postgraduate training. At the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation, we are running a postgraduate school where we train people in 14 different specialties. I am so happy that the Minister from Belize is here, because they sent people to our postgraduate programme right here in Guyana, and they have been talking to us to send people to do the nursing programme here in Guyana. So, in training, we have many, many opportunities. Outside of that, we have reviewed the system, and we felt that the level of service we are offering at the primary health care level can be increased.

So, we have done a masterplan of what we should deliver at the primary healthcare level, meaning at the health posts and at the health centres. We are looking at, over the next couple of years, each one of these facilities being capable of handling at least 216 disease entities. We will equip them to make sure they have the right equipment and the right personnel to be able to deliver.

Yesterday, when the President and Vice-President spoke, they also spoke about using technology in making sure that we can reach people and give them a better quality of healthcare. How are we going to do that? There is now a new field called tele-medicine. So, we want to establish a tele-health centre in Georgetown that would be linked to different parts of the hinterland. One pilot that would be starting in a month's time, in four villages in Region 9, is that we would be training the community health workers who will have laptops with several devices connected to the internet. So, one would be 500 miles away and the doctor from Georgetown could hear the patient's heartbeat or be able to see what is happening in the patient's belly using ultrasound that is transmitted through the internet. That is going to have a satellite uplink so there will be no connectivity problems. The doctor in Georgetown would be able to help the community health worker to make the diagnosis, and when the diagnosis is made the patient would be able to get the treatment. If the patient needs to be referred upwards, that could be done. The intention is that, once the pilot works very well, we will scale that up so that people can get better healthcare in the different villages.

While we do that, we have other special programmes that we are working on. For many persons in the hinterland communities' access to eye care has been a problem. If you have to go to screen your eyes, check for cataract and things like that, it has always been a problem. You had to come to Georgetown to be able to do that. Now, we have a team of doctors who are coming into the regions, screening people, and if they find that you have cataract, they will put you on a list, then we will fly you out, take you to Port Mourant, you get your surgery, and once you are doing fine, we take you back home. This year alone, we have completed about 37 cataract surgeries, and

with that programme, we have helped close to 400 persons already. This is an active programme. We want to talk to you a little later, maybe, about when we will be coming to your community so that we can do this type of screening.

In addition to screening for cataracts and teridiums, one of the other things we are doing is we are going to come to a couple of communities, as a pilot, to give out spectacles. This is a special programme that we have where on the spot they will give you a device to put on and regulate it to see what type of glasses you need, and, on the spot, you will be able to get your spectacles. We will pilot that, and if it works as good as we anticipate, then we will roll that out to several villages across the interior.

We also have programmes where we are working to eliminate certain types of diseases. Again, we need your collaboration. One of the diseases that we want to look at is Chagas disease. In some of your communities, there are those types of diseases. You can help us to eliminate it. When we come into your community, we want to talk a little more about Chagas disease, Bush Yaws, the elimination of Filaria, Leprosy – in a few communities Leprosy is still there – and we want to remove that from the set of diseases in your communities. ‘Worms’ is still a big problem in some of our communities, but we can eliminate that. Again, we want to work with the various villages to make sure it happens.

Malaria is a big problem in some of our communities. We have started a programme. Last year, we distributed more than 57,000 bed nets to various communities. This year, we are going to do some more. More importantly, you have to help us to control the mosquitos. There are several measures we can take to do that. And, of course, when people are on treatment, we want them to complete the treatment. You can help us to do that. Again, we want to talk to you about some of these things.

When women get pregnant in the interior, sometimes there is a problem because by the time they get to the hospital, it can be problematic because of the distances people have to travel. This Government has set up a programme where, in the hospital compound, we are now building what is called waiting homes. So, when a woman thinks she is near term, she would come and be in the waiting home until she is about to deliver, and then she is taken to the hospital to have a very safe delivery. After she is finished with delivery, she would go back in the waiting home until everything is fine and then she would go back to the village. We already have two waiting homes in Region 9. We are now in the process of completing some in Regions 1, 7 and 8 so that, again, this would contribute to safe motherhood, so that we do not lose any mother during childbirth. We are going to continue to do this so that we can improve these types of programmes.

There are lots of changes that are happening. I have focused on some of the programmes we have in the interior but there are lots of other things that we would be doing. I would love to hear from you so that we can collaboratively work to improve health in your community. Thank you very much.”

Questions and Answers

CDC Chairman, Fenton Ragnauth, Region 4, Swan Village, stated that his request was based on the fact that the population at Swan Village had reached 1,000 and, thus, there was need for a health centre. He detailed the difficulties experienced to access healthcare. He called attention to the fact that land was donated for government purposes and thanked Minister Dharamlall for working with the community to get the land. He thanked Government for the primary school which would open its doors in September, 2022, and he also thanked the Minister of Amerindian Affairs for the COVID-19 cash relief donated to the CDC.

The Minister stated that the Ministry would certainly consider the request of the Chairman. He further stated that, as a temporary measure, there could be periodic visits to the community.

Toshao Michael Williams, Annai, Region 9, stated that it was a privilege to speak on behalf of 16 villages of the North Rupununi and more than 8,000 people. He stated that over the years the community had been lobbying for the Annai Health Centre to become a district hospital. He expressed the hope that the plea can be considered at this time. He indicated that the Annai Health Centre has an ATV but that it was not sufficient to conduct outreaches. He thus requested two ATVs to assist with transportation. The Toshao thanked the Minister for the eye care programme which he spoke about because he had personally benefitted from it. He indicated that he possessed, on a matrix, the issues from all 16 villages to be presented to all the Ministries for consideration.

The Minister responded that a number of factors had to be taken into consideration for the expansion of health facilities and opined that the RHO and health personnel of Region 9 would advise on the expansion of the healthcare facility. He revealed that it was now being envisaged that district hospitals would have the capacity to do minor surgeries and other similar functions. The Minister stated that with respect to the ATV, even distribution would be considered to meet the needs of communities.

Lemmel Thomas, Toshao from Kamarang/Warwetta, Region 7, stated that for the period January to June, 2022, in excess of 200 persons were transferred to the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC). He pointed to the financial burden incurred by families to visit their sick relatives and to await their recovery prior to returning home. He commended the proposed upgrade to the district hospital. Toshao Thomas expressed appreciation for the presence of doctors in Kamarang and stated that the village council had been offering support to the hospital through the donation of a brush cutter and stationery, among other items. He raised the issue of the non-payment of salaries for the Dentex at the district hospital since January, 2022. The Toshao stated further that a Nurse Aid, who had been promoted to Midwife, had not received her upgraded salary since January, 2020. According to Thomas, support was also provided to the team in the form of transportation to travel from the Kamarang District Hospital to riverine communities. He stated that the current boat could accommodate more than 10 persons at a time and therefore there was need for a bigger transportation.

The Minister of Health gave a commitment to further investigate the issue of the number of persons being brought to Georgetown for medical attention, while iterating that there was a package of service that was available at the district hospital level. He stated that if a particular service was unavailable, arrangements could be made for a specialist from Georgetown to travel to the area to provide the service. He stated that options to address the situation would be explored in order to find a solution.

The Minister also gave an undertaking to address the matters pertaining to salaries.

The Minister requested the Toshao used his influence to address the poor vaccination rate of persons in the Upper Mazaruni area. He pointed out that, previously, the vaccination drive had been taken to the area, but the response had been underwhelming.

Toshao Kingsley Baptiste, Three Brothers village, Mabaruma, Region 1, requested two boats and engines for the health workers in the area to transport patients to Mabaruma, which was some distance away from his village. The Minister stated that the request would be addressed to determine what was possible. He advised the Toshao that assets from another Ministry, agency or department could be utilised for community purpose if the need arose. Toshao Baptiste responded that the engines the village possessed were small and it was time consuming to transport persons from where he resided to Mabaruma.

Mr. Lloyd Perriera, Toshao of Wakapoa, Region 2, expressed appreciation to the Government for the return of the doctor to Wakapoa. He requested an extension to the Wakapoa Health Centre in order to facilitate the accommodation of patients. The Minister promised to look into the matter.

Mr. Shirl Valenzuela, Senior Councillor, Siparuta, Region 6, expressed appreciation to the Government for its work in the past two years. He noted that when there were medical outreaches to his village, there was insufficient space to accommodate residents. He requested an extension of the Toshao Valenzuela stated that a medic was currently in training from the Siparuta Village. He requested another extension for a medic quarters to be created to accommodate the medic when she completes her training. Toshao Valenzuela noted that the health centre in the Siparuta Village did not have any means of communication for instance, internet access. He requested that access to the internet be provided at the Centre. He noted this would also facilitate communication with the doctor in Orealla. Toshao Valenzuela pointed to the benefit of such a request. The Toshao requested further the provision of a road ambulance. He highlighted the benefits of having an ambulance.

Toshao Lewis Devair, Orealla, Region 6, stated that the health hut was currently being rehabilitated in Orealla and thanked the Minister for the current works. He noted however, that no one from the village had been sent to be trained as a health worker for the year 2022. The Toshao enquired whether a request could be made to have two persons from the village sent to be trained as Community Health Workers (CHW).

The Minister of Health pointed to the possibility of having those persons trained as CHWs. He asked that the Toshao make contact with an identified representative from the Ministry.

Mr. Linden Green, Region 1, stated that he was tasked with representing a number of communities across the Matarkai Sub-Region in Region 1. He thanked the Government for the tremendous progress across the region at large with regard to the health sector. He noted that repairs were being undertaken at almost all health centres across Matarkai. He pointed to issues related to transporting patients to the hospital and the shortage of drugs. Mr. Green requested the training of two health workers from the region to serve the community. Mr. Green pointed to the need for more Malaria personnel since the region was prone to Malaria.

Mr. Green stated that he had been requested to enquire which agency was responsible for the burying of the dead especially the unidentified dead. He stated that the community of Matthews Ridge was requesting furniture and additional staff and informed the Minister that the mortuary freezer was not working.

The Minister of Health stated that the issue with transportation in the area had been brought to the Ministry's attention. He stated further that the Ministry had provided a new ambulance to the sub-region and that ambulance had been destroyed. The Minister said that it was unfortunate since the ambulance cost \$16 million and was currently of no use. The Minister indicated that the issue of the shortage of drugs and medicines would be examined since there should not be any shortages. The Minister agreed with the training of the staff and reminded that there was a centre for training in the area. He pointed to the number of trained Malaria personnel in the region and enquired how those personnel were distributed to ensure that the sub-region was adequately covered.

The Minister stated that he did not have an immediate answer on the burying of dead, especially the unidentified ones. He noted however that where a dead is unidentified there are systems in place for their burial. He offered to examine the mortuary to address any issue.

Toshao Allan Williams, Tobago, Mabaruma, Region 1, stated that he was a newly appointed Toshao. He highlighted challenges with transporting patients from the area and traversing the various areas to execute his duties. He expressed hope that the Ministry could address the transportation issues in the region.

The Minister of Amerindian Affairs informed the Conference that a bus had been provided to the village in 2014 and the Ministry was currently procuring another bus for the village. She pointed to the benefits of that vehicle in assisting with health emergencies. The Minister noted that this would be done under the investment COVID fund.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development stated that the road was currently being upgraded but was delayed due to the weather conditions.

The Minister of Health stated that the Ministry would not be able to provide an ambulance to every village but informed the Conference, however, that 10 All-Terrain

Vehicles, three boats and four ambulances were given to Region 1 in a short period of time. He stated that the Ministry was actively working in the Region to resolve its issues.

Toshao Lewis Devair Orealla-Siparuta Region 6, requested medical teams visiting on outreaches be allowed to overnight to facilitate attending to more residents of outlying areas. He revealed there was a guest house available for the overnight stay free of cost, but no request was ever made to utilise this service. The Toshao also indicated the river ambulance located at Orealla was not being housed properly and plugged the need for a boat house to moor it appropriately to prevent interference by persons utilising the river for their daily routines. He requested a meeting among stakeholders to facilitate this process. Assistance was also sought from the Ministry to facilitate a place to stay in Corriverton after transporting patients from the village due to emergency situations as well as additional allowances to cover meals and other travel expenses, including fuel.

The Minister of Health committed to continuing outreaches in order to maximise the benefits to residents. Also, the Minister accepted the offer of the free accommodation being provided by the village to accommodate team travelling for the outreaches, thereby alleviating the overcrowding that normally occur. Commitment was also given to assist with meals, travel, overtime, et al. The Minister pledged to meet with the Toshao to discuss the way forward with the building of the boat house should residents agree to provide the materials.

The Minister indicated that between the Ministries of Health and Local Government and Regional Development, the procurement of fuel used for travelling by the village will be borne by them as well as, committed to reviewing the system to make it more efficient to eliminate the long hours spent travelling.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development advised that the REO was paying keen attention to what was being highlighted to ensure they were dealt with while giving tacit consent in assisting as well. He indicated that the Ministries of Health and Education, through a directive of His Excellency, the President, were conducting training for persons desirous of becoming teachers or health workers and asked that the Toshao supply the names of all young people to the subject Ministers before the day was out or through the REO to move forward. He highlighted it was more cost-effective to train persons who remained in the villages rather than to construct living quarters to house persons from outside of the villages.

Toshao, Flagan Carter, Region 10, Rockstone, publicly commended the work of the Minister and the staff located in that region for all they have done and continue to do for the residents. Mr. Carter addressed the issues of alcohol addiction, the need for rehabilitation, the effects of drugs and sexual abuse.

The Minister of Health thanked him for the comments while highlighting some of the work the Ministry was in the process of achieving such as legislation for mental health and other legislation and restructuring of the physical administration of those projects. He acknowledged the challenges in the area of substance abuse rehabilitation and encouraged the Toshao to meet and have discourse on the way

forward. He also indicated that the Ministry would be rolling out a programme in this area in the future. The Minister noted the need for more rehabilitation facilities, citing the fact that only two organisations offered long term/intuitional rehabilitation namely the Phoenix Recovery and the Salvation Army, in order to assist those in need of help in returning to normal life after addiction.

Toshao Grennison Roger, Katoka Village Region 9, pointed out the remoteness of the area which did not allow for emergency cases to be facilitated in a timely manner while speaking on the deaths of three residents who died on their way to the Lethem Hospital. Even though the region has an ambulance, it was not always feasible to utilise this service. He then requested a minibus to transport persons to Lethem for healthcare and indicated that the request was made previously for a minibus, but it was not honoured.

The Minister of Amerindian Affairs announced that a pickup will replace the previous one which was out of commission due to a mishap in the month of September, thus helping to alleviate the transportation issues currently being faced.

Toshao Samuel Miguel, Manawarin, Region 1, expressed his excitement for the opportunity to be the Toshao and to attend the Conference for the first time. He thanked the President for the great job he had done for the village since he had been appointed Toshao of the Village.

He indicated that because there were nearby islands, there was need for transportation to assist patients to access healthcare at the health facility. He then outlined some of the difficulties being experienced by residents.

He requested that the existing health post become a health centre. He also requested the presence of a doctor in Manawarin and for the existing doctor's apartment to be furnished.

The Toshao, in the interest of the community, stated that persons can be trained in the areas of dentistry, eye care and microscopic examination, to be able to serve in the village of Manawarin.

In response, Dr. France, from the Materials Management Unit (MMU) bond, stated that with respect to the questions pertaining to the supply of drugs and medications the situation would be alleviated shortly.

The Minister responded that the extension of the healthcare facility would be addressed and that the Toshao should compile a list of persons to be trained so that the possibility for training could be determined. He highlighted, however, that after training consideration would be given to more populated areas, but assured that all communities would, nevertheless, benefit from the service.

He promised to examine the possibilities for transportation.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development informed the Conference that upgrading of the road to Manawarin was in progress which would alleviate some of the transportation problems.

The Minister of Health reminded the Conference of the presence of several health officials and encouraged that those issues be raised with them. He then offered the Conference posters in indigenous languages on different health matters.

The Chairman, Toshao John, requested that the Toshao compile their requests and pass them on to the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs or the NTC Secretary.

The Chairman announced that the Ministry of Education had set up a boot in Room 2, in the East Wing, for persons to relay their concerns to Ministry officials.

The Chairperson, Ms. Sarah Browne, welcomed everyone to the afternoon session and reminded the Conference of the opportunities offered by the various Ministries through the booths that had been set up for easy consultations.

Presentation by the Hon. Vickram Bharrat, Minister of Natural Resources



“Colleague Ministers, Toshao, leaders of villages, Senior Councillors, staff from the different Ministries, especially the Ministry of Natural Resources, let me say that we are happy to be here this afternoon. Fortunately, or unfortunately, I will be with you for rest of the day, including the reception too. You might have to get accustomed to seeing my face for the rest of the day.

I want to let you know that from the Ministry of Natural Resources we have the Chairman of the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), Mr. Jimmy Reece, the Commissioner of GGMC, Mr. Dennison, and other senior officers. From the Guyana Forestry Commission, we have the Commissioner, Mr. Goberdhan; the Chairperson of the Board of Directors, Ms. Benn, as well as other Deputy Commissioners and senior officers.

From the Ministry of Natural Resources, directly, we have the Permanent Secretary and the Deputy Permanent Secretary along with other staff. From the Petroleum Department, including the Local Content Secretariat, we have the Director of the Secretariat and other senior officials. They are all here for us to take you through this afternoon's session. We are willing to go as late as possible, as long as there is time. We have no issue with that because we are already starting late.

I wish to give a quick overview and a background of what has been happening and what are some of the issues affecting the sector to date. Then we will open for discussion. I think, based on the programme, we will deal with mining and logging in the first session, then in the second session we are going to deal with oil and gas, particularly local content. If I am correct, I think that is on the programme.

I will speak now on mining and logging in particular, and then after the break we will deal more directly with oil and gas, because I am sure everyone is eager to know what is happening in this new sector, oil and gas. Of course, the main question is, how will you benefit from this new-found resource?

If I may start with mining, I know mining is one economic activity that a lot of villages is involved in. For some villages it is the main economic activity. Logging as well is a main economic activity in many villages across the hinterland regions. Fortunately, having spent time at the Ministries of Local Government and Regional Development and Health in my political work, and now as the Minister of Natural Resources, it has taken me to almost 90% of the villages in the hinterland regions. For most of your villages, since Sunday night, I have started to have conversations with Toshaos, leaders and Senior Councillors. I have visited many of the villages in all the regions. Because of that I am fully aware of the issues affecting villages and communities – what are the issues we have resolved, the issues that are pending, the issues we need to look at in a holistic manner and to solve it once and for all, in terms of mutual benefit.

I have sat and listened to the presentation from the Prime Minister, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education. I listened to the requests made by representatives of your villages in terms of boats and engines, new hospitals, new health centres, new schools, additions or extensions to schools, and rightly so, because you are here at this forum to represent your people, you are here to make representation on behalf of your communities. After all, you have been entrusted with that responsibility by your people to come here and represent them and to ensure that their needs are well represented and, if possible, satisfied by Government and other agencies.

I want to say that, at the Ministry of Natural Resources, we have a difficult task. I am sure most of you, as leaders, would agree with me. The difficult task is balancing the exploration and production of natural resources with the preservation of the environment. I am sure there will be issues about the environment raised. I am certain about that. That is not a problem. At the end of it, we need to realise that there is no way that we are going to extract natural resources without creating some uneasiness and without creating damage to the environment, which we want to the

minimal. That is why we have always advocated for sustainable and responsible mining and logging activities. Our extraction of natural resources should be done in a sustainable and responsible manner. If I come here and tell you that mining causes no destruction to the environment, then I am not fooling you, I am fooling myself because you know that. There will be, but we have to work together – and I want to focus on that word ‘together’ – to minimise or keep the damage at a minimal level. When we point to the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission, the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) or me and say that we have to do it, that is just one of the partners. It takes two hands to clap. We have to do it together. That is the only way it is going to happen. That is the only way we are going to develop our villages and our country. The reason I mentioned that is because there are some people who are pro-environment. All they can talk about is the environment, which is good. What about the economics? What about the demands and all of the requests that are being made by people in this country? What about all the requests that you made this morning for new extension to schools and hospitals and for training and boats and engines? How are we going to get that? We need to ask ourselves that. If we do not explore and produce natural resources, then where are we going to get the income to satisfy the needs of our people? Many international environmentalists would say that we should leave the oil out there and, sadly, some of our people are saying the same thing. But do we not deserve a better life too? Do we not deserve a life like the first world countries too? I was in Uruguay last week and there was a petition by a gentleman going around. He came to me to sign the petition to stop exploration and production of oil and gas. I said, if you bring a petition to me that reduces the demand for oil and gas, I am going to sign that petition. But I cannot sign a petition to stop the production of oil and gas because if I do so, I would be putting more pressure on the ordinary people. This is simply because the demand for it will remain, and if we stop or reduce the production, obviously, prices will go up. Who will have to suffer? The ordinary man will have to suffer even more than we are suffering right now. So, we need to look at this from a fair perspective. When we speak, we need to understand the economics too. We want our villages to develop, and, at the same time, we want our environment to be preserved. That is what I want too. That is what the Government of the country wants too. We want to preserve our natural environment as much as possible. Nobody wants to remain in a subsistence way of living. Some people want us to remain like that. If you look at the international environmentalists, they want us to go back to our subsistence way of living. They do not want us to have the facilities like the first world. They do not want us to have the education, health or infrastructure facilities like other countries have. I am saying this to outline to you the importance of extracting or producing natural resources. It is not a question of stopping the production of natural resources. The question is that we need to do it in a more responsible and sustainable manner because development must take place. We want our people to have a better life too. We want each village to have health centres. If they have health posts, they should be upgraded to health centres. We want more secondary schools in the hinterland too. How is it that we are going to accomplish this? We want better community and hinterland roads. How do we accomplish this? Things come at a cost. Nobody from outside of Guyana is going to come here and do this for us. We have to do it. As a Government, that is our

responsibility. The same manner in which your people entrust faith in you to develop their communities and villages, the people of this country, including you, put your faith and trust in us, as a Government, to develop this country. It is a hard task, but we are committed and dedicated towards doing that. I wanted to put that out from the inception. I have seen a lot of articles recently and I have had a lot of letters written to be about the environment. Believe me, I respect the environment. I am 100% behind anybody who wants to protect the environment, but I am not in support of stopping the extraction of natural resources because of the mere fact that we need revenue to improve the lives and livelihood of our people – all of Guyana, regardless of it is the Rupununi, North West, Corentyne Coast, Kwakwani. Every single Guyanese deserves a better life. I spoke with a number of Toshao. There are a number of issues – and we have seen it in the newspapers – especially with mining. But comrades and friends, we have to face it. There will always be issues. As we solve one today, there will always be a next one. Otherwise, you would not need me, and you would not need all of these people here. I have been to villages where the request was for land extension and when we granted the land extension, they said they needed a new school. When we built the new school, they said they needed us to upgrade the health post to a health centre. So, there will always be issues, and we accept and understand that. So, if we solve 99% of the issues today, tomorrow there will be many other issues. To resolve mining issues, it cannot be done by GGMC alone. It has to be done in conjunction with you, the leaders, and the villages. I have had several complaints too that leader, in the past, had collaborated and conspired with coast lander miners and carried on mining activities without permission from the village councils. We have had issues like that before. This is something that all of us here have to agree we will not tolerate.

I, personally, have been working for a little less than two years to ensure that we change a perception. There is a perception about the image of the GGMC. I cannot vouch for every single Mines Officer at GGMC. I cannot vouch for in excess of 200 Mines Officers. I do not go with them into the interior every single day on their missions. What I can tell you is that we are working to change the perception of the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission. We are working towards even further creating more professionalism and changing the manner and attitude in which they behave towards miners and leaders in communities. This is one of the issues I have recognised over the last year. We need to change that. We need to ensure that we build a relationship and a partnership. In the past, what I realised was that Mines Officer functioned as though they were police officers, but they are not police officers. They are regulators. They regulate mining activities; they monitor mining activities; they ensure there is compliance with the Mining Act and that is what they should be doing and not be acting as police officers. We know that, obviously, there will be a few who would not adhere to what is stipulated. There may be a view who might want to function on their own. There may be a view who have a personal interest against national interest too. I am aware of all of that. One man jokingly said that if you send a Pandit, a Moulana and a Pastor in the interior to look for illegal mining, they will come back with gold rings and gold chains. When one talks about gold there is always this mistrust and temptation that are involved in it. The only way we can change that

is if all of us work together. Like the Minister of Education, most of you here probably have my number already, but I am going to give you my number. Like Minister Manickchand said, I may not be able to answer you. Please Whatsapp me or send a message to me. Believe me, before the day is out, I will respond to you. It is our intention to create a working partnership with you to ensure that whatever economic activities are done in your communities are done in the best possible manner.

I would like to speak to a few specific issues because I know they would probably come up. One is Marudi. We are not afraid to speak about these issues because we have nothing to hide about these issues. We know that Marudi has always been an issue. Mining started in Marudi in the 1980s. I think it was 1985 that mining started in Marudi. Mining did not start in Marudi when I because the Minister of Natural Resources. Mining was there since in the 1980s when I was a little boy. All we did was try to restart the mining activities in Marudi so that everybody could benefit. I could have said that I was not going to touch Marudi because that is a problem. But I said that we need to sort out the issue because who is suffering more? It is the people of Region 9 who are suffering more. You might not actually be involved in the mining, but you benefit from the indirect expenditure from the mining activities. So, when we realised that restarting it would benefit the regional economy, then we decided that we were going to restart it, we were going to speak with the communities, we were going to speak with the company and we were going to ensure that we had agreement that everybody gave consent to and were comfortable with, and that was what we did. From day one, when we went and held consultations, I, personally, went into Marudi. I went to Aishatlon four or five times. I think Toshao is here, and he would know that. I have personally been there four or five times already. I have been into Marudi itself and I have always said, at every single consultation and I have always said to everyone, every single time the topic of Marudi comes up, that there are certain conditions that must be in the agreement, and there are certain conditions that GGMC will enforce at all costs. One was respect for Indigenous people in Region 9. There were previously complaints before the mining closed off that the coast landers and miners were taking advantage of the Indigenous people in Region 9. There is zero tolerance for that. We will not tolerate that. Everyone who is involved in it knows our position. If it happens in any way, we are going to close off the mining totally. One is respect for Indigenous people in Region 9.

Secondly, there will be no illegal activities at the landing – no drugs and no prostitution, et cetera at the landing. There would be zero tolerance and we will enforce that. The miners as well as the leaders have a responsibility to report it to me when it happens so that we can take action. I am totally not in support of any illegal activities at any landing, as a matter of fact; not only Marudi.

The third condition is the environment, which is important.

We had concerns about the medicine bush, about the waterways, about the forest. We said that we were going to ensure that all mechanisms were put in place so that there was minimal damage and pollution to the water ways. No use of mercury at Marudi – that is the policy. I think that is the first place where we are moving, and

we have actually enforced that there would be no use of mercury in any mining operation at Marudi.

There are conditions that we put in place to ensure that our rights and your rights are protected, but we must carry on with our economic activity. That is the bottom line. That is why I started out by mentioning a few things towards that. We must carry on with our economic activity. You know some may say to stop it totally. I could stop it totally yes, but who would lose? Who would be the losers? The people of Region 9 would lose the most. You might not be involved in mining directly, as I mentioned, but you would benefit from it indirectly. More money would be circulated in the Region and it is done in a controlled manner and in a manner that will bring benefits to the local regional economy. That is the agreement that we would have signed.

Also, we would have issued a prospecting licence to the large company. Somebody asked me yesterday if there is mining by the large companies. There could not be mining by the large companies if we issue a prospecting licence. If they are doing mining, then they will lose the prospecting licence. It is simple as that. They have not applied for a mining licence either, so I just want to put it to rest that there is no mining activities by the large companies in Marudi. There is absolutely no mining activity. They have a prospecting licence and that is what they are doing. That is what the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) is ensuring is done by Romanex Guyana Exploration Ltd., because I think they change their name steady. The people in Region 9 knows that.

The other area that we have had a number of complains about is Chinese Landing. I know some people might be afraid to speak frontally about it, but those of you who are involve and are part of that community or part of that region, some of you know the issue more than I do. I actually came and reach that issue. That issue started a long time ago and unfortunately, the matter went till to the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), so for me or anyone else to add contrary we would be in contempt of court. However, we are still looking at certain measures that could be put in place to control what is happening there and to ensure that everything is done in best practices. Sometimes we see some reports and some letters that are very sensational. We have to admit that a lot people from the village are mining too, they are part of the process too. That is why I say that we must do this together and we must take responsibility at the same time.

I want to assure you that we from the Ministry of Natural Resource and the GGMC are committed to ensuring that we work with you to resolve most, if not all, of the issues in a timely manner. I can tell you, when it comes to land sometimes these issues run on for years, especially if it goes to court. There have been so many issues that came to me, and I tried to resolve them before they get to the court. This is because when they get to the court that is 10 years. Who benefits? Nobody benefits. None out of the two parties benefit, neither does the State benefits, the villages do not benefit. No one benefits when it ends up in the court. For example, there is a matter right now in Region 1 that has been in the court for about 10 years now. We tried resolving it, the parties do not want to settle the matter. It is back in the court

now. We need to work together as I mentioned to ensure that these matters do not reach the court, because when they reach the court no one benefits.

Some people, unfortunately, die before the court matter is finished. Our commitment to you is that we will work with you. We will continue working with you to ensure that we resolve issues as they arise.

We may not be able to solve all the issues today. I am sure you have issues that you are going to raise. I cannot promise you that I will stand here today and fix all the issues. If I promise you that then I am making myself a fool because I cannot do it. But what I can promise you is that we are going to work together to ensure that we fix the issues over the shortest possible period of time. That is promise that I am going to make to you. You have my number, you can make direct contact with me and please do. Do not let us wait for issues to fester and for them to get beyond our control before you bring them to me. My staff know that when the issue comes to me it is not a problem. I know sometimes staff do not want the Minister to know about certain issues, but I think my staff are very comfortable with issues coming to me and then we get them resolved. So, feel free to send any issue to me as early as possible. Just send me a WhatsApp message.

On the logging side – quite honestly in those villages that are involved in logging, will know that, when we took over the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) in August, 2020, the Guyana Forestry Commission was bankrupt. They had no money to pay their staff. They had no money to pay light bill, phone bill, their insurance, National Insurance Scheme (NIS). They had no money at all. It is simple as that. They had owed staff for two months. A lot of villages are involved in logging, so we are working now toward rebuilding the forestry sector. I want to make a point on that too. There are a lot of misconceptions too that the Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030 is going to stop mining and logging. Now that is not true. In fact, there is something that is included in this document, I saw a flier about it. The answer to that is no. It will not stop mining and logging. It speaks to sustainable responsible mining and logging. That is what it speaks to. I just want to put that to rest that the Low Carbon Development Strategy in no way will stop mining or logging activities. Neither will it reduce logging activities. This is because, based on our agreement that we signed, in Paris and elsewhere and with the Low Carbon Development Strategy, we are allowed to cut 1.2 million cubic of wood every single year. You will not believe it, but we have never reach 50%. We have never reached 500,000 as yet and we are allowed to cut 1.2 million cubic and still keep our deforestation rate to 0.05 and below. There is so much scope for increased production in the logging sector without breaching our agreement, without carrying up our deforestation rate.

There is room for improvement or increase in production. The GFC has been working with a number of associations throughout the entire country, by giving you tags, by writing off some penalties, by putting you on payment plans to ensure that we increase production. We have even gotten Barama Company Ltd to go back into large scale operation. Barama is now working with a number of villages in Regions 10, 1, 6 – Orealla/Siparuta. I know they are working with those villages to buy the logs from you and to even give you equipment and advance payments so that you can harvest.

That is what we want because, based on our developmental thrust which we are on right now, the prices for lumber and wood products will increase significantly. Already we have seen shortages in building materials. Right now, aggregate, for example stone, there is a shortage of stone in this country. We are importing it. It is a bit embarrassing that we are importing stone into this country when we have so many resources available.

We have to work toward addressing the local demands. There is so much demand that is being generated now with our housing drive, with the oil and gas sector, with the public expenditure in infrastructure. There is a lot of demand for lumber and wood products. We want to encourage the association of villages to get back into production.

A lot of Toshias spoke to me over the last few days and we are going to work towards assisting your villages and associations to go back into production.

On that note, I want to caution too. Just like in mining, I want us to work together in resolving issues in logging. We will have to do the same thing. This is because there are many associations in the country that have a lot of issues.

Quite honestly, what I have found is that in the associations there are too much in fighting. There are too many acquisitions where only families and friends are getting tags. One man getting half of the tags and nobody else getting tags. Then one person goes and do something illegal, and the entire association is charged. We have to be careful with this. We have to fix our associations. You have to screen your members when they come into the association. You maybe have to put a limit to the amount of members in the associations too. In one of the associations in Region 10 there are over 100 members. If the GFC is going to give you 200 tags it means almost one to a person – one log to a person for the entire year. We have to look at how we manage the associations. We have to look at our membership and we have to look at working with the GFC. This is because there are too many associations that right now owe the GFC. They have not renewed their permits because they have outstanding moneys. You have my number, let me know what is the issue. I will try my best to work with you, like I did with some of the Toshias over the last couple of days. They will receive tags before they go back so that they can start harvesting again. If we do not permit you to cut then you cannot pay the fees, so we have to look at it the other way.

I started out by telling you that we need to produce but if you are not given the opportunity to produce then you would not be able to pay your acreage fees or your royalties and you would not be able to carry out infrastructural work in your communities. Let us ensure that we fix the issues that are there causing problems among the associations.

The other final note on forestry is that we want villages to go into processing, to go into value-added. You know that when you export, or you sell your logs, you do not make the real money. When you convert the logs to lumber or to wood products, that is where you make your money. Some people tell you that is too much work, that they are not able with that and that they prefer to sell their logs. You make more money when you process. You cut less trees, you need less logs and you make more money. I

want to personally encourage villages and associations to look at ways in which persons can go into processing and downstream activities. This is because that is how you make more revenue.

Last year January, I know that we distributed probably over \$1 billion in what we call the economic grant to villages. I personally went to Region 9 and distributed almost half a billion dollars. Some villages got \$10 million based on their size and population. In some villages they got \$7 million, some got \$15 million, and some got \$7 million. They were advised to use maybe \$1 million or \$2 million out of it to upgrade the ICT Hubs and the remaining amount of that money was supposed to be used on a small economic venture that would bring revenue into the village and create employment for the people. I know some villages still have moneys from that fund that was given. Do you still have it in your bank account? Use it. If you are a logging village, use it and buy a portable sawmill, buy a tractor, pay down for a skidder. This is because those are economic ventures. Those will bring revenue to your village. Those will create employment for your people. That was the idea for us as Government, giving that to you as villages and communities. We know that COVID-19 took a hard hit on all the village economies on the coast, much less the interior. That is why we gave that grant so that you could have venture into a small economic activity. I know some villages set up motorcycle stores. One village, I think it was Fairview, said that they would buy a portable sawmill and were advised to purchase a tractor.

Another village went into poultry production, *et cetera*. I knew of villages that used it meaningfully and those that still had money remaining. If you are involved in logging/mining, think of ways in which the money can be used to boost production in whatever economic venture the villagers are involved in. Toshihos/Leaders, I thought I would begin with those short remarks upfront before allowing your questions and or comments. I should be grateful that whilst raising your issues on logging and mining, you also supply suggestions on how we can, together, resolve those issues.”

Questions and Answers

Toshao Esau Boyal, Santa Cruz, Region 1, relayed information on the concession the village currently held which was causing confusion amongst the villagers. He requested assistance with the explanation of the procedures/laws on how the concession worked. He also clarified that his village was working under Kwebanna where a GFC Forest Office was located. Unfortunately, the Forest Rangers stationed there had no means of transport to assess and verify what was done by villagers. He then requested transportation and fuel for the Rangers to facilitate the legal logging process.

The Minister of Natural Resources responded that, indeed, this was an issue throughout the country that constantly prevented the Rangers from adequately performing their duties. He intimated that just like the Mines Officers, the Forest Rangers were to work alongside the villagers and loggers to ensure the laws were adhered to and not to police their activities. He also relayed that the Guyana Forestry Commission was in a better position to deal with transportation woes. The Minister

thanked the President for the \$350 million which was disbursed to the Ministry. He also said the weather was playing a part in inhibiting the agency and its work but, nevertheless, the agency will continue to persevere to assist the regions. The Toshao of Fairview was reassured that his concerns were being addressed and that they were going to resume production the week following the conclusion of the Conference.

Toshao Bradford Allicock, Fairview, Region 9, raised a concerned and sought clarity pertaining to the claim that the Guyana Forestry Commission was not in control of community logging and as a result of this claim, confusion/misunderstanding arose due to persons not being held to account to the Guyana Forestry Commission rules. He thanked the Government for the \$10 million grant provided for COVID relief and disclosed that it was used to purchase a log loader instead of the LT 15 sawmill.

The Minister responded by citing parts of the Vice-President's speech which was delivered on the first day of the Conference and pertained to the rights of Amerindian people in Guyana, especially subsurface rights where the Minister explained that coast landers were not given those rights to their lands. He reiterated that the resources could be explored in the communities but must be done under the guidance and regulations of the GGMC and GFC. It was noted that both agencies would commence training in August, 2022, relative to the Mining Act/Forestry Regulations in all villages which were involved in mining. The Minister ended by commending the Toshao on the manner in which the grant was utilised.

Mr. Peter Persaud, Bamboo Landing, Region 1, sought an intervention for Bamboo landing located in the Barama River where it was alleged that residents have or were migrating due to the activities of miners.

Minister Bharrat stated that he spoke with the Toshao of Kariako who had similar problems. He stated that a team from the Mines Division would visit the area as early as next week.

Toshao Melina Pollard, Riversview, Region 10, thanked the Government, the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) and the GGMC for what they had done for Riversview. She also thanked the Minister for sending a team to her village to assist and reported that after speaking with the bauxite company they were making some headway.

The Minister responded that the Government instituted a fine against the company and that he was aware that work was being done to address the issue. He thanked the Toshao for her involvement.

Mr. Emanuel Henry, CDC Chairman, Eclipse Falls, Region 1, reported that the village was waiting for demarcation of the land in order for title to be provided. He revealed that there were 20 to 30 illegal mining dredges operating on their lands. He requested that the GGMC, which had an office in the village, look into the matter.

The Minister stated that the Land Division would make checks to determine whether there was land tenure in that area. He indicated that the Toshao would be furnished with the information if there was, but if not, the responsible division would address the matter of illegal miners.

Toshao Jillian Williams, Campbelltown, Region 8, referred to the Minister's presentation on the care of the environment and requested that officers of the GGMC visit the village to assist with prospecting so as to prevent damage to the area. She further requested a forest inventory of the species of trees to be found in the village.

Toshao Williams then said that the residents of Campbelltown were requesting a wood mizer from the Ministry.

The Minister stated that he had promised the villages of Chenapou and Karisparu to send in a team from GGMC to assist with prospecting so that the Kaieteur National Park would remain protected. He revealed that each village could earn \$11.5 million annually from the forest and they should not jeopardise that. The Minister then said that a team would also assist Campbelltown with prospecting to avoid the dangers he had seen when there was a 'shout' in Campbelltown.

An official from the Guyana Geology and Mine Commission reminded that Campbelltown had promised to take out a prospecting permit which would be to their benefit but there had been no action in that regard.

The Minister called on all communities and leaders to operate according to the laws of the country and to follow the regulations. He urged that communities meet with the GGMC.

The Minister stated that there was a national forest inventory being compiled at present which would be available to everyone as soon as it was completed.

Toshao Sonia Latchman, Bethany Village, Region 2, revealed that there was an outstanding issue with the boundary. She pointed out that there was a difference between her map and the map at the Ministry. She stated that the situation was hindering the livelihood of her people since the community depended on logging. Toshao Latchman suggested that a surveyor from Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission (GLSC) be assigned to clarify the issue.

The Toshao requested two GPSs and safety kits for loggers in her community. She disclosed that, at an earlier meeting, the loggers requested her to seek assistance similar to the assistance given to the fishermen for them.

The Minister of Natural Resources stated that the GLSC was not under the purview of his Ministry, but the agencies worked closely together and would decide on a course of action. The Minister stated that could be presented to her before the conclusion of the Conference. He stated further that, promises made to Toshaos to procure chain saws and a brush cutter would be fulfilled also before the conclusion of the Conference.

Toshao Alvin Joseph, Tasserene Village, Region 7, stated that they had been complaining about pollution of the Tasserene Creek. This had been caused by medium and small-scale miners, since 2012. He stated that the Tasserene Creek was the only source of water for the village to utilise. Toshao Joseph stated that the people of Tasserene were requesting that the mining blocks in the area be removed, and those miners be given alternative blocks. Toshao Joseph stated that since they

have collected the COT agreement, they needed to know what benefits they would have to get from the miners within the reservation.

The Minister of Natural Resources stated that agreements for mining and logging were made between the village councils and investors. He stated further that Government was not involved as a broker or a 'middleman' in those agreements. He advised that the issues be worked out by the village council and implored leaders to work out the terms and conditions with prospective investors. The Minister stated that, following that process, licences and permits were granted.

The Minister acknowledged the gravity of the situation and made a commitment to send a team into the area during the following week. Mr. Lewis from the GGMC stated that a team had visited the area recently and they would continue to monitor the situation. According to Mr. Lewis, the issue of surface run-off had also been raised. The Minister stated that the Toshao's proposal of offering alternative blocks away from the waterways would be taken into consideration.

The Minister of Amerindian Affairs noted that there were a number of new Toshaos who had been elected to leadership within their communities and may have never been engaged in discussions at the village level. She stated that, at present, when an investor approached a village with a proposal, that proposal was shared with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. She stated that if the village gave approval, they worked in collaboration with the Ministry to craft an agreement, which was legally binding and fair to both parties. She advised the Toshaos not make 'notebook agreements' but to follow the correct administrative process. The Minister of Natural Resources supported the position of the Minister of Amerindian Affairs in relation to the making of agreements to ensure they were not disadvantaged. He urged that there be collaboration between the villages and Government to address issues.

The Minister of Natural Resources gave an undertaking to identify a few villages to train temporary Mines Officers to identify issues of non-adherence to the rules and regulations. He stated that the Toshaos would be given the responsibility for identifying the persons for training.

Community Toshao, Mr. Flagon Carter, Rockstone, Region 10, recognised the Minister for his leadership in the sector. He acknowledged the Minister's role, especially in the works carried out on the trail from Rockstone to the Sharima Village. He listed the following requests: the waiver of funds for Great Falls; issuance of mining permits; applications for community concessions which needed the support of the Minister. He asked on behalf of the women's group in Rockstone for consideration to be given to have the two non-working freezers of the group fixed.

Toshao Carter further thanked other officers for their efforts towards the community. He enquired about available funds and support mechanisms directed to the newly elected NTC body with regard to more support initiatives.

The Minister of Natural Resources commended the Toshao and other officers for their efforts in making representation on behalf of their communities throughout the country. He stated that Ministry of Natural Resources was paying the rental for the

building that housed the NTC Headquarters and that the Ministry will continue to do so until the NTC's new building was completed. The Minister noted that it would be a significant achievement of the NTC to move into its own building with the relevant support staff enabling it to make worthwhile representation.

The Minister related that the Muritaro issue was being examined and that an official request was needed for the waiver for the Great Falls. He asserted that the Ministry was willing to offer whatever help was needed to assist villages and association with getting back into production and stated that a decision would be made shortly on the applications for the community concessions.

Toshao Cornel Edwards, Micobie, Sub-District 1, Region 8, pointed to the dangers in some of the areas where the miners worked, especially, during the rainy season. He pointed further to the need for the training of miners in the execution of their duties, especially as it related to their safety. He asked for the issuance of mining applications to be addressed.

The Minister noted the number of issues which had occurred in Micobie during the past but noted that the community was in a better position. The Minister indicated that the issuance of mining permits would be examined and that it was the plan of the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission to conduct training throughout the entire country in mining villages. He noted the importance of training workers in mining operations.

Toshao Michael Thomas, Aishalton, Deep South Rupununi, Region 9, pointed to the reopening of mining in Marudi. He stated that the small miners in the surrounding areas were willing to work with the Ministry on the way forward. Toshao Thomas stated that persons had been identified to embark on the relevant training as Mines Officers.

Toshao Thomas asked that the issuance of new mining blocks surrounding the Marudi area ceased since the village of Aishalton had applied for an extension to that area and the land issues needed to be addressed.

The Minister enquired about the persons who had been identified for training since he agreed with the training of staff. He reminded the Conference about his stand on illegal activities on the land and the environment, and respect for the rights of the Indigenous people. The Minister posited that the relevant stakeholders would have to work together on the way forward. He indicated that the persons would commence training two weeks from the current day and would become temporary Mines Officers who would monitor the mining activities in Marudi to ensure that the agreement was upheld.

The Minister stated that there was no new application for blocks in the Marudi area. He shared the position that new blocks would not be issued in the area.

Toshao Eugene Andrew, Sand Creek, South Central Rupununi, Region 9, stated that he was pleased to hear that persons had been identified to undertake training with the GGMC. He stated that small mining and logging activities were carried out in his community and asked that persons from his area also be included in the training to

be carried out by the GGMC as Mines Officers and Forestry Rangers. Toshao Andrew stated that those persons were needed to assist persons in the area with carrying out their mining and logging activities in the correct manner. He enquired about the procedure for logging on State lands.

The Minister responded to the last question pertaining to logging in State Forest by stating that approximately 12.5 million hectares of land were assigned to forestry and only on the assigned land were people permitted to do forestry activities provided that they were legal holders of permits. He stated that Guyana was boasting of having 90% of its forest intact as a result of not permitting logging activities outside of the assigned spaces. With reference to the question of training, the Minister advised the Toshao to speak with the officers from GFC and GGMC and to supply the names of the two persons identified for training.

The Minister while addressing the issue on a stalled operation in Marudi, advised the REO from Region 9 to employ a regional coordinator for that region, who would be responsible for logging and mining and make clear that that person would be answerable to him. The Minister also agreed with the Toshao that procedures and activities must work in the right way. By way of an announcement, the Minister alluded to the commencement of a goldsmith/jewellery training course which was a collaboration with the GGMC. The Ministry of Natural Resources was training about 20 young persons who were scheduled to complete that training in August, 2022. While highlighting the need for resuscitating the trade, the Minister pointed to the desire to recruit more persons from the Hinterland regions to be in the next batch scheduled for the continuation of the free training programme. He encouraged those present to submit names of interested persons before the end of the Conference. The Minister stated that those who were not selected immediately, would be given every opportunity to so do owing to the ongoing nature of the programme.

Toshao Vivian Edwards, Waramuri, Region 1, while referencing the ongoing issue in Chinese Landing, noted that this matter was brought before the CCJ and should the Government act, it would be in contempt of the court. His main concern was with the threats and intimidation being levelled against the residents of that village and made a public call to the Government of Guyana to act on this issue before things got out of hand.

The Minister replied that the Government shared the same concerns as expressed by the Toshao as it related to the threat of violence against residents. He relayed that the matter would be dealt with by the GGMC and the Ministry of Home Affairs, noting that the Police needed to become involved to bring some form of normalcy to the situation.

The Minister was grateful for the reminder that was also given by other Tshaos of communities undergoing similar conditions. He reiterated that the visits were rescheduled and would be done in concurrence with advice given by the Tshaos on when it was feasible to do so.

Toshao Eve Samuels, St. Monica, Region 2, reminded about the boundary line dispute between St. Monica and Kabakaburi. She asked about the timeline for the

resolution of the issue since it was a burning matter that was promised a decision a month prior.

The Minister stated that he had sought advice and was awaiting a response from his team.

Toshao Orin Fernandes, Chinese Landing, Region 1, first thanked the Government for its support which was being given in terms of handouts and grants to residents. He gave a brief outline on the history of Chinese Landing and highlighted the issues being faced in his village. Toshao Fernandes pointed to a matter which was before the CCJ and stated that the village was not included.

The Toshao highlighted the activities of armed trespassers who conducted mining activities in the area despite that there was title to the land. He detailed for the Conference what took place when the village council tried to meet with officers on the matter. The Toshao stated that mining activities were a threat to health and named Tasserene as an area of interest.

The Minister reminded the Toshao that he had written to the Ministry and GGMC about the issue. He assured the Toshao that the issue was being attended to. He reminded the Toshao about the injunction that had barred the GGMC from monitoring the area and that the law had to be respected. He then assured the Toshao that the other issues would be attended to and suggested that there be a meeting with the respective agencies to find solutions before the Toshao went back to his village.

The Toshao enquired about the status of the four mining blocks in Chinese Landing.

The Minister indicated that the mining permit was active, but that he was not sure about the time for renewal. He stated that GGMC would have that information. The Toshao then stated that an individual had claimed he had bought the place and was acting as the owner.

The Minister revealed that he had similar reports but that they were only working with the records of the GGMC, which had no record of the sale.

The Toshao then stated that he was still awaiting the visit of the Minister. The Minister said that when the National Assembly goes into recess, he would make visits to villages that he had not been able to visit as yet. He named a few areas he wanted to visit.

Toshao Delph Hunter, Kambaru/Ominike, Region 7, stated that his village was granted title to its land in 2015. He enquired why mining blocks were still being issued.

The Minister assured the Toshao that the GGMC would make the necessary checks and report to him and that they would meet with him on the following day to discuss the findings.

Toshao Mario Hastings, Kako, Region 7, stated that there was a shortage of human resource at the GGMC, noting that there were more grants handed out that could be

monitored. He requested, kindly, that there be a suspension to the granting of concessions.

The Toshao stated that he agreed with the Minister that they should sit down and talk. He alluded to the pending court case and stated that he did not want to go into details since he did not want his brothers and sisters to go through the same things.

The Toshao gave his support to Chinese Landing and stated that the situation there was not good. He reminded the GGMC that permission was granted with the stroke of a pen and that he did not like the right of Indigenous peoples being trampled on.

Toshao Hastings urged that the issues be seriously addressed so as to bring resolution to the matter which had been ongoing. The Minister stated that he shared the sentiments about the respect for the rights of Indigenous peoples. The Toshao pointed to the importance of the consent of persons, which was stipulated in the Amerindian Act. He urged that caution be exercised in relation to balancing the preservation of the environment against the extraction of resources.

The Minister asked that decisions be thought through thoroughly prior to final decisions being made. He referenced the political turmoil in Guyana between 1960 to 1992 and the continued export of raw materials as two factors which hindered and continues to hinder Guyanese from benefitting from Guyana's vast natural resources.

Toshao Troy Peters, Kwebanna, Region 1, expressed appreciation to the Minister for his excellent support which was received in relation to the land renter's association.

Ms. Gwendolyn Jeffrey, CDC Chairman, Agatash, Region 7, expressed gratitude to the Government for the developments in the communities over the past two years. She requested that a tractor be provided to the community to be used in the community's logging concession.

The Minister agreed to examine ways in which support could be provided to the community of Agatash.

Mr. Adon Jacobus, CDC Chairman, Aranaputa, North Rupununi, Region 9, highlighted for the NTC an issue which concerned a company, Royal Logistics, requesting a no-objection letter from the community in order to conduct mining operations. He stated that the representatives from the company were accompanied by a purported representative from the GGMC and enquired whether the Minister was aware of the matter.

The Toshao pointed out that Aranaputa and the GFC had enjoyed cordial relationship and they had given the GFC a space for an office. He requested that GFC be given an office of its own so as to allow it to operate on a 24-hour basis.

Mr. Adon Jacobis highlighted that the village had retendered with the aim of being granted a concession.

The Minister stated that the application process had been closed recently and that the applications made were being examined by the Ministry. He expressed gratitude and thanked the CDC Chairman of Aranaputa for the space which had been

identified by the village for the setting up of a station for forestry officers and indicated that the Ministry would consider taking up the offer.

The Minister noted that the CDC Chairman had highlighted the issue of the quarry correctly and stated that the company needed to approach the village for a no-objection. He assured the Chairman that the paper shown to the village leaders by the company was in no way a mining permit or a licence. The Minister reminded the NTC Conference about the *modus operandi* involved in the Ministry granting a mining licence or permit to any mining company or miner. He noted that the Ministry would not force any village to work with any mining company since it was the prerogative of the villages to take such decisions.

The CDC Chairman requested that GGMC engaged the community on the companies which had signalled an interest in venturing into businesses in the village. The Minister stated that it was his belief that approach to engage the community was incorrect.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development informed the NTC Conference that the area which Mr. Jacobis represented was a NDC which was formed in 2018. He stated that the applications which were being made were not being made on behalf of the Aranaputa Village Council but on behalf of the NDC of Aranaputa, inclusive of the forestry concession. The Minister stated that any quarrying activity must occur on the NDC lands and not on Aranaputa land.

An Officer from GFC informed the Conference that the Guyana Forestry Commission would examine the plan, understand the issues which were being raised and make contact with the village. He stated a surveyor would then be sent to the community so as to bring solution to the issue(s) highlighted.

The Minister of Natural Resources thanked Toshaos and leaders for their participation in the discussion and dialogue and stated that much had been resolved. It was his belief that there was a clear pathway in moving forward in regulating mining within Amerindian villages and communities and the roles GGMC and the Ministry of Natural Resources will play in supporting Aranaputa. The Minister appealed to the leaders and reminded them about the need for collaborative efforts between the villages and the Government to deliver solutions to issues being faced in the area of natural resources, in order to build communities and regions and to develop Guyana.

The Ministers urged that everyone worked together and conduct activities in a responsible and sustainable manner since caution needed to be exercised in the manner in which exploration and production of our natural resources took place.

Presentation by Hon. Vickram Bharrat, Minister of Natural Resources on the Oil and Gas Sector and Local Content

“I have some time to give you an insight into what is happening in the oil and gas sector. I am sure that you are eager to know what is happening and how you will benefit from the oil and gas.

Guyana made its first discovery of oil and gas, as you would know, in commercial quantity in May, 2015. A few days before our General and Regional Elections in 2015, ExxonMobil Corporation made its first discovery in the Stabroek Block offshore Guyana.

The leaders from Region 9 who are here would know that our first real discovery of oil and gas was made around 1982 in the Takatu Basin, the stretch which is commonly called the hunt-oil stretch. It is called hunt-oil stretch because the name of the oil company which did exploration activities in the Takutu Basin is called *Hunts Oil Company*. That was Guyana's first discovery that there were hydrocarbons on our land. However, at that time, because of the infrastructure, there was no bridge to Brazil or no proper road to go into and because there was a lack of technology and sophisticated equipment, which we have now, that activity was halted.

We did not have exploration activities until after 1999 when the Exploration Licence was signed by then President Janet Jagan. She signed the Exploration Licence. I am stressing on that because there is a difference between an exploration licence and a production licence. Janet Jagan, as President in 1999, signed the Exploration Licence with ExxonMobil Corporation at a time when many companies were afraid to do exploration activities in countries which were unknown, in countries which had no data as to whether there were hydrocarbon deposits or not. I would say, and we need to recognise, too, that it was a big risk which was taken by ExxonMobil Corporation in 1999 to sign an exploration agreement with the Government and people of Guyana.

Take it in this context, had ExxonMobil Corporation found no oil and had invested US\$20 or US\$30 million or US\$1 or US\$2 billion, then it would have lost that. It would have had to pack up and leave Guyana which would have then been considered as a loss. ExxonMobil Corporation took the risk of signing the exploration agreement with us and then, in 2015, luckily, hydrocarbon of commercial quantity was found in the Stabroek Block offshore Guyana.

Now, the pace at which we are moving in developing the oil and gas sector is unprecedented. It has never happened anywhere in the world, especially by a small developing country. You might see this mostly in the developed first-world countries, but for a country like Guyana, we would have never seen this pace of development in the oil and gas sector.

After discovering oil in 2015, we started producing oil in December, 2019. Our neighbour to the east made a discovery years ago and is still not producing today. We have moved beyond one floating production storage offloading (FPSO) vessel. Back in the days we called such vessel oil rigs. That is where the oil is drawn from the reservoir. It is now called the FPSO. That is the vessel which has all the pipes connected to the reservoirs or the wells to suck the crude oil out the of the reservoir and then transfer into ships for export. I am just giving you an explanation so that you will understand what an FPSO is. We now have two FPSOs – one is called Liza Destiny, which is producing 120,000 barrels per day; and the other is the Liza Unity,

which is producing 220,000 barrels per day. Safely, right now as we speak, our country has produced over 300,000 barrels of oil per day.

We have already signed two other licences which will see two more FPSOs coming – one should come late next year, which would produce 220,000 barrels of oil per day; and the two years after that we should have another called the ‘One Guyana’ FPSO, which will produce 250,000 barrels per day. With those four FPSOs and those four licences which we have already signed, it is already over 800,000 barrels per day that will be produced when all four are operating in Guyana waters. Soon another will be seeking our approval, which will take us to over 1 million barrels per day. This is only from the Stabroek Block.

There are nine offshore blocks. The production is only taking place in the Stabroek Block. When you hear us speak about the Production Sharing Agreement and the agreement which was signed in June, 2016, by the former Government not being a good agreement... which we did mention and campaign against that we could have gotten a better deal for Guyana, that we could have gotten more than 2% royalty, and that we could have gotten more than 12.5% share of the oil. We argued that we could have gotten better.

There is a misconception by a lot of people that the Production Sharing Agreement is for all of Guyana’s oil. The Production Sharing Agreement is only for the Stabroek Block. That is what the Vice-President was referring to when you heard him say that, for the other blocks, we are going to ensure that we have a production sharing agreement. When production starts in the other blocks, for example in the Berbice Block where there was a discovery by Canadian Oil and Gas Exploration (CGX) Company earlier this year, the drilling of a second well will commence in August. If CGX has another commercial discovery of hydrocarbons, we may very well start producing oil from the Corentyne Block too. That is when the Government will be required to sign a production-sharing agreement for the Corentyne Block. The Government wants to assure you and everyone in Guyana that when we the Government signs a production-sharing agreement it will definitely have more benefits for Guyana and Guyanese than the one the APNU/AFC signed in 2016.

So, when you hear us talk about that, that is what we are referring to. Only when a block starts producing then you can sign a production-sharing agreement. Now, there are exploration agreements with all the other blocks, but there is no other production sharing agreement because only the Stabroek block is producing. All the discoveries that I mentioned earlier and all the amount of oil that we will produce in another six to seven years from now, it is only the Stabroek block.

There is the likelihood that we could be producing from other blocks in another five to six years from now, depending on the discoveries in those blocks, such as the Corentyne block, Canje block, Kanuku block where they are drilling right now, so we are hoping there is a discovery there too, then there is the Orinduik block, the Roraima block, and then there is the block which we call Block C that is still not awarded to any company. This block will go towards an open bidding process for

companies that are interested in buying at the end of this year. We are hoping we get a good price for it too.

So, what we are doing now too, is that we are looking to utilise and monetise our gas because we have been focusing a lot on oil and its production, but we have not moved towards gas utilisation and monetisation. Now our biggest problem in this country and - the comrade who spoke earlier, about Guyana not realising its true potential from its resources - one of the reasons why we have never really realised the potential from our resources is because we always had a problem of power production. The cost of power production in this country is probably one of the highest in this hemisphere.

We pay close to 30 cents per kilowatt on the coast and in some of the hinterland communities, especially Lethem, Mahdia, Mabaruma and those areas, it is very expensive, and it is not reliable. We grew up in this country knowing about 'blackouts' especially on the coast. When I visited other countries and mentioned 'blackouts' they thought people had fainted, they were sick and they fell, but we know about 'blackouts'. One of our biggest hinderance towards moving to value-added and really realising the true potential of our resources has always been the cost of power generation and the reliability of power generation too. So, we are now working towards addressing and solving that problem. And you probably heard about the Gas to Energy project.

Now what really is the Gas to Energy project? It is actually running pipelines from offshore Guyana where we are producing oil now, 100 miles offshore - if you go on the seawall, it is 100 miles out - so we are going to run 12-inch pipelines from 100 miles out, straight into shore and carry it to Wales, where we will build a power plant there, that will use the gas to generate electricity. That really in a nutshell is the Gas to Energy project. It is bringing the gas that we are finding offshore right into land and then use it to generate electricity. As you know, when the oil is produced, it is not the oil alone that you get, you get gas, and you get water with it too. That is the gas we are going to use and begin to monetise, because from that we are going to get cheaper cooking gas. When that project is completed at the end of 2024, our electricity cost - those of us who are connected to the grid - will be cut by 50% or even more. For example, if a person is paying \$20,000 electricity bill at the end of the month now, they will pay \$10,000 when that project is completed at the end of 2024.

But not only that, we will have cheaper and reliable power so 'blackouts' could probably be a thing of the past. We will also have cleaner power, because the whole world is moving towards transitional renewable energy and trying to cut their carbon dioxide emission. I went to a conference recently and there were countries making pledges to cut their emission to 0, by 2030, 2035 and by 2040. But we must be proud as a country since we are net 0, or we are even in the negative, even though we have so many issues in mining which we are doing in Guyana, even though we are doing logging and producing oil and gas now, Guyana is net 0, one of the few countries in the world that is net 0. Countries are putting in all kinds of systems and spending billions of dollars now to become net 0, we are already there.

And we are not satisfied with that, the Gas to Energy project will cut the emissions from current power production by 70%. With this we will go further into the negative, even though we are producing oil, encouraging mining and logging. That is why I mentioned that the Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030 will not stop mining or logging, because we are going to cut our emission even further with the Gas to Energy project. We are moving towards hydro and solar, and your 30,000 units will be distributed to you shortly which will add towards cutting our emission because it is renewable energy, the mini hydros that we are using in the interior regions now will also add to us transitioning to renewable energy. So very soon in the future we may not use fossil fuel to generate electricity in Guyana.

Now, a lot of people have been criticising us for moving too fast in the oil and gas sector, stating we should not move so fast, that we should slow down. That is why I mentioned to you that in a few years from now, Guyana will not be using fossil fuel to generate power, likewise, many other countries around the world too. Most countries are moving towards transitional, renewable electricity and towards electric vehicles. So, the demand for fossil will not remain the same and we need to understand that. Another 10-20 years from now, fossil fuel will not be in demand as it is today, meaning, we will not need fuel as much as we need it today, because we are generating electricity by using hydro, solar, wind, gas also we will be using electric cars, so we would not need fossil fuel and the whole world is moving in that direction. In another 20 years from now, fossil fuel will no longer be the black gold as we call it, lithium and copper might be more expensive than oil and gold.

We need to ensure, since we found this resource that we have now, that we use it, produce it as fast as possible, use the revenue from it to develop our country, ensure we have proper healthcare, proper education system, proper infrastructure and we have food secure communities. When people criticize us that we are moving too fast in the oil and gas sector it is without any basis, they do not understand how the world is moving, especially now that we are seeing so many impacts of climate change and you, we are all experiencing it. Some of your communities are underwater unto now as we speak. And as the Vice-President mentioned yesterday, flooding is here to stay, whether we like it or not, because of that fact, because of climate change that is occurring around the world.

You never know, at some point in time, countries may be penalised for using fossil fuel. Or the world might say 'we are going to buy products from countries that are making these products using renewable energy and we do not want to buy from countries that are using fossil energy.' Now what will happen to those countries? They will be forced to start producing with renewable energy. I am telling you this to show the importance and the reason why we must extract or produce as fast as possible and to use our resources to build a new economy. That is why when you hear President Ali speak, he will always refer to the non-oil sector and how important it is to keep those traditional sectors going. That is why we want to support mining and logging and that is why we are placing so much emphasis on agriculture, food security and tourism because those sectors will survive, but the oil and gas sector, unfortunately, will not survive around the world maybe next 20-30 years from today.

We need to use it as we have the resources and then use the revenue to develop our communities and our country.

In a nutshell, I tried to summarise, as best as possible, what is happening. Recently, we passed the Local Content Legislation and this legislation is to ensure that Guyanese benefit from the Oil and Gas Sector. I want to speak a little before I close on how we will benefit from the Oil and Gas Sector. Firstly, we want our people to be employed and provide goods and services in the Oil and Gas Sector. Now a step in that direction is the Local Content Legislation which is now the Law, telling companies that they must do business with Guyanese businesses. It is not optional anymore. We could probably stick with a local content policy, but then a local content policy does not compel an oil company to do business with Guyanese, but a legislation or law compels Exxon Mobile or any other oil company that you must do business with Guyanese companies. I am not sure if everyone has a copy, but it is online, you can always check the Local Content Legislation, there is a schedule that is there with specific targets, you will see food supplies – 75%. What it means is that every single oil company operating in Guyana must buy at least 75% of their food supply from Guyanese businesses, that is what it means.

Without that legislation they would have bought it from Trinidad, which they used to do, from Suriname, from America or from wherever they felt like. But with the law in place, they must buy it from Guyanese businesses. If you look at the schedule it says 100% cleaning services, 100% security services, welding fabrication 30% and there are about 40 different services. Maybe you can look at it, it is online on the Ministry's website or even the Parliament of Guyana's website and you will see the 40 list of services and the targets that we have set for the oil companies. Those targets are based on our capacity as a country too, because we cannot put in the legislation you must buy risers, jumpers and Christmas trees from Guyana when we do not produce those things. But we can say 'look you have to buy your food supplies from Guyana because we have it, you have to procure security services from Guyana because we can do that, catering service 100% because we can do that'.

The good thing is, we can change the local content schedule at any point in time once we develop our skills, our ability and our capacity. If it is 40 now, we can add another 40 next year. If welding and fabrication is 20% now, we can increase it to 50% next year. We can do that; we have the power to do that. As a matter of fact, I just need to sign an order and it goes into law. That is the importance and significance of having a Local Content Legislation in place. You probably saw in the news that many countries are not happy with the Local Content Legislation, and I do not blame them. As the Government, we must look out for Guyanese, we cannot expect other people to come and take over all the jobs, all the business and all the services from Guyanese, then how will we benefit? We will continue adding to that schedule as we build capacity.

We also made amendments to or changes to the Natural Resource Fund Act. That is the account the oil money goes into. We changed the law governing that Fund to ensure there is proper accountability and transparency, that everybody in this country know how much money is coming out of that account and going into the

Consolidated Fund, that there is proper oversight by Parliament because it has to be approved by Parliament before it is spent. Do not let people fool you and say that we can use the oil money as we feel. That is not true. The law states how much money can move from the Natural Resource Fund into the budget. The law states clearly that we cannot spend it without coming to the National Assembly and getting the approval. People might say all sorts of things but that is what the law states. You can read it for yourselves. The Natural Resource Fund Act, like the Local Content Act, is available on our Ministry's website and also on the Parliament's website. So, when you have the time read it, and you will see what I am telling you is actually in the Act – what we put in the Act as safeguards. We could have said that we are in Government and could spend it how we feel. But we said, no, because we campaigned and said two things about the oil and gas sector. We said, one, that we will manage the sector in a transparent and an accountable manner, and that is why we changed the Natural Resource Fund Act. The second promise we made about the oil and gas sector is that we will manage the resources and revenue in such a way that every Guyanese will benefit from it. People may want to know how they will benefit. I can tell you that in this year's budget – the largest budget ever in the history of our country – it is mainly because a portion of our oil revenue has been transferred or will be transferred from the Natural Resource Fund into the budget. So, when Region 9 can boast about how it has the largest budget ever in the history of this country, it is because of that. When we say that we are going to build a new secondary school in Region 9, it is because of that. When we say that we are going to put a smart hospital in every region or upgrade the hospital to a smart hospital it is because of that. When we say we are doing the Linden to Mabura Road it is because of that. We said clearly, and the President has already outlined, that when the revenue is transferred and budgeted, it will be used to improve, one – education, because education is key. Minister Priya Manickchand mentioned this morning that we, as a Government, are working towards bridging the gap between the hinterland and the coastland. That is because we believe the opportunities and facilities that are available on the coast must be available in the hinterland region as well. The revenue will be used to do that.

The GOAL scholarship is another programme. Now you can stay in your village and get a degree, diploma or a master. You do not have to leave your village or leave Guyana to go overseas. We are working towards bridging that gap, and the revenue will be used toward bridging that gap.

The road from Linden to Mabura will be a significant game changer for this country and that is where revenue will go towards. Converting all the wooden bridges to concrete from Linden to Lethem is another project that will be ongoing. There are so many others – the new Demerara Harbour Bridge, the bridge to the Republic of Suriname. These are all projects that are being undertaken by the Government. We made a promise in, one, education; two, health; three, infrastructure. Our country needs proper infrastructure. Even in the mining and logging areas we need proper infrastructure; we need better roads. You know the amount of money we are spending on hinterland roads, but, unfortunately, when the rain comes it washes away these things. We keep spending money all the time. Right now, we have to

spend hundreds of millions of dollars to repair sections of roads that are washed away because of the rain. It is no fault of any one of us here, even though some people blame the Government for the rain.

We made the promise that we will use the revenue to benefit every Guyanese. When the President made the commitment that we are going to ensure that every village is food secure, that is important. Now that is one of the biggest problems in the world because countries, very soon, will suffer from severe shortages of food. We are lucky in Guyana; we are blessed in Guyana because we do not have to worry about that. But other countries have to start to worry about where they will get food next year or the other year. That is why it is so important for us; that is why we say we are a blessed country.

My friends, leaders, Toshaos, I know it is getting late and we have to freshen up and go to the reception. It was already indicated to me that I am speaking too much. We have about 10 minutes. What we will do is take a few comments and suggestions from you as to how we can move forward to manage the oil and gas sector. The floor is open.”

Questions and Answers

Toshao Jeremy Boyal, Warapoka, Region 1, highlighted cases of patients being referred for overseas treatment and the need for assistance. He enquired whether a percentage from the oil and gas fund could be deposited into the Amerindian Development Fund to assist such patients. He then detailed the lengthy process involved in accessing assistance for overseas medical treatment.

The Minister reminded the Conference that the Presidents spoke to the construction of new and specialised hospitals and also signed an agreement with Mount Sinai Hospital, one of the best hospitals in the world, to bring its expertise to Guyana. He stated that was to allow for Guyanese going abroad for treatment to be a thing of the past as there would be world class healthcare here to address medical issues.

The Minister stated that for tourism there were a number of projects to boost eco-tourism in interior locations. He reminded the Conference that the President had charged them to look at their community development programmes because revenue would be given to fund those projects. He stated there would be a number of funds to benefit villages, but it would need to be channelled to specific development to bring value to the communities.

Toshao Shane Cornelius, Karrau, Region 7, greeted the Conference. He stated that listening to the presentations yesterday and today, he discerned that the oil and gas sector was an exciting one. He requested access to fliers on oil and gas to share with villages so as to change the perception, since there was misinformation and not enough information.

The Toshao then stated that he wanted to remind fellow Toshaos, based on the presentation on the Low Carbon Development Strategy, that all leaders needed think seriously about their village plans. He noted that, with the revenues coming in, they needed to have a structured vision of where they wanted to see their village in the

future and recommended that they think in terms of the long-term sustainable management of villages and livelihood programmes for the future.

The Minister thanked the Toshao for his great suggestions and stated that the Local Content Secretariat would put together a package for dissemination to the NTC before the conclusion of the Conference. He urged his colleague leaders to commence work on the village plans to ensure sustainable management of villages.

The Minister agreed that information about how the oil and gas sector worked needed to be dissemination so as assist in providing a better understanding about the sector and to dispel the misinformation which was being peddled about the sector.

The Minister informed the Conference that the Guyana technical training college will be established at Port Mourant, in Berbice, before the end of 2022. He informed the Conference, further, that training in oil and gas and in other fields, such as hospitality for tourism, would be conducted at that college.

The Minister requested leaders to encourage youths from their villages to take advantage of the opportunity to be trained in oil and gas. He pointed to the need for citizens to be become certified and trained so as to be employed in and to benefit from the oil sector directly. In order to realise true local content, capacity needed to be improved in human resources and in private sector/business entities to offer goods and services to the sector. The Minister pointed to need and importance for citizens to be become certified to benefit from the oil and gas sector.

The leader from Region 7 indicated that Indigenous people needed:

1. To be part of human resources in the oil and gas sector in order to aid in the development of hinterland villages and communities; and
2. To advocate for their rights to be respected.

The leader pointed to the need for the hinterland villages and communities to be provided with facilities similar to what the city enjoyed, such as light, water systems, buildings, *et cetera*.

The Minister informed the NTC Conference that the Vice-President had overall responsibility of the oil and gas sector and that he worked directly under the guidance of the Vice-President in that area. He stated that the Government had been doing a tremendous job in ensuring that all citizens benefitted from the sector. The Minister iterated the need for youths to be involved in the training which will commence at the Port Mourant Training Centre. He encouraged leaders to ensure that hinterland children were in the school system and pointed to the need for the people from the hinterland, especially the youth, to utilise the scholarship programme and use the opportunity to obtain various diplomas and degrees to be eligible to work in and benefit from the oil and gas sector.

The Toshao from Region 7 pointed to the value for the Guyana dollar even though Guyana was an oil producing nation. He pointed the Conference also to the high cost of fuel.

The Minister stated that the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was now being felt. He posited that, over the last two years, many countries had shut their doors because of COVID-19 and, as a result, there was a shortage in the supply of products. He pointed to the high demand and low supply which were the driving forces in the increase in cost of living. He pointed also to the significant escalation in shipping costs as being another factor, and the demand for oil worldwide as a result of the war between Russia and Ukraine.

The Minister noted the global effects of the current war between Russia and Ukraine. He pointed to the resulting demand and corresponding increase in the price for oil and the increase in cost of living.

Toshao Michael Williams, Annai, North Rupununi, Region 9, encouraged the various regions to partake in the training being offered by the technical institutes. He stated that capacity needed to be built in preparation of the oil boom. He anticipated that when the road to Brazil was completed all resources would be needed in the region.

Toshao Williams noted that land had been approved for Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) teachers in the area. He expressed the hope that resources would also be given to the Education Department so that a CPCE training Centre could be built in the sub-region and training could be conducted.

Toshao Williams noted the dependency of the villages on the Presidential Grants for the execution of projects to enhance the livelihoods of their people. He stated that some of the oil revenues could be used to foster villages development.

The Minister noted that the North Rupununi could become a commercial hub with the completion of the road to Brazil.

The Minister of Labour informed the Conference that the Board of Industrial Training (BIT) had signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Bina Hill Institute. He stated that he would be in the North Rupununi to launch the first set of programmes being conducted by the Board of Industrial Training at the Bina Hill Institute. The Minister stated that a Technical Officer had been appointed for the North Rupununi who would address extensive technical training.

The Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport explained in detail the trade-offs for investments in the various communities. He explained further the developmental equation as to why development happens in some places and not in others.

Toshao Kingsley Baptiste, Three Brothers, Mabaruma, Region 1, enquired about the high price for gas although Guyana had been producing oil. He pointed to his challenges with pursuing a career in tourism with the high cost of gas.

A Toshao noted that it was the impression of participants that there would be a better future with the booming oil and gas sector. He pointed to the villages' plans and suggested that the NTC examined bigger plans which he referred to as the national NTC plans. He asked what safety measures were in place to deal with an oil spill on the coastal plain? He also said that while people were excited about what comes out

of it on the positive side, we needed to address the negative side because for some reason, people were taken up with the good things.

The Minister closed off the session with responses to the two leaders. Firstly, he admitted the Toshao was correct and that we all needed to think long term and should work towards achieving that too, which would be attained through human resource capacity building. He encouraged the villages to prioritise education, saying it was always the key for any developed society/community.

On the question of an oil spill, assurance was given that the EPA, along with the Civil Defence Commission (CDC), and the Ministry were working aggressively towards putting systems in place to ensure readiness for any contingency. The Minister also made mentioned that Guyana, for the first time, had an agreement in place to bring a “Cap and Stop” which was written into the last licence signed. Previously, subscriptions were paid for “Cap and Stop”. In the event of a spill offshore, the recovery process would begin in a matter of hours rather than days as in the past agreements.

On the question of why fuel and not gas was expensive, the Minister explained the drilling process whereby Guyana was extracting fossil fuel or crude which in turn was refined into many petroleum products in another country owing to Guyana not possessing a refinery of its own. He reminded the gathering that Guyana was not enforcing taxes on fuel as a result of earning revenue from the oil and gas sector. He further explained that the high fuel cost came as a result of many factors not limited to the war between Russia and Ukraine, high shipping costs and, of course, the impact from covid. He encouraged the participants to be optimistic and thanked them for engaging in the discussions.

The Conference ended with Toshao Latchman who thanked the Minister of Natural Resources for engaging the NTC and made the following announcements:

- Invitation to Reception at Guyana Police Officers Mess Hall.
- Free eye testing and reading glasses distributed by Ministry of Health.
- General Registrar Office booth addressing birth certificate issues.
- Ministry of Education officers available in the morning and during lunch period.

Day 2 of the Conference was adjourned at 6.40 p.m.

Day 3 – 13th July, 2022**Call to Order**

The session was called to order by Mr. Derrick John, Chairman of the NTC. He announced a minor change in the programme in which the presentations for both Wednesday and Thursday would be combined. He stated that the Ministers slated to present on Wednesday would do so during the morning session and those slated for Thursday would present during the afternoon session on Wednesday. The Chairman indicated that Ministers would be allowed five minutes for their presentation in order to have greater interaction from the Toshaos. The Chairman explained the mode on how the Conference would proceed.

Presentation by the Minister of Housing and Water, Hon. Collin Croal

“Thank you very much. Chairman of the NTC, executives of the NTC, Toshaos, Ministers of the Government, technical officers and members of the media, good morning all. I am not hearing you too well. I do not hear too good. Good morning all. Good.

Water

Do we have the prompter so that I could move quickly? I know the timeline is for a five-minute presentation and then we will go to the questions. Let me start with water. You know the mandate for the delivery of water is through the Guyana Water Inc. (GWI) and that is for potable water. The fact remain that we have a new plan that we are working with and that is a 2021 – 2025 vision. For those of you who have issues in relation to water, wells or you want to know when your area maybe captured, then that is easily presented. As an overview, when we started in August, 2020, the coverage in the hinterland was only 43%. In under 18 months we have invested close to \$1.5 billion in the hinterland for new wells and first-time access.

What that means is that, as a result of those interventions, we have move to about 63% at the starting of this year. By the time we are finished at the end of 2022, we will have 73%-75% access in the hinterland.

You heard the President on the first day, during the opening ceremony, say to you, as part of the millennium goal, because we have Sustainable Development Goal-6 (SDG-6), that we have to achieve by 2030. This PPP/C Government, will ensure that, by 2025, all villages, all communities, all recognised settlements – you noted that I said the words ‘recognised settlements’ – will have 100% access to potable water.

What that means is that you will realise over this year and the next two years that the interventions in the hinterland regions will be billions of dollars. We have also had some recent or new challenges in terms of drilling in the hinterland. This is because some of you come from communities affected by the climate change and climate prone activities and so, as a result, you have in some areas where we would consider safe, we now have to re-strategize and re-drill in higher areas. This is because, as was recently found in areas such as many of the communities in Region 9 and in many of the riverine communities, we found that the water levels, when there is flooding, the well system is affected.

As a result, you can expect as part of our strategy, you will realise that we will capture your relocation as part of our 2025 max programme. I just want you to look quickly at this map. This gives you an overall assessment of how we plan to achieve by 2025. This also gives you an assessment of where we are with the four main regions and then we have the villages from the coastland regions *per se*. You will see, for example, in the news, that more interventions have been happening in Region 7, especially in the Upper Mazaruni. There is a reason for that. The reason for that is simply there, you will see they have the lowest coverage. They have a challenge too because of the mining activities that are taking place in the Mazaruni. We have been making hundreds of million of dollars in intervening in new systems in the Upper Mazaruni. These cost a lot of money because logistics alone to take these rigs into the hinterland are costly. As a result, what have we done? We have invested in a new Pat rig that is specifically for the hinterland communities that allows easy mobility, putting it on a boat or trailer and moving it.

Right now, that new rig is drilling its first well in Moruca. Moruca has a number of wells that we are doing this year. When it is finished there then it will be going to Pomeroun. Pomeroun, for some of you who are knowledgeable enough, do not have many systems there. Then we have another rig that is currently in the Matarkai sub-region drilling in Arakaka. When that is finished in Matarkai, it has to go over to Mabaruma because we have not had any interventions since we are in Office. We have invested in those and we are going to be, hopefully, investing in another rig to help fast-track the drilling of a number of wells in the hinterland communities.

We have the information and, in the interest of time, we have information on the status of all communities, all villages. In this document we have a comprehensive

document, a situation analysis. If you rise and say you are asking of X village, we can immediately tell you the status of the system in your community and how we plan to achieve this.

What I want to assure you, therefore, because many of you will want to know who are without systems and who are also seeking expansion. I will give you a typical example. We just finished a well earlier in the year in Jawalla. When you go to Jawalla, they are now asking what happened across the river. Those are all part of what we have to do as part of our expansion.

What I want to say, therefore, is that those of you who have specific issues, you can raise your issues here because the Minister said it is an open floor. Those of you who have some specific complains about a pump here, a pump there, a pump down... I think somebody last night was telling me somewhere in Moruca was down. For those sorts of complains, we have the GWI staff here. When we are finished with the opening, we are going to place them in a room on the Western Wing and you can send some of those individual complains. Those of you who want your bigger information and request, certainly can raise them here. You realise there are more than 200 of you and, like what is happening in your land, where some of you have land or titles, you are now asking for extensions, so you have a different scenario. It is the same thing with many of you here with water. You have water and now you are seeking expansion of service. For example, like in Matthews Ridge, they will rise to say that the entire Matthews Ridge do not have coverage. I want to assure you that our plan for the hinterland is to ensure that we have 100% access across the hinterland.

Housing

Let us speak a little in terms of housing. Overall, on a macro level, you will recognise when we speak about housing, the interventions, whether on the coastland or in the hinterland have been driven by all PPP/C Governments. There have been in the past interventions for a Government housing programme in the hinterland. I need to pause here to explain a little about how it works for the hinterland. Many of you now have the cable news so you are watching. For example, the news on E-Networks. You have been asking and you have been seeing these houses being constructed on the coastland and many of you, during our outreaches, have been asking what has happened to the hinterland. First of all, let me make it clear. On the coastland, the houses that you see being constructed are not being done free of cost. Those beneficiaries, they all pay for them through the various means. The majority would be the banking systems. They go through a prequalification to be able to take a mortgage so that they can pay for the houses that are being constructed or for those who have the majority or 50% cash, then they can negotiate with the bank, or they pay that amount up front.

In the hinterland, the programme is much different. In the hinterland, the interventions that have been done, the houses have all been constructed free. Just

like how the President reminded you that water, as part of our social commitment to the hinterland, would be delivered to Amerindian villages in the hinterland free of cost, similarly we have a commitment for the hinterland of working in partnership with communities to ensure that we can deliver on a similar type of housing programme. These are some of the previous interventions that have been done in the past.

There are two models that you have. In terms of the construction of the houses, which we call full house subsidies, there is a collaboration between the Ministry through the Central Housing And Planning Authority (CH&PA) as well as with you in the villages where there is a commitment to provide labour. Two of those labourers are paid for by the agency, then you also, as part of your responsibility, will provide labour and so we have a collaboration for a construction. The other model that you have, previously, is the roof replacement subsidies. The roof replacement and this have their advantages.

When you talk about water now, many of you have been asking about black tanks and for zincs because you want to practice rain harvesting. And it has its advantages for those who are further away from the cluster, who have difficulty in accessing water from the pipeline. This comes as an advantage and this is what has happened in the past. These are some of the communities that have seen interventions previously: Regions 1, 7 and 9. So some of these villages will be familiar to you.

What have we planned? We have to start somewhere. I know that all 220 of you would stand and say that you would like a housing programme in your community. But we have to be realistic because we have to start somewhere. And as I have said, the intervention for housing is being provided free, so it is coming also from the taxpayers' dollars.

The first major funding for housing programmes was started by a certain gentleman who happens to be the President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. The then Minister of Housing, under his tenure – I am speaking about President Ali here – there was an IDB loan and there were interventions for housing in the Hinterland, working of course with you, utilising your local scenarios. For example, in Region 9, we would have taken into consideration your advantage of having clay blocks and in Region 1, we would have full wooden types of construction because of the accessibility to wood and so these are sort of models we utilise to ensure that we take into consideration and maximise the local scenario or the competence that you may have from your village.

What are the changes we will make? We are going to have two models: 1, the maintenance of the full house subsidies, and I had explained how that worked; and 2, we are going to make one other change. Rather than it being for zinc replacement only, we would have for more of the home improvement, in the sense that, based on the consultation that will be done in the community, we will derive what is better for those that really need the assistance. It would not be confined to just zinc, it can be

for, maybe, the completion of you wall to modernise or to help with the completion of your home. It would be hybrid, and we would not determine that, you would from the consultations.

We have over 300 houses that would be constructed in the first phase in the main hinterland region and, as I have said, we have to start somewhere. Those are the areas that we will commence our collaboration and construction. The collaboration and consultation begin as early as August. For example, today, because we have had to fast track the community of Kokerite, as they are affected by flooding, they are now part of the relocation plan. As such, they will be the first batch to start the collaboration for the housing programme.

How will it work? I want to make this plea here. We need strong commitment from village councils. We have had issues in the past with transparency and accountability. With each one of the houses, we expect to utilise a minimum of five workers; two skilled, which will require probably two carpenters/masons, for which through the Central Housing & Planning Authority, we will pay for those, and the beneficiary community will provide three of the labourers. We will sign contracts with you, the village council, and you have to take ownership of what is happening. As part of our local content, we want to ensure as far as practical that the materials come from your community.

The final point I want to make is, we want to move as quickly as possible on this. So, we will be setting up a substantive department with responsibility for the hinterland housing in the CH&PA, because there will be required, in the initial phase, consultations. And I want to make this very clear, we from the Ministry will not be coming to determine who will be the beneficiaries. Do we have that understanding? My time is up but I will ask the team from GWI to remain to assist with whatever queries you may have.”

Presentation by the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Hon. Nigel Dharamlall



“Good morning, everyone. The footprint of development pursued by President Ali is in all of your villages. Today, we have our REOs present and we will be happy to take all of your questions. As you are aware, through the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development being the overseer of the 10 administrative regions, of which you are all a part, a lot of the infrastructural, health, and education, development are pursued in your villages. We have had success stories since President Ali took Office.

In some villages, we have pursued community enhancement, started niche projects, which we do not traditionally do, but we have now started to build the economic capacity of many villages. I have also asked and I hope that this is being pursued – I want to implore the NTC – where we have dormitories located in the hinterland, the REOs have been instructed to work with the village councils to provide contracts to these villages to start agricultural projects. I have also discussed that with the Hon. Minister of Agriculture and we will jointly pursue it with the Minister of Amerindian Affairs. The investment in shade houses and other projects to supplement what happens at the dormitories. At Waramadong, St. Ignatius, Aishalton, Annai, Paramakatoi, Mahdia, Kato, Three Miles Secondary to some extent, Northwest Moruca, in Port Kaituma, we will be building these projects to minimise the high airfares to send in food supplies to these areas, and these will then begin to invest in some of these ventures.

We have also gotten an instruction from our President that all of the infrastructural work that is currently being done and would be pursued in the future, that those works must be done in conjunction with the village councils, and you are expected to employ people from within your communities and pay them a living wage to make sure that they help with the development of the infrastructure within your communities. You have seen a lot of work has already been done in many areas. In

Region 8, last year, we pursued this project of \$100 million to the North Pakaraimas to upgrade the road, and this year, an additional \$300 million was disbursed. We have built for the first time in St. Ignatius an asphaltic/concrete road. The first Amerindian village to have one.

We have also been doing quite a few extensions for schools and dorms and I know that this is an issue that has been plaguing many of our Amerindian brothers and sisters. With resource constraints – you are also Toshaos – we would like to do all at the same time but we also have to prioritise. So, today, I would like to hear from you how we can manifest the resources of our villages to make better the lives of the people we serve and work for. I am not here to make a speech to you but to listen to your questions, and how we can start working with the RDCs to develop most, if not all of our villages, and to deal with issues that irk you on a daily basis. Some villages we have also engaged in building dumpsites due to the expansion of the villages, so too solid waste. We also have to practice certain values that obtain in a modern society. Thank you for listening.”

The Chairman stated that they were happy and excited about the works that the Government was doing and that all of the work will require a lot of funding.

He stated that at the end of this Conference the resolution would be provided for signatures, and Toshaos were encouraged to consider signing since there were benefits to be derived for all communities.

Presentation by Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Zulfikar Mustapha



“Executives of the National Toshaos Council, colleague Ministers and leaders across the hinterland communities, as we are stressed for time this morning, I will just go through some of the plans we have for agriculture. I know many of you, or almost all

of you, are interested in the agriculture agenda and what we have in store for your communities. The President rightly said in his address to us, that our villages need to craft a hinterland food strategy or food security plan. We cannot have one plan for all the villages; we will have plans that are suited to all the villages. What we will be doing at the Ministry of Agriculture is to have a number of officers working with you to craft this strategy so that your village can benefit from the Government's agriculture plan.

Today, in Guyana, agriculture is one of the most important sectors. Our Government is placing a lot of priority on agriculture. A lot of resources for the last one and a half year – close to \$2 billion – has been extended in the hinterland communities, besides what has been given for flood relief. Many of you had suffered losses during the flood in 2021. Almost \$1 billion had been allocated and distributed to 225 villages across this country as flood relief. We will continue to make major interventions, as we gave done before.

What we have done is try to change the way agriculture has been done over the years because we cannot continue to do subsistence agriculture. Now is the time we have to change the focus because, today, food security is important. We have seen what happened during the pandemic. Many countries had money but did not have food to buy. We are very lucky that we are producing almost 60% of the food that we are consuming. We, as a Government, want to increase that. That is why later this year, as we have already embarked on corn and soya production, we will increase that from 125 acres to 3,000 acres. So, now, our country will embark on the production of corn and soya on a large scale so that we can be self-sufficient. Also, we have started high-value crops. We have not only gone into production of the traditional crops, we want to consolidate the traditional crops with high-value crops like broccoli, cauliflower and carrots, so that we can get more sold in the tourism and oil sectors. We will work with the farmers in their communities. As you heard the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development say, we are working to do smart agriculture, not agriculture to go into a land and just plough it and plant like that, because climate change is real, and many times many of you have lost your crops. We have to ensure that we work in a smarter way. That is why we will be working with you to develop your community; to develop shade houses across this country. I have already given to and worked with many communities to develop their shade house programme. Today, a number of villages across this country in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 are cultivating crops in shade houses. These are important things for us. As I said, we will continue to work on the programmes we have started in Regions 1 and 9 – the Hinterland Environmentally Sustainable Agricultural Development Project (HESADP). Over \$400 million has already been expended. We are working with farmers and the community to train them to ensure they embark on a project from which they will be the beneficiaries. In another four months another \$400 million dollars will be expended on this project.

In Region 7, we are working with the farmers to change what they have been doing. Many persons, when one speaks about Region 7 relate it to mining, but agriculture is a big thing too. I have visited Region 7, the President has visited Region 7, and what we discovered was that many farmers who want to plant are not doing it in the right way. As a result of that we have our technical people who will be working with the Toshaos to give them best practices to ensure that they do the planting in a smarter way.

In Region 9, we have distributed a number of equipment. As a matter of fact, in Regions 1, 8 and 9, we have distributed and will be distributing a number of tractors. Those tractors the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs have given to the villages will help the village. What we are doing is giving tractors that could do large-scale ploughing and rowing so that the community could benefit. We have already donated two to Region 9; we will be donating another two to Region 1, and another two to Region 8. The other communities we will be working with to see how we can enhance those areas.

The new initiative, as I said, is that we will continue to execute the programmes we have been doing. All the communities in this country will be given free acoushi ants bait. I have been instructed for NAREI to make that available before you leave here, so that you can take it back with you. We will be giving free seeds for all the crops you are cultivating in all the villages, through all those who are present here today. We will be working with all of you to give chemical and other pesticides too, to help to increase farming in the community.

As I said, we did a number of water harvesting projects in a number of communities and we will continue to do that. In Region 9, we have completed almost seven of those water harvesting projects and we will continue because we have two excavators working there. I have made a commitment that we are trying, at least in every hinterland community to make an excavator available so that you can have the benefit of the machine.

What we will be doing also, instead of waiting for all of you to come out to Georgetown to get seeds and other things, we will be working with various villages and regions to develop nurseries in those area so that planting materials can be readily available for you. That is rather than for you to come to Georgetown or go to other places to get. We will make the planting materials more available to you.

As I said, the National Agriculture Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) and Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA) will continue the training. We have started a programme which all of you know – the black giant programme. By the end of October, 2,000 households will receive 25 chicks each. That programme will be a continuous programme under the Agriculture Sector Development Unit (ASDU), the HESADP and the Rural Agricultural Infrastructure Development (RAID) projects. We will continue the programme in the hinterland communities so

that we can make them more productive. We have already donated these black giant chicks to a number of villages.

The President, earlier this year, launched a project called the ‘cage culture’. Do you know what is the ‘cage culture’? We have seen a decline in our marine fishing industry. What we have done is start aquaculture. We are getting very, very good results. As a matter of fact, we have moved production on the coast from 12,000 to 70,000 kilograms last month in brackish water. We want to work with you to develop the ‘cage culture’ in the interior. We have launched the project at Capoey and Mainstay. By the end of this month or early next month, we will install four cages in those areas so that the pilot can go on. I want to tell you that in every hinterland community where there is running water we will install that project. One cage is capable of earning \$1 million annually. Imagine if one village has four or five cages how much it could earn. By the end of this year we will purchase almost fifty cages so that we can put them in various interior locations to help you to supplement your income. In short, this is a programme I just highlighted.

Time is short; we do not have enough time morning. But we have a desk with a number of officers and you can go to the desk and raise any issue. I have asked that materials be made available for all the Toshaos here, so when you leave this function to go back to your community you can take a small amount of things like seeds and acoushi ants bait. Rest assured, we will work with you. As a matter of fact, agriculture is one of the most important activities for us. We are putting a lot of resources in. As Minister Vickram Bharrat said yesterday, we will use the oil resources to develop the other sectors. For us to get food security, we have to develop the agriculture sector, because agriculture was here before any one of us and will be here after all of us are gone. I want to encourage you to join us, come on board, and let us develop this exciting sector. Thank you.”

Mr. Mohamed Nazim, Management Development Officer, Ministry of Amerindian Affairs reminded Toshaos and Senior Councillors that they will be able to ask their questions right after the presentations from the Hon. Ministers. He then introduced the Minister of Human Services and Social Security, the Hon. Vindhya Persaud.

**Presentation by the Minister of Human Services and Social Security,
Hon. Vindhya Persaud**

“Cabinet Colleagues, distinguished Chairman of the NTC, distinguished Toshias, regional representatives, leaders, everyone, good morning to you.

I feel very privileged to be able to share some of the work the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security has been involved in since the PPP/C came into Government in 2020 to now. The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, as the name suggests, is very people-centered, very people oriented. You must have had the impact of the Ministry throughout the regions. I feel that this platform gives us an opportunity to make our services more efficient and effective by working with you to see how we can better serve and have better systems, so that we can make all of our promises in the manifesto a reality. Many things have been introduced in your regions, many things are to come, but it is imperative that we work with you, at all times, to troubleshoot whatever issues you have and to ensure whatever bottlenecks there are in the system, as we are working with them, we can fix them. I have the intention today to ensure, from today, until you end here, that you engage all of the senior members of staff of the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, so that many of the issues that you have raised with me informally, in conversation, at all of the various events we have met, we can deal with them every single day. So, when you leave here, those issues will be dealt with to your satisfaction.

The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security deals with so many things. I know the ones you are most familiar with are old age pension and public assistance. But from 2020 to now, we have invested \$7 billion in all of the hinterland. Every year, we invest \$2.3 billion in old age pension alone. That caters for over 6,000 persons in the hinterland region.

What has the Ministry of Human Services done since I became the Minister? One of the key things we did was to look at how we can get the old age pension increased, and it had been increased. In fact, the increase from 2020 to 2022 has been the largest increase in the shortest span of time under the PPP/C Government. This is just the beginning.

In his speech, His Excellency said that the full commitment given in the manifesto will be made a reality within the period we are in Government. In addition, we are working on how we can achieve an ease of access to old age pension. In the hinterland, in particular, in addition to us developing alternate venues, not only the post offices, MoneyGram and Western Union, we have embarked on direct payment. Direct payment comes in two forms – to those who are in shut-in conditions, perhaps bedridden; and the second one, which we are still working on to get to a state with which you would be happy, is to take the payments directly to you in your villages. We have started that for some villages, which we have managed to get correctly, but there are other villages that we need to work harder to make that system more effective.

I want to give you my personal commitment that we will work with you to make that a reality before the end of the year. There are a number of villages and those villages have been detailed in the slides. You have seen in the slides the various post offices and the locations, from Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9, we have been servicing since we became Government.

As we continue, I would like to ask that all of you who are here from the various villages and the various regions to meet with us and work with us on how you want the system to work best for you.

Public assistance had also been done in the same way. We looked at public assistance very seriously because it deals with the most vulnerable people across the country. Over 3,000 persons in the hinterland have access to public assistance to the tune of \$500 million. The recent announcement by the President of Guyana is that children defined as 18 years and below will have a one-off cash grant of \$100,000. We have managed to collect data from all of the regions, even the most remote regions. If the child has not received this grant as yet it is because we do not want to leave any child out. We want to ensure that every child is catered for, no matter where that child is.

In addition to that, I made an announcement right after because I know persons living with disabilities have great difficulties, sometimes, in accessing public assistance because of the old system. One has to apply and reapply and it can be very frustrating. Do you not agree with me? What we are asking for is one medical report to state that you or someone you know has a permanent disability and that person will receive public assistance all the way to pension with no hassle, no second medical report required, no going to the Local Boards of Guardians. It is as easy as that. How do you feel about that?

We have started to work with persons living with disabilities by providing wheelchairs, walkers, hearing aids, and canes at no cost to those persons. We have managed to cover a number of communities in all of the regions and we will continue to do that. We are focusing heavily on riverine communities this year, and we will be taking all the programmes of the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security to those communities.

One of the biggest programmes which, I think, took the country by storm was the WIIN programme. I know that my time is almost up, but I want to say that we are aiming to train approximately 500 to 600 persons in the hinterland. We have already trained, in the hinterland for the first time, a number of persons in professional care – elderly care, childcare and patient care. You will now be part of the public system and have an opportunity to be your own bosses. Ladies, take the opportunities. Men, we are not excluding you; we will be working with you.

We also have a number of very powerful programmes coming up. I want you to meet with us after this session to ask us many questions. We will share that information and we can share the presentation with you as well, so that you can have access to everything that I cannot say now. During the question and answer segment, I want you to ask us all your questions, and visit our booth so that you can get all the help that you require.

The empowerment grant was also part of the programme we had in the regions where many women benefitted from \$50,000 each.

I want to thank you for affording me these minutes to share with you. I want to ask the Minister of Amerindian Affairs if you can all join with me before the morning session ends and before we close for lunch, for the ICAN Pledge. Everyone will be presented with this and let us stand together against domestic violence.

[The Minister displayed a document.]

Thank you, all, my brothers and sisters.”

Mr. Nazim, stated that the Government deserved the credits for making the promises a reality. He noted that another promise which was being fulfilled was the provision of the 2,000 scholarships to Guyanese. He welcomed, thereafter, the Minister of the Public Service, Hon. Ms. Sonia Parag, to make her brief remarks.

Presentation by the Minister of the Public Service, Hon. Sonia Parag

“All protocols observed. Allow me, this morning, to be very brief on presentation about the public service/public sector.

Most of you probably do not know the Ministry of the Public Service’s mandate. It is really to manage the employment and recruitment of human resource or human capital, which is our most valued asset in this country – our people – for employment in the public sector. Also, we are responsible for the training in different skillset to suit the public service or the public sector.

The Ministry of the Public Service has a scholarship programme and Training Division which deals specifically with that. In addition to that, together with the Ministry of Education last year – 2021 – the Ministry of the Public Service rolled out what is called the Twenty Thousand Online Scholarship Initiative. It is an initiative which was birthed by His Excellency, our President, after wide consultation with Guyanese leading up to the 2020 General and Regional Elections. In that consultation, we learnt that there were many gaps in our hinterland regions, in our rural areas, where persons, young and older people, were not able to gain a skillset or an academic qualification to be able to have a tertiary education. We all know that education is important and a priority for this Government. Hence, the 20,000 online scholarships came at that time.

It is also something of convenience where you can sit at home and be able gain a certificate in welding or motorcycle repairs. We are aware, acutely so, that, in communities in the hinterland regions especially, you do not necessarily want a degree, a diploma or a masters. You want something which you could earn in your own communities. We have programmes under the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) Programme. The technical staff from the unit which deals with

GOAL are here and would be available to you all day today, if you want to be able to sign up for the GOAL scholarship.

We have technical skills for men and for women. We also have diplomas, degrees and masters programmes in different fields of studies for all Guyanese. In 2019, when the previous Administration was sitting in Government illegally, not one person from Regions 7, 8 and 9 received a scholarship. These are the facts. It tells a story. It says to us that you were not considered, you were not thought of as important or as a priority in our education sector, and to be able to gain a higher learning. In 2020, with the GOAL Scholarship, we changed that. I want to briefly set out the statistics of those who receive scholarships in these regions:

Region 1 – 240 is the number of persons who were qualified for the Guyana Online Academy of Learning scholarships. The number of persons granted scholarships were 238 – 99.2%

Region 7 – There were 242 qualified applicants; 240 were granted scholarships – 99.2%

Region 8 – There were 100 qualified applicants; 97 were granted scholarships – 97%

Region 9 – There were 236 qualified applicants; 230 were granted scholarships – 97.5%

The figures should tell you that this Government cares about the development of our people. We cannot have transformation in all sectors and not develop our people. We are working assiduously to make that happen.

Today, I have the staff with me. For those persons who want to apply for the GOAL scholarship, you could meet with them.

Let me give you an example. Last year, in Region 1, Moruca, a 74-year old farmer applied for a GOAL scholarship to do rural farming and was granted it. No qualifications were required.

I know my time is limited, but allow me to say this: In 2021, 6,000 Guyanese were granted scholarships. A substantial amount was granted to the hinterland. This year, we are aiming to grant 8,000 scholarships to Guyanese. There is another programme called the Get Ready for Opportunities to Work (GROW) programme where there were two sets of areas. Firstly, one where one does not have CXC, dropped out of school and wants a second chance. There is a programme that can allow persons to qualify as if they had CXC to move on to a degree or diploma programme. I want you to be able to take that opportunity today if you have not done so already. The Government makes education a priority and we do not want our Amerindian brothers and sisters to be left behind at all. Please take that opportunity, and let us have our friend, neighbour, and family, be able to take that opportunity as well.

I am available, my staff is available, for any questions or clarification on this issue being experienced with the Ministry of the Public Service.”

Mr. Nazim invited the NTC to ask questions of and make suggestions to the Ministers who had recently concluded their remarks. He reminded Toshias and leaders to state their names and villages prior to asking questions and making suggestions.

Question and responses

Toshao Eugene Andrews, Sand Creek, Region 9, greeted the Conference. He informed the Minister of Housing and Water that the solar panels and generator were not enough to power the houses in the area. He stated that a request had been made for a deep well and that was done. It supplied 90% of the houses in Sand Creek.

Toshao Andrews reported that the secondary school and the dorms were not getting enough water. He stated that another deep well was drilled but was not yet completed. The Toshao expressed confidence that when completed the secondary school and the dorms would enjoy a good flow of water.

The Toshao stated that the system was being monitored by the Community Support Officers (CSOs). He expressed concern that the CSOs did not have adequate work and asked that a villager be trained to work adequate hours so as to eliminate issues that may arise with the water system. He pointed to the overcrowding in school and requested from the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development an extension to the primary school. He enquired also about an extension to the Medical Facility in Sand Creek and an upgrade of that facility to a cottage hospital.

Toshao Deon Adams, White Water, Region 1, commended the Government and the RDC for works carried out in his village. He acknowledged that the Toshias needed to work just as hard to the benefit of their respective villages.

The Toshao noted that the primary school in the village did not have adequate space to accommodate the children. He requested an extension of that school urgently. He stated that the ICT Hubs were temporarily housing some of the children.

Toshao Adams pointed to the challenges with transporting the children to school. He requested Government's assistance to furnish the area with some form of appropriate transportation.

The Toshao informed the Minister that while the village had received a new generator, it was not adequate for the residents. He requested transformers to upgrade the generator.

Toshao Adams also requested additional Community Infrastructure Improvement Project (CIIP) workers to accommodate the growing population.

The Chairman noted that there were many concerns which needed to be raised. He reminded that Ministers would be setting up help desks for Toshias who did not get the opportunity to raise their concerns. He asked that the large regions divide

themselves into sub-regions to avoid repetitions and be able to exercise better time management.

Mr. Renato Shrikumar, CDC Chairman, Hosororo, Region 1, greeted the Conference. He stated that while other issues were being address it was important that the wellbeing and welfare of Amerindian brothers and sisters also be addressed.

He stated that during the previous Administration there were contractors who provided security services. Those security services had been making the appropriate National Insurance Scheme (NIS) deductions but were not remitting same to the NIS. He enquired from the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, through the Minister of Finance, whether there could be a collaborative effort to have the companies remit their employees' NIS contributions.

The Minister of Amerindian Affairs stated that the matter would be addressed following the lunch break since the Minister of Finance was scheduled to make his presentation then. She stated however that if the Minister of Finance chose to answer he was free to do so.

The Minister of Finance opted to respond. He stated that the law required all employers to deduct NIS contributions and pay same to the NIS. Where a company failed to do so they were breaking the law. The Minister posited that if the CDC Chairman had information on such actions, he should bring it to the attention of the Minister.

Toshao Troy Peters, Kwebanna, Region 1, enquired from the Minister of Housing and Water whether the Kwebanna community was on the list to receive water facilities for 2022.

The Toshao thanked the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development for the items given to the community but indicated that more gears and fuel were needed to do a better job

Toshao Peters asked that the Ministry of Agriculture intervene in the completion of the casava factory that was started under the previous Administration.

The Toshao enquired about financial assistance for persons in the area. He enquired from the Minister of Human Services and Social Security about a Probation Officer for the Moruca sub-district.

Toshao Desmond James, Red Hill, Region 1 stated that he was representing a number of villages. He stated, further, that the villages of Three Brothers, Bumbury Hill and Red Hill were asking from the Minister of Housing and Water assistance with setting up of housing schemes.

He then directed the subsequent requests to the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development which were as follows: 1, contracts be awarded to the Mabaruma subdistrict village councils and not just to chosen persons; 2, that the

CDCs receive the stipend that the Toshias were currently being paid; 3, that the CSOs be paid much earlier than what currently obtained; 4, the delivery of an excavator that was promised to Red Hill; 5, Government lobbying Digicel to install a tower to assist Tasserene, Barima, and Koriabo with stronger signals; and 5, that the HESAD projects be extended to other villages.

The remaining appeals were then directed to the Minister of Human Services and Social Security where he requested the following: 1, receipt of the single mothers' grant; and 2, the long-awaited extension for the village to be completed.

The Chairman then invited responses from the Ministers. The Toshao of Region 10, Mr. Carter, informed the Chair that he was ready with his region's responses.

The Minister of Housing and Water responded to the housing and water related issues and requests from each region, individually, with the following responses: Sand Creek, with respect to the CSOs payment, he stated that there was an agreement between GWI and the CSOs and that the Minister of Amerindian Affairs will elaborate on that; in responding to Region 9, the Minister mentioned that an overhead cost was being felt as a result of GWI delivering water free of cost in the hinterland; also, some of the issues stemmed from the previous CEO arbitrarily appointing CSOs on a salary scale from Region 9 only, which incurred an overhead cost of approximately \$50 million dollars, which, unfortunately, the present administration cannot sustain if the delivery of potable water was to be done across the country, hence the present collaboration between the CSOs and GWI. He further elaborated that two CSOs were trained from each village and if, for some reason, the CSOs were no longer available, he committed to an ongoing training to always have reserve personnel on standby. Also, there was an established office located in the region, tasked with providing training and assistance wherever needed. Additionally, a deep water well will be dug for Sand Creek through the Regional Democratic Council's budget by yearend.

With respect to the expansion of water sources, the Minister indicated to Kwebanna's Toshao that it was a part of Moruca's programme for the digging of wells for the satellite villages and that the rig would be in the region until the end of the year.

In response to Red Hill's request, the Minister indicated not every village could have benefitted but listed the areas identified for Mabaruma subdistrict which were: Smith Creek, Morawhanna cluster, Black Water Savannah and Arukamai. This is just phase 1.

The Minister of Agriculture in responding to the queries highlighted that the Cassava factory has had misappropriation issues, oversized equipment just to name a few and he will be working with his colleague, the Minister of Amerindian Affairs and the Toshao to address those issues with respect to this HESAD project to have it completed.

For Red Hill, the Minister indicated that an excavator would be made available for each hinterland region. There is one in region 1 so that will be sent across to Red Hill shortly.

The Minister also revealed that the HESAD project in Koriabo will be extended as well as, the names of the fisherfolks in the hinterland were submitted and captured to receive the grant from the government.

The Minister of Human Services responded to the question from Moruca indicating that someone was approved and they needed to come to Georgetown to sign the contract, be trained for two weeks and thereafter be reassigned to Moruca as the officer.

In relation to the single parent grant request, the Minister revealed this was not the case. What was approved was two 25,000 one off cash grants to persons living with disabilities and public assistance recipients, old age pensions and in collaboration with world food programme for persons who did the Women Innovation and Investment Network (WIIN) programme under the empowerment fund. What was collected from the regions was data on single parents since it was working on programmes for those persons.

The Minister of Amerindian Affairs explained the process and difficulties with regard to the CSOs receiving their payments in a timely manner and asked the Toshaos to assist with aiding the process in order to effect payments quickly.

With respect to the factories and cocoa famers, the Minister intimated that the ministry was still in the process of examining what occurred with those projects and the PS was working with IST to acquire the details. And for Moruca subdistrict, the money was placed into the bank account of the village council. She then asked the village council of Santa Rosa not to utilise the money for any other purpose because the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture will work to complete those projects including the Monkey Mountain Lapidary. She again reiterated to the Toshaos not to use funds earmarked for particular projects on other ventures not yet approved.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development reported that a new well was constructed and completed a month ago at the secondary school dormitory worth \$7 million in Sand Creek. With reference to the health centre and primary school, the Minister reported that maintenance work was done this year, but budget allocations will have to be sought for any extension next year and asked the Toshaos to begin prioritising their needs in order to be submitted for the 2023 budget, for which preparations were to begin shortly. He also informed the White Water Toshao that a contract was awarded for the expansion of the electrification system for the residents to be put on the grid.

The Minister further assured the Toshao that for White Water, consideration would be given to the provision of enhancement workers and the tools necessary for works to continue. He also stated that they would be

The Minister, with respect to security at Hosororo, stated that the investigation would be done.

The Minister stated, on the matter of Kewbanna, that they were in the process of procuring tools and equipment for the enhancement workers. He stated that in the interim they would be happy to work with the village councils as they continue to do their work to upgrade and enhance the village.

The Minister stated that the Toshao from Red Hill was right, and that it was an instruction from the President that village councils and businesses within villages be considered. He stated that village councils would continue to be given contracts. He then urged that businesses within villages become contractors and they will work with them in order for them to get contracts. He stated that the REOs were aware that they were to provide contracts to work with village councils and give them contracts. The Minister stated, that *modus operandi* would intensify and continue next year.

He informed the Conference that for the first time the satellite village of Touthida, Kacshibai, had a primary school to prevent the children from walking long distances to go to school. He stated that they were also to be provided with a new well, which would begin in two weeks. The Minister went on to list the other communities to benefit from new wells shortly. He stated that as communities require them the Ministry would provide.

A Toshao from Mabaruma, greeted the Conference and thanked the Minister for the work being done in her region and the country. She described that for Mabaruma Settlement, with the exception of eight homes, all others were provided with electricity and that lights were provided for streets as well. She stated that they had acquired nine streetlights for one part of the community and then requested 30 more for the other area of her community. The Toshao said that the community was waking up under the PPP/C.

The Toshao stated that water was also provided for her community except for eight houses in Line Field but that they were addressing the issue.

She expressed appreciation to the PPP/C for the COVID-19 grant. She expressed appreciation, too, for being able to purchase a bus for the village.

The Toshao informed the Conference that the focus was on education and that there was need for a building to set up a document centre with Wi-Fi. She said that, with the assistance of the Regional Chairman, land was made available for the building and the money was also available to purchase the things to put in the building. She thus pleaded for assistance with the construction of the building.

The Toshao highlighted the plight of unemployment of youths though some had gained passes at CXC and some had not. She highlighted that poverty and lack of parental support were some reasons for them not being able to pass their subjects. The Toshao however informed the conference that the youths without subjects were proficient in other areas of training. She pleaded for assistance with training for such youths and for employment opportunities for others. She detailed the assistance she had provided for some youths and the results.

CDC Chairman, Fenton Ragnauth, Region 4, greeted the Conference and stated that he would give highlights for three CDCs – Banakari, Waiakabra and Swan. He expressed gratitude to the Minister of Housing for providing the water system for the village of Swan. He requested training for a member of the community to enable the proper functioning of the well.

The Chairman requested a deep well for the growing community of Banakari, which depended on creeks that were not close by. He stated that he was requested to use the tractor with a black tank to assist Banakari with the delivery of water to the residents. He indicated, however, that assistance with fuel was required.

He stated that water was being delivered to Waiakabra residents with the tractor also, since the visit of the team from the Ministry of Housing and Water which included the Minister and the CEO. The Chairman expressed confidence that after the completion of the well at Swan the team would begin its work in Waiakabra. He thanked the Ministry of Housing for their assistance.

The CDC Chairman requested from the Minister of Public Works, Bishop Edghill that the access road in Swan be fixed. He stated that the previous Government expended on a crush and run road but that at present it was in a bad state. He revealed that the tractor that they have was also used to repair the road to make it usable to an extent. He outlined the difficulties being experienced by the residents and the costs associated with transportation. He stated that if the road could not be repaired as soon as possible it was very important for mud or loam be obtained to be placed at the sides of the hills where the water runs, to protect the road.

The Chairman requested of the Ministry of Agriculture that the three CDCs of Region 4 be a part of the black giant poultry programme.

The Chairman mentioned that he had not heard anything about single parents but that he would visit the Ministry's booth with representatives from the other CDCs to be guided.

Senior Councillor, Stavros Stanley, Santa Rosa, thanked Minister Croal for the efforts to provide water to Santa Rosa. He requested that water service also be extended to the Four Miles shortcut and to continue to the junction of Kamwatta road.

Mr. Stanley requested assistance for farmers in Santa Rosa Village for the cultivation of 50 acres of five-year coconuts, five acres of three-year coconuts, ten acres of red

peas, 10 acres of kidney beans, 10 acres of black eye peas, 10 acres of peanuts, five acres of ginger, 10 acres of seedless limes, five acres of cocoa, five acres of hot peppers, and five acres of onions.

Toshao Stanley mentioned that job opportunities in Santa Rosa Village was of serious concern. He stated that the residents who were academically equipped managed to get into the public service or in the private sector and those who were not academically equipped entered the mining community where they were exploited.

The Toshao suggested that the culture could be changed if additional investments were made in agriculture. He assured that Santa Rosa Village could become a contributor to the economy of Guyana and could become self-secured in terms of food security and requested that investments be made in aquaculture since adequate fish to feed residents was scarce.

He noted that his questions had been answered already by the Minister of Human Services and Social Security and requested that training be undertaken with the members of the Local Boards of Guardians and thanked the Government for enhancing the lives of the people of Santa Rosa.

The Minister of Agriculture committed to working with the villages to extend the 'Black Giant poultry' programme to the three areas on the highway.

The Minister agreed to commence training of farmers in Santa Rosa. He agreed to train 1,000 farmers by the end of 2023 and assured the Conference that, following the training, the Ministry of Agriculture will work the village to develop the crops in Santa Rosa. The Minister challenged the Toshao to gather the farmers so that the training could commence in the shortest possible time.

The Minister reminded the NTC Conference that his Ministry was examining various areas to develop agriculture in a way different from the subsistent way in which it was done over the years. He reminded the Conference about the reasons agro-processing facilities were being built across the country and that, for 2022, seven of those facilities would be built. The Minister noted that several hinterland communities would see the construction of agro-processing plants within the next three years so as to move from the primary form of production to a more value-added form.

The Minister urged that focus be placed on food security and reminded the NTC Conference that Guyana was driving the Agricultural agenda in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

The Minister of Human Services and Social Security stated that the members of Local Boards of Guardians were trained in June and were also trained in 2021. She detailed for the Conference the reasons for conducting country-wide training for the Boards of Legal Guardians and noted that such an exercise would be an ongoing one.

The Minister noted that a women's group would be set up in Banakari and that the WIIN programme will be taken to Banakari Village so that many persons, including single parents, could undertake training.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development acknowledged the presence of the Mayor of the town of Mabaruma. He stated the council of the town of Mabaruma usually received \$18 million yearly in subvention and urged that a part of that subvention be utilised to procure streetlights for the town of Mabaruma.

The Minister reminded the CDC Chairman of Region 4 that the Vice-President had intended to visit the highway to meet with all the CDCs which were established along that route.

The Minister of Public Works stated that engineers would visit the Swan area in two weeks to assess the works which needed to be undertaken.

Egbert Henry, Toshao of Smith Creek, Morawhanna Village, stated the population of Morawannah Village was 109 persons. He raised the issues of employment and housing for residents of the village. He raised, also, the issues of the lack of electricity – solar power, or lighting plant – and the lack of potable water. The Toshao requested that farmlands be prepared since all the lands were swamped as result of lack of drainage.

Ralph Hendricks, Toshao of Capoey, expressed appreciation to the Government and the Ministry the support given to Capoey. He raised a concerns about the water system for residents on the eastern side of Capoey and requested an update. The Toshao enquired whether there was a cut off point for public assistance. He called the Conference's attention to the deplorable state on the road in the area. The Toshao stated that the village council has been utilising its resources in an effort to try to upkeep the road. He informed the Conference about the challenges being with experienced with the Community Enhancement Workers (CEW).

Toshao Areafa Shabeer, Mashabo, Region 2, thanked the Government for the works undertaken in her community. She stated that her community had benefited from the cash grant and other initiatives for which she expressed appreciation to the Government.

The Toshao pointed out that the community was experiencing an issue with water and, thereafter, requested a larger pump which could supply the community with water from the wells. She also made a request for black tanks to store potable water.

The Toshao informed the Conference that there were persons in her community who were in need of housing.

Toshao Shabeer requested from the Ministry of Agriculture a fog machine, shade house, drugs and tools for the residents in her community.

The Toshao requested from the Local Government and Regional Development funds to construct a multi-purpose building. She also pointed to challenges with the roadways and the difficulties students were having with traversing those roadways. The Toshao pointed to the need for a bus to be provided for the students.

Toshao Aubrey Fredericks, St. Denny's, Region 2, commended the quality of the Conference. He expressed appreciation to the Government for the increase in the stipend for the Toshaos.

Toshao Fredericks directed his question to the Minister of Housing and Water. He stated that previously a request had been made for a water purification system, but that request had not been fulfilled. He, thereafter, posed the same request.

To the Minister of Agriculture, the Toshao requested a larger shade house which would be managed by the village council. He stated that with the larger shade house, adequate vegetables would be supplied to the entire community.

Toshao Fredericks requested an upgrade to the road from Mainstay to Tapakuma. He stated that the villages of Mainstay and St. Denny's would benefit.

The Toshao requested that electricity be provided to the village since it was an important convenience in development.

Ms. Gwendolyn Jeffrey, CDC Chairman, Daag Point, Region 7, outlined the benefits her community received since the Government took Office. She requested that fuel be provided for the bus to transport schoolchildren to and from school.

Ms. Jeffrey made a request for 30 solar lights to be placed around the ball field so that the heritage celebrations could be well lit.

She stated that the community was dissatisfied with the manner in which the construction of the road to the ball field was undertaken. She stated that the road was made of crusher run and has not fared well under the weather conditions. She requested that an expert be sent to assess the state of the road.

On behalf of the farmers in Agatash, the Toshao requested that the community be involved in the production of the black giant poultry rearing.

The Minister of Agriculture assured that the black giant poultry programme would be extended to all hinterland communities. He iterated that, by the end of October, 2022, 2,000 households would each receive 20 of the black giant chicks. The Minister stated that the programme would continue for the duration of 2022 and the entire 2023, so that all communities could be targeted.

The Minister stated that although he was unable to make an immediate commitment, he would work along with community of Mashabo to ensure that they received the fog machine, shade house and tools requested.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development stated that, in relation to the road to Capoey, an evaluation was currently being undertaken. He stated that the President had given an undertaking, when we had visited the village about one month prior, to have the road upgraded.

In relation to the Community Enhancement Workers, the Minister stated that such matters must be addressed in the correct manner. He stated that approval must be given for the employment of the persons and the village council was not in a position to make the decisions solely. He stated that the persons to be replaced should be identified for the Ministry to approve it. The Minister noted that the Ministry had never denied the employment or change of any Community Enhancement Worker.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development stated that the multipurpose building at Mashabo will be addressed. He stated that he was informed by the Minister of Public Works that 1,000 metres of road in the area was slated to be fixed and the region would undertake the maintenance. The Minister noted that the road on the Tapakuma side up to the Mainstay high bridge was estimated to cost \$1.040 billion.

In relation to St. Denny's, the Minister indicated that the Guyana Energy Agency (GEA) had procured a solar grid system for the community to commence installing off the grid power. It is expected to power the government facilities with the excess power being used to power households. He noted that, per capita, Agatash had received the most support from the Government. He outlined those initiatives which had been undertaken in the areas of road, school, and sea defence, but gave a commitment to speak with the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport to procure lights for the community. He stated that the regional engineer would be tasked with examining the road to the ball field in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works and the contractor would be made to undertake corrective action.

The Minister of Public Works stated that in relation road issues in relation to Mainstay, Mashabo and Agatash, the overall intent of Government was to have all access roads fixed to a standard that was durable and beneficial to communities. He pointed to the financial cost attached to these projects, pointing out that the Mashabo road was estimated cost \$317 million. In relation to the road to Agatash, the Minister stated that the design to undertake the 300 metres of road was for crusher run and another project would be undertaken to bring it to the stage of asphaltic concrete. He stated that the estimated cost was about \$30 million.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development informed the conference that for school and medical purposes, the respective regions would provide fuel for the buses and boats.

The Minister noted that because of the enormous cost attached, the projects would be undertaken in a phased manner. He stated that works would be undertaken at the

soonest financial opportunity. However, in the immediate short-term, maintenance would be undertaken to bring relief to the residents.

The Minister of Housing and Water noted that the water purification system project for St. Denny's would be addressed under a future year's programme. In relation to Mashabo, the Minister stated that allocation for a bigger pump would be placed in the 2023 programme.

In relation to the request for housing, the Minister stated that although it was not practical to address all communities' concern simultaneously, should a particular community have a particular initiative, the Ministry could examine and fast track for same. He stated that discussions would be held after the morning session.

The Minister stated that a new well would be dug in Capoey in 2023. Smith Creek, Morawannah was scheduled to be included in the first phase of the hinterland housing programme. He stated that a new well would be part of a future programme. With regard to the Four Miles short cut in Santa Rosa, the matter was being addressed but it was not immediate.

The Minister of Housing stated that residents in Swan would receive training for the maintenance of the system shortly.

In relation to Banakari, the Minister requested that discussions be held between the Ministry and community in order to prepare a budget for the cost of assistance to utilise the tractor for the transport of water. He stated that the issue would be addressed comprehensively in a future year's programme.

The Minister said that the request from Mabaruma Settlement for eight houses would be addressed immediately. He stated that a number of wells will be drilled in a number of areas in the Mabaruma cluster, and that the entire system would be interconnected from White Water to the top of Mabaruma.

The Minister of Human Services and Social Security revealed that the three categories of public assistance were medical, economic and permanent disability. She stated that children and adults with permanent disabilities would automatically qualify for assistance and consideration would be given to them remaining on the register until they reach pensionable age.

The Minister further stated that, the medical and economic aspects of public assistance were temporary methods of assistance and not long term. She stated that applications would have to be sent to the local board of guardians to determine who would qualify for benefits and for how long. She informed the Conference that after six months persons would have to reapply.

The Minister stated that training was available through the WIIN programme which would assist persons to become financially independent. She revealed that a significant training programme was garment construction and that each person

trained in that area would be provided with a sewing machine and materials to begin their own businesses from home.

Minister within the Ministry of Public Works informed the Toshao from Tapakuma that the GEA was putting mini grids in 19 communities. He stated that Wakapau, St. Monica and Capoey would be supplied with mini grids for Government buildings primarily. He listed the 19 communities to benefit in the various regions. He stated that the residents would be facilitated through another initiative with 30,000 home systems.

The Minister of Amerindian Affairs said the request for a minibus by the community of Mashabo was noted and it would be discussed. Also, with respect to the matter of the orphan, the Ministry had provided a scholarship for the orphan.

Toshao Michael Wilson Jr., Rupunau, Region 9, greeted the Conference and requested an update on the water catchment project from the Ministry of Agriculture while thanking the Ministry for the HESAD project which had commenced.

He then expressed the hope that the construction of the access road from Rupunau to Sand Creek was being considered.

The Toshao indicated that there was a health post that was abandoned in the community of Werimore and requested that it be rehabilitated.

He also requested an expansion of the water system in Rupunau and that Werimore be supplied with a water system since the community was developing.

The Toshao also requested a four-by-four pick-up for the community for emergency cases since the tractor they were provided with was not suitable for those cases.

He enquired about the status of the request that was made previously for a tractor for Werimore.

Toshao Michael Williams, Santa Aratak, Region 3, greeted the Conference and stated that the water system in Santa Aratak was not as effective as it was 10 years ago because of the growth of the population. He requested the intervention of technical personnel from GWI to assist so that residents, schools and the health centre would be properly facilitated.

He stated that maintenance of the Kamuni Creek was done by the village council and members of the community, with the NDC assisting with fuel in the past, but he requested a pontoon with an excavator to better maintain the creek since the area had become a tourist destination. He sought the intervention of the Minister of Agriculture since the Creek was the only mode in and out of Santa Mission.

He expressed thanks to the Minister of Agriculture for the black giant poultry and stated that construction of shade houses were to begin shortly, and that a farming community was formed to offset issues in various areas.

Toshao Williams thereafter commended the Government for the work it was currently undertaking for his community.

CDC Chairman Helen Williams, Saxacalli, Region 3, greeted the Conference and requested from the Ministry of Agriculture, the formation of a farming group for the community. She stated that was the request of the residents of Saxacalli rather than join with the Lanaballi farming group.

She expressed gratitude for the black giant poultry and requested another supply for other residents. She stated that there was usually no notification of the visits from NAREI so the residents were not able to benefit.

She stated that the village of Saxacalli was calling for CDC elections since the previously election was held in 2012 and that there were no meetings being conducted.

The CDC Chairman of Saxacalli Mission, also requested the following:

1. Guard huts for guard;
2. For two bridges within the community to be constructed;
3. Repairs to be undertaken on the community centre;
4. Issues concerning NIS being remitted for the guards by the security company; and
5. Issues with pension books which had been addressed.

The CDC Chair informed the Conference that a riverine dental outreach was usually done on a regular basis. She requested that a dental chair be provided for the riverine team to utilise when they visited the various health posts.

Timothy Andrews, Toshao of St. Cuthbert's Mission, Region 4, thanked the Government for the work they had been undertaking in the Amerindian communities. He requested that house lots and housing facilities be provided for Indigenous people who had migrated to the coastland to access better education and better jobs. The Toshao pointed to the large number of Indigenous people who had to resort to renting homes for their children who were attending school in the city.

The Toshao applauded the Ministry of Housing and Water for the housing programme which would be implemented in the various Amerindian communities and stated that it was his hope that St. Cuthbert's Mission would be a beneficiary of such programme.

The Toshao indicated that homes in St. Cuthbert's Mission were still without water and pointed to the need for the lives of the residents of his community to be made easier. He indicated that the construction of a deep water well in the village of Pakeri/St. Cuthbert's Mission would assist with the rapidly growing population.

The Toshao requested an update on the completion of the road in the village of Pakeri/St. Cuthbert's Mission. He brought to the attention of the Conference the efforts the village council had been making to have security provided for their health centre and stated that there was a reluctance by doctors to serve in the community.

The Chairman of the NTC informed the Conference that he had given up his slot since, as the Chairman of the NTC, he would be in Georgetown weekly and would have an opportunity to address his issues with the various Ministers.

Lewis Devair, Toshao of Orealla, Siparuta, Region 6, stated that the water system in the community was costly to operate and pointed to the challenges being experienced in the community with the supply of water to residents. He stated that the community was currently preparing a proposal to implement a better functioning system to facilitate a better flow of water in the community.

The Toshao informed the Conference of the efforts being done in the area of logging to provide low-income housing for loggers and public servants. He indicated that plans were in train to develop a new scheme in Orealla and detailed aspects of the development plans. He requested technical assistance for the new scheme in order for the development to be streamlined to provide water and electricity for its occupants.

The Toshao spoke to the condition of the existing benab and the difficulties experienced to renovate it because of the daliban with which it was made. He revealed that, on their own, they had begun the renovation by obtaining the materials from Suriname, but requested assistance from the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development in the form of a grant to assist with the continuation of the renovations. He reminded that the heritage month was approaching and the pressure was on to complete the renovations for the activities. He requested assistance from the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

He then thanked the Government for the assistance rendered to the communities of Orealla and Siparuta and indicated that the communities would love to continue to develop. He remarked that the communities never had such keen attention from Government and stated that they wanted to continue to develop as other communities were.

He reported that the ATV that was donated in the past was damaged and requested assistance for repairs. He highlighted the area of health could benefit from the acquisition of new ATV. He then spoke to a system being implemented to prevent the misuse of the ATV in the village.

Minister of Public Works, Bishop Edghill, offered a public apology to the people of St. Cuthbert's Mission. He stated that the project for the road was inherited from the previous Administration and the contractor was incapable to handle the volume of work the project required. The Minister stated that the contract was terminated. He assured the Mission that the project was redesigned and shortly would be

implemented. He indicated that the project would be implemented in stages to bring it up to asphalted concrete.

The Minister of Agriculture indicated that the Ministry was ready to begin the water catchment programme with Rupunau and was awaiting confirmation from the community.

With respect to the clearing of the Kamuni Creek, the Minister indicated that assistance would be provided shortly since it he had spoken to his engineers and it was recognised that the Creek needed to be cleared. He stated that the Ministry's amphibious excavator was presently in another area. He estimated it would take three weeks in the present area and then it would be available to assist to clear the creek.

He promised the community of Saxacalli to assist with the establishment of its own farmer's group, and that a team from NAREI would visit the area in two weeks' time to assist and also provide necessary tools. The Minister also indicated that the community would be notified by NAREI before visits in the future.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development reported that the construction of a health post would be done for Werimore from savings.

He reported that he had spoken to the Chairman of the CDC with respect to the elections at Saxacalli and soon the elections would be held.

The Minister stated that with respect to payment for the security at St. Cuthbert's Health Centre it would have to be budgeted next year through the RDC. He requested that the village council provide payment up to end of the year.

In relation to Orealla, the Minister stated that assistance would be provided by means of a grant to continue renovations of the benab, but opined that it may not be before the heritage celebrations. He reminded that the community was being provided with fuel for electricity every month.

The Minister reminded the Toshao of Orealla of the purpose of the ATV and of their responsibility, as the village council, to put systems in place to take care of government assets such as ATVs. He upbraided the management systems of the Orealla–Siparuta communities.

The Minister indicated that he was informed by the REO of Region 7 that stipends for the CSOs would be available on Friday. He indicated that those present at the Conference could collect same.

The Minister of Housing and Water, Mr. Collin Croal, apologised to the Toshao of Orealla and promised to visit in August. He revealed that another well was scheduled for Orealla for the 2024 work programme, and he promised to discuss the proposal for assistance with fuel to manage the rotational system in the interim.

The Minister then informed the Conference that previous requests from Toshaos had been for first-time access to water but now most of the requests had been for extension of services. He stated that was an indication of how much intervention Government had provided for communities.

He remarked to the Toshao from St. Cuthbert's Mission that at this time the Government was focused on first time access to water for all communities and the next phase would be expansion, to satisfy the goal of water for everyone.

He promised to look at and to collaborate on the proposal made by Orealla for housing since it was a good proposal. This is one way to create a win-win for satisfying housing for your village as well as creating employment opportunities and other spin-off benefits.

The Minister informed St. Cuthbert's Mission that their request for the expansion was noted and on the question asked about access to housing in relation to persons who have located to many parts of the coastland from the hinterland, those were dealt with similarly as in the national housing programme, that is, through an application process by visiting any one of the regional offices or central Ministry's office in Brickdam, Georgetown, to facilitate the process. He also stated that, from the Minister's level, direct intervention was being made to facilitate hinterland requests.

The Minister indicated that staff from his Ministry will be located in a room to deal with matters related to housing and water during the break.

The Minister informed Santa Mission that a technical team would visit on Saturday to assess the issues of the village while the CEO of GWI would need an explanation and further information. The Minister committed to that promise.

The Minister informed the Toshao from Rupunau that a new well was scheduled to be dug immediately, however, the delay was caused by weather conditions not conducive for work which caused inaccessibility. He relayed that the ministry was awaiting better conditions to commence work.

The delegates were advised by the Moderator that there was a tourism desk designated and for them to take their issues there and that Ministers scheduled for the afternoon session were rescheduled to day 4 or 5.

Senior Councillor Shirl Valenzuela, Siparuta Village, Region 6, greeted the Conference and thanked the Government for its interventions during the past two years while highlighting how the village council had utilised the money disbursed to them. He relayed that, from last year to present, the village council had spent over \$10 million to purchase tractors that the residents had requested. He, nonetheless, had some issues to raise and they were as follows: the upgrading of a well that was dug over twenty years ago to facilitate the population growth and expansion of the area; additional barrels of fuel be added to the two already being received to power

the generator and for the ATV supplied to the health center approximately seven months ago, which never received any fuel for its operation; and an extension to the electricity grid to facility the growth of the village. The Toshao expressed appreciation for both items that the Government provided to his village and directed the three sets of issues to the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development.

While highlighting the many successes the village experienced within the agriculture sector, such as the many visits by NAREI staff, distribution of the flood relief package, assistance to the fisherfolk and other areas, the Toshao noted that an excavator was needed to assist the village to protect itself. He advised that the residents were willing to perform the tasks such as drainage cleaning, revetment works and such other related activities and not wait on the Government to do it. He also stated that the excavator will add value to their product by loading the barges of sand themselves leading to better income for the villagers. In addition, the use of external contractors would be eliminated with the supply of the excavator. This request was directed to the Minister of Agriculture who the Toshao reminded had said in his presentation, each area would have had an excavator.

The Minister of Agriculture sought to bring clarity to what was said by the Senior Councillor, which was that every village had an excavator. Not every village had one; there were about 20 excavators available and every region, at least, had one available, said the Minister. More importantly, the interior regions, especially Regions 7 and 8, had excavators, and it would be difficult to place those machines in every village at this time, but places like Siparuta and Orealla should be able to benefit from Region 6 which had about 15 excavators. Villages that fell within regions like those benefitted greatly.

Toshao Shane Cornelius, Karrau, Region 7, with salutations observed, alluded to a “turbo charged government” comment made by Representatives from the UN on the performance of the Government for the past two years. He thanked the government for all it has been doing for the villages and charged that people started lifting the vision for their villages and having thoughts on sustainability. He offered two recommendations to the Ministry of Human Services. First, the employment of more Social Protection Officers in the region. And second, the construction of safe houses for victims of domestic violence and child abuse as a form of deterring the victims from returning to the abusive situation.

The Toshao recommended that the services of Psychologists be employed in the school system to provide services for the schoolchildren.

The Toshao stated that in 2021, the Karrau Village Council had partnered with the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) and had received a \$3 million contract, which was executed, and savings were realised. He stated, further, that in 2022, more contracts were awarded. The Toshao expressed appreciation to the Ministers of Local

Government and Regional Development and Public Works for commitments made to enhance the village.

The Toshao stated that a team from the Ministry of Agriculture had visited and that work had commenced on the construction of the shade house.

Toshao Cornelius stated that the village council was interested in partnering with the Ministry of Housing and Water to provide housing for vulnerable persons in the village through the utilisation of the community-owned sawmill.

The Toshao stated that a number of persons from the hinterland who had received the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) scholarships were dropping out of the programme because the poor quality of internet service made it difficult to attend classes. He suggested that the Ministry of Public Service partner with the Office of the Prime Minister in relation to the internet service. He urged continued collaboration between Government and the village in order to continue moving along a positive trajectory.

Toshao Lennox Percy, Pariuma, Upper Mazaruni, Region 7, pointed to the geographical location of the village and stated that development was needed in several areas, including infrastructure, health and education.

Toshao Percy requested that a system in which all leaders were involved in the decision-making process be implemented. The Toshao enquired about the status of the solar farm project for the community which was supposed to have come on stream in 2021. He recommended that the project be implemented in a phased manner if the funds were not available for complete implementation all at once.

The Toshao raised the issue of only 30% of farmers receiving a grant that had been distributed. He stated that when questions were asked, they were informed that documents in relation to the grant had been lost.

The Toshao pointed to the renewal of firearm licences which was important in assisting the farming community in protecting their farms from wild hogs. He requested support for the community policing group.

The Toshao enquired whether each Ministry could assign specific personnel to address issues and concerns of the village.

The Chairman announced that the session needed to take the luncheon suspension since His Excellency the President was slated to address the Conference in the afternoon session. He stated that the Toshaos would have the opportunity to continue airing their concerns on day 4 of the Conference.

Upon the resumption of the afternoon session, the Chairman reminded the Conference that respective Ministries had established booths to receive issues and concerns of the Toshaos.

The afternoon session convened with the arrival of His Excellency the President. The Chairman stated that the President was present to address issues with participants on a one-on-one basis.

His Excellency, the President, Dr. Mohammed Irfaan Ali

The President congratulated his Ministers and the Amerindian leaders for the open and wide-ranging conversations they had held. The President stated that he was in possession of a document containing all comments and issues raised by participants at the Conference as well as issues raised with him on an individual basis. He stated that, having reviewed those statements, he would offer a statement and a methodology on the way forward.

The President noted that it was his intention to spend the remainder of the afternoon deciding on core plans in an effort to accelerate addressing their needs and the implementation of their ideas. Following the issues and concerns raised by the Amerindian leaders, the President outlined the following nine broad headings under which they were categorised:

- (1) Food Security/Agriculture
- (2) Women Affairs
- (3) Pensioners and the elderly
- (4) Children and young people
- (5) Human resources
- (6) Facilities
- (7) Services
- (8) Economic activities and empowerment
- (9) Infrastructure

The President stated that, in addition, there was a general identification of a weakness in the Government system in monitoring and evaluating progress of investment and works that were being done. He gave an undertaking to address that as well.

The President then addressed each category individually in order to formulate an action plan for each category.

Food security/agriculture: The President stated that he was aware of the basic items which were requested for the villages, such as seeds, equipment and fertilizers. The President adumbrated that the overall goal for agriculture was food security. He thereafter highlighted some measures which could be considered to make the goal a reality.

According to the President, Amerindian leaders must identify what their villages were overproducing. The President pointed to the possibility of Government investing in the necessary equipment needed for value-added activities and manufacturing in order to address seasonal oversupply. He stated that a partnership could be formed with the private sector to utilise these value-added products. The President stated that, in this regard, the current existing opportunities by village and region would be identified.

The President encouraged the leaders to determine whether a programme should be developed in order to enable every food kitchen for children to have a steady supply of basic items. The President stated that discussions would be held with the Minister of Agriculture to create small projects in each village and region to make it a reality. He outlined the economic activities that were germane to some Indigenous communities and stated that, through collaborative efforts with the relevant agencies, efforts could be made to assist those regions in boosting their production.

The President noted that transporting goods and produce from the interior locations was another bugbear that must be addressed. He pointed to value added production but noted that large quantities of produce were needed.

The President stated that the Government was currently in the process of launching a major project – the marine cage project – to support aquaculture and that Mainstay and Capoey had been identified to be a part of the pilot project.

Women: The President stated that there were some specific initiatives that could be examined to support women, stating that they were not new but initiatives that worked previously which the former Administration removed that included, transportation and uniform grants. He stated that the Government had decided to work with every community on the way forward whether they had voted for the PPP or not. He made reference to the defunct BNTF programme that had identified all the resources that were earmarked for the hinterland and riverain development, to assist with skills training and sewing centers which was cancelled and redirected to the coastland by the former Administration.

He explored the specific opportunities that were available for women in the villages which would empower them to become economically viable within their communities. He cited examples of how this can be done showing how the linkage can be achieved. He asked those present to identify all the areas that can benefit women economically, especially the gaps and what were the opportunities available.

Next category was pensioners. Here the President related that only a few issues affected the pensioners which were: to receive their pensions in a timely manner; easy access to their pensions – paid in the villages and access to health care in their villages. He asked that areas be identified that would make the lives of the pensioners better and supplied to his administration.

Next category was children. Here, His Excellency referred to a previous comment on children that included kitchen and school feeding programme and asked the attendees to supply information on the following: access to learning materials; issues preventing them from learning; and what was needed to enhance their learning opportunities.

On youth empowerment, the President asked that the following be identified: skillsets needed for their training; state the conditions of recreational facilities in the villages; the targeted outcomes; the small priorities.

Next category was human resources. Here again, His Excellency requested that each village state the following under the category of teachers: identify the number of teachers that are currently working; the number of trained teachers and those in need of training; the number of young people who are interested in becoming teachers' assistant and teachers, with the requisite qualifications. Under the category of health workers, the President asked the following be supplied: the number of healthcare workers that were available; the number of persons interested in the training programme for nurses and healthcare along with the requisite qualifications. He also alluded to the categories of social workers where there was a need to identify retirees and the train the trainers programmes that were available also. For community workers, he asked for a list of areas that they could be useful in.

Next, he looked at facilities in the communities that dealt with the following: ICT hubs – villages with ICT hubs and those without; housing facilities for teachers and health workers, and he enquired on how those facilities could be improved with the support of the communities to improve the human resources and the services that were being provided. He also stressed the need for tourism opportunities and asked the Toshao to identify those projects that would aid in tourism viability.

Under the category of services, His Excellency pointed to the importance of the villages forming a network that would enable them to work together in terms of transportation services, security, health, housing and water. Each village was asked to list what were the issues under this banner and submit same for resolutions.

Transportation services included the shared use of minibuses, ATVs and boats, to assist each other.

Security included the resuscitated border patrol units for border communities. Here villages on the border were asked to identify themselves to be added to the list for protection.

Housing and water included full access to water by 2025 and the identification of personnel to assist wherever possible.

Economic activities, here the President asked that the villages identify potential projects which could address shortages in the country such as in the areas of forestry, mining, agriculture, agro-processing and tourism to name a few.

For infrastructure, the President highlighted what was happening in the energy sector such as small hydro units and solar farms being utilised and in other areas such as bridges, buildings, healthcare and so forth. He again asked the Toshaos to identify their needs in the villages and submit same as quickly as possible.

The President then queried whether the above list of categories had captured all the concerns listed for further discussion later in the afternoon session to which he got their full consent. He also noted that there was a lack of monitoring in hinterland communities.

The President stated that he had seen a lack of monitoring. He stated that they wanted continuous engagement, and proposed to establish a monitoring team for hinterland communities which would be led by the Office of the President. He named the persons comprising the team and the agencies they represented.

Dr. Rahaman, Director of Vector Control, Ministry of Health

Ms. M. Ming, Ministry of Amerindian Affairs

Mr. S. Hussain, Ministry of Education

Dr. Mahadeo, Ministry of Health

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Human Services and Social Security

Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

National Toshaos Council (would like the Chairman but will let them decide)

Youth Advisory Council (a representative to be decided)

Mr. Choo Khag, Head of Regional Planning, Ministry of Finance

Mr. Ramraj, Director General, Ministry of Agriculture

Mr. J. Walcott, Ministry of Public Works

A representative of the Joint Services

Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Natural Resources

Mr. Jailall, Ministry of Housing and Water

Ms. Denise. Thudore, Ministry of Housing and Water

The President then stated that the other agencies would form a specific ministerial task force to support the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. He stated to the Conference that was being done because they are important and must be serviced at the highest level. The President said that the mechanism had been put in place to accelerate the work that they plan to do.

The President then proposed the Conference be divided in groups by regions and then the Ministers and representatives of the various sectors and Ministries, including Cabinet Members, would meet with each group to compile their concerns. He proposed that the group meeting session be for two hours.

His Excellency reconvened the Conference after the group meeting session.

The President reminded the Conference that before it began they had presented the plan they had for hinterland development in the manifesto which they used to seek their support in the hinterland. He then stated that was the reason they took time to give a synopsis of what had been accomplished by the Government thus far from the visits undertaken to hinterland communities.

The President stated that all issues raised when visits were made to 97% of the communities by Ministers were compiled. He said that they were then presentations made at the Conference on sectoral issues and that more presentations were to be done on Friday.

The President indicated that the exercise today was based on the matters that were raised at the Conference. He stated the key areas identified were food security; human resource development in the training of teachers and young people; infrastructure development; the improvement of facilities, which covers ICT; transport, which included roads and boats; services, which included health and education; and issues dealing children and women.

The President stated that the lists from the various groups would be put into a format of priorities and that, the following day, at the Conference, they will deal specifically with a strategy to implement the priorities.

The President stated that there were other national issues for which they required the involvement of the Conference.

The President provided the Conference with some of the activities which were ongoing nationally. He pointed to one such activity – oil and gas – and how its resources will benefit the Indigenous people. The President stated that those activities which were ongoing needed to be understood since persons could be misled. He noted that the Vice-President will update the Conference on some of those national issues, such as oil and gas and LCDS, and how they were linked to the development of the Indigenous people.

The President stated that the Vice-President will update the Conference on the strategy of the Government and how it included the Indigenous people. He stated, further that, following the presentation by the Vice-President, the leaders will have a chance to have focused discussions on those activities which would be highlighted by the Vice-President.

Vice-President, Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo

The Vice-President noted that it was customary for village leaders to stand and speak about the priorities of their villages. He noted, however, that those priorities and issues had been documented in the session which was held so that when the President convened the Conference on Thursday 14th July, 2022, all day would be spent on prioritising activities and or issues which were documented and to discuss how Government could fund them. The Vice-President pointed out, however, that, realistically, Government could not fund all of the activities in every community at the same time.

The Vice-President reminded the leaders that the priority issues and activities needed to reflect the discussions which were held in villages since it was important that the priorities of villages were also the priorities of the village leaders. He noted that lots of activities could be undertaken in the villages and that Government will focus on those. The Vice-President posited, however, that holistic integrated developments in communities could not be realised if other issues within the regions were not addressed. He posited, further, that the regional plans will be highlighted and discussed as well when the President convened the Conference the following day. The Vice-President informed the NTC Conference that funding for those regional plans will not be included in the villages' budgets but in the Ministries' budgets and by the extension the national budget.

The Vice-President stated that, in the 2022 Budget, more money for roads in the hinterland regions was included than that which was allocated in the past three years when combined.

The Vice-President stated that often times most of what was heard, seen in the newspapers, on social media and in the international press was based sensationalism and not on the reality of the industry. He pointed to the realities of the oil and gas sector and provided a breakdown of the revenues which were garnered per year from the sector.

The Vice-President informed the NTC Conference that the COVID-19 cash grant and the grant to school children did not come from the Sovereign Wealth Fund. He stated that the first withdrawal from that fund was deposited into the 2022 Budget.

The Vice-President reminded the Conference about the excuses which was made by the APNU/AFC Government in relation to the \$10,000 cash grant for school children. He noted that, today, the same APNU/AFC was requesting that each Guyanese citizen should receive moneys from oil and gas. The Vice-President provided a breakdown for the Conference about the illogicality of the request which was being made by APNU/AFC.

The Vice-President stated that when the capital cost for the investment was repaid, a larger share of the profit from oil and gas would be available for distribution. He pointed to need for the oil revenues to be spent in a manner that did not create

problems in the future and stated that Government had taken a decision to save some of the oil revenues for future generations.

The Vice-President reminded the NTC Conference about the signing bonus which the APNU/AFC received and detailed to the NTC Conference the law which had been passed by the PPP/C Government in December, 2021, for transparency and protection of the oil revenues from theft and mismanagement.

The Vice-President highlighted for the conference some of the areas in which Government had intended to spend the revenues from oil production:

1. Some would be saved for future generations;
2. Some would be used to build solid infrastructure;
3. Some would be expended for adaptation to climate change for drought and flood control;
4. Some would be expended on agriculture to diversify the economy;
5. Some would be expended on health and education; and
6. Some would be expended on three groups of people – disabled, children and elderly.

The Vice-President reiterated that, through increased allocation in the budget, the Indigenous communities would benefit from significant increases in spending on health, education, agriculture, and infrastructure, among others.

The Vice-President addressed the issue of environmentalists in Guyana writing to the international community to state that Guyana should cease oil production because it was polluting the world. He stated that, historically, the developed countries had been responsible for the majority of the greenhouse gas emissions. The Vice-President informed the conference that Guyana was considered a net carbon sink. He stated that the plans to halt oil and gas production worldwide were irrational, since the world still required oil and gas. He stated that Guyana's position was that the development countries should make efforts to shut their oil and gas industries and young oil producing nations like Guyana be allowed to utilise the resource to develop the standard of living of their peoples.

Low Carbon Development Strategy: The Vice-President stated that since the launch of the Low Carbon Development Strategy in 2010, a dedicated effort has been made to have everyone involved. He reminded the Conference of the financial resources Guyana had earned from the agreement with the Kingdom of Norway for selling its forest carbon. He stated that some \$US85 million remained for solar panel and \$US\$125 million for programme adaptation remained at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

The Vice-President noted that the thrust of the LCDS was the preservation of the environment. He stated that 15% of any money earned from the LCDS in the future

would go directly to Amerindian communities, in addition to funding from other sources. According to the Vice-President, it was important that the initiative enjoyed the endorsement of the Toshaos since it was about preserving our forest, waterways and biodiversity long into the future.

The Vice-President stated that following the submission of the plans by the Amerindian leaders, efforts would be made to find the financial resources to fund some of the plans.

In addressing concerns raised about the Government's presence at the conference, the Vice-President stated that it was important that the Amerindian leaders interacted with policymakers in order to get their projects funded. He reminded the Conference that it was the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government that had given greater powers of governance and independence to Indigenous people through the passage of the Amerindian Act.

The Vice-President assured that there were macro plans as well for the communities. He enquired whether the Toshaos could have the estimated costs of the projects they wished to have funded and thanked them for listening.

The Chairman thanked the Vice-President for his presentation and alluded to the amount of work the Government was going to do during the night to get back to the Conference in the morning to present their proposals. He also made two announcements. One being the "ICAN" pledge that needed to be signed by the Toshaos. And the other pertained to a draft resolution that was crafted earlier that afternoon. The Chairman asked for the blessing of the entire Conference in the passing of the resolution. He mentioned, also, that another draft resolution was scheduled to be crafted that pertained to LCDS 2030, that would be distributed on 14th July, 2022.

The Secretary, Toshao Shane, read the draft resolution.

See Appendix .

Day 3 adjourned at 6.06 p.m.

Day 4 – Thursday 14th July, 2022**Call to Order**

The fourth day of the Conference was called to order at 9.30 am by the Chairman for the session, who greeted the Conference and thanked the President and Government for the work it was doing on behalf of the Indigenous people.

He stated that the commitment of His Excellency was demonstrated the previous session when he proposed to address their submissions of issues at the Conference that day, thus enabling them the opportunity to integrate alongside the development taking place across the country. The Chairman then invited His Excellency to address the Conference.

His Excellency, the President, Dr. Mohammed Irfaan Ali

The President thanked the Conference for the work done putting together the issues to be addressed and the investments needed to move communities and hinterland development forward on Wednesday. He congratulated the governmental and ministerial teams that worked during the night to analyse the submissions to aid Government in arriving at a position to strategise for the immediate and medium term.

His Excellency stated that it was the goal of the Government to invest in every community but at this point, it was dealing with hinterland and riverine communities, whereby it was necessary for the NTCC to advance an agenda that could identify some key priorities which could be delivered promptly.

He stated that all communities could have identified projects that led to their development which occurred under successive PPP/C Governments that laid the bedrock for further advancement. He then proceeded to accentuate for the Conference those benefits that were in the areas of education, health and the impact on development by the initiatives of the former President, now Vice-President, Dr. Jagdeo. He thus, opined, that development in its own nature had advancement and was pleased villages had the potential to be sustainable on every front because they possessed the talent and skillset. He declared that the Conference was enabling its ideas to be taken onboard with the plans from the central government level, to unlock the potential and opportunities to enhance and improve livelihoods in communities.

His Excellency pointed out that in every development strategy of the PPP/C Government, hinterland communities and the Amerindian people were identified as integral parts in the development of the national quality of life. He stated clearly that the natural resources and the revenues earned from them must be beneficial to every citizen and that there should never be advocates for the creation of situations that would be disadvantageous to communities while reminding the attendees they were part of the geographic space called Guyana.

The President stated that, as citizens and members of the family of humanity, each had a moral responsibility and moral obligation to protect the forest. He detailed that Guyana and all forested nations continued to advocate, internationally, for resources to be provided to safeguard the forests which benefited all the people. Similarly, the resources from the oil and gas sector will be used in a transformative way to benefit every Guyanese. The President repeated that plans were in place to derive ways in which the quality of life will be enhanced and listed the following as some of the important issues which would aid enhancement:

1. Access to water;
2. Good educational system;
3. Youth empowerment;
4. Access to food and the sustainability of food; and
5. Good governance system;

The President reminded attendees of the fundamental design and purpose of the BNTF programme which was created to address the needs of the hinterland and riverine communities and villages. This he noted was changed from hinterland to coastal during the tenure of the APNU/AFC Government. His Excellency paid attention to the inconsistencies which existed in society while noting the silence of some organisations when this was done. He reminded the Conference that it was the PPP/C which fought to have BNTF restored to its original purpose while describing a conversation which he had had, with an Indigenous woman during his visit to Monkey Mountain for a meeting who had travelled on foot for three days with a baby.

The President urged the Conference to ignore the negative narratives and headlines which were being peddled against the Government and its Ministers and to exercise judgement in deciding what was best for them. He also assured the attendees that the team from Government was willing to listen, work and spend time to have their ideas realised. He further stated that, mechanisms were being put in place for the local leaders to be held accountable.

On the delivery of a transformative agenda, the President acknowledged that many of the young Toshaos had been pointing in that direction and that all communities were integrally involved since the greatest transformation which could take place was human transformation. He opined that transformation occurred when government provided better access to health care, ensured that medical supplies were available in a timely manner and upgraded medical care, which added to the health and wellbeing of the people of the community along with improved economic prospects and youth participation which enhanced the livelihood of communities. This he posited was the message received in all the ideas generated thus far. Transformation must lead to structural changes in the way things were done.

The President pointed out the various needs of the communities while being mindful of the cultural value system and advised that all be involved in the decision-making process. This he posited would foster ownership and commitment. He noted that Government was undertaking to monitor and effectively execute the delivery of efficient and reliable services to the people and expressed the view that an enhanced relationship between Cabinet and the various communities would allow for regular communication and networking to augment targeted interventions on the way forward, which contained the overarching principles of equitable and sustainable development.

Having examined all the suggestions under the various categories, the President identified some areas/projects which were in the national development strategy and outlined the four areas that received overwhelming responses. Those were education, health, agriculture and youth. He instructed the NTC to return to their various communities and inform the residents they had a Government who was ready to work immediately for their upliftment.

Under agriculture, His Excellency highlighted that the production process was an issue which needed to be addressed immediately.

Under the youth umbrella, The President while observing the number of young Toshias present, stated that there were a lot of suggestions pointing to innovation and youth empowerment.

The President stressed that the improvement in services needed to be addressed immediately and to this end, government was seeking to pass a supplementary provision of \$3 billion dollars, in the National Assembly the following Thursday, July 21, 2022, dedicated towards the development of the Amerindian communities. He stated this money was outside of the \$50 billion dollars already spent and that \$250 million will be set aside for youth empowerment projects. He also highlighted the possible negative reactions the request would garner and stated his Government was prepared to push forward. The Opposition's ability to exercise their rights freely was testimony to the fundamental democratic principles on which the government stood, explained the President.

The President encouraged the Amerindian leaders to follow the truth and advance the cause of the people in their communities. He assured also, government's continued support in working with them to remove all barriers to development and listed the following:

- (1) Develop a common, comprehensive programme to provide training for every eligible candidate from the hinterland community to be trained as health workers, nurses, teachers, teaching assistant and teaching aids. Ensuring the required skills were available to serve the communities.

The President stated that it was an important time in the country's history since Government was finalising all development strategies to realise their successful

implementation in the forthcoming three (3) years. He also stated that, the PPP/C Party did not need to be in government to champion the cause of the Indigenous people. He said:

“Today, the PPP/Civic as a Party and the PPP/Civic in Government has demonstrated, once again, its deep and profound respect and commitment to the development of our deserving first people of this country by these allocations.”

He concluded by assuring that the Amerindian leaders could always count on the PPP/C as a development partner.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Toshias, expressed deepest appreciation to the President for the commitments made to the Indigenous people. He then informed the Toshias of the importance of their assistance in the crafting of Guyana’s transformative agenda and thereafter requested the Toshias to give their comments and recommendations based on the President’s address.

Responses by Toshias and other Leaders

Toshao Deon Adams of White Water, Mabaruma, Region 1, thanked the President for the hard work he had undertaken in supporting Amerindian development and stated since their assumption to government, all commitments made to the community of White Water had been realised. The Toshao requested a sanitary facility be constructed to cater for the needs of people who were awaiting the ferry.

Toshao Stavros Stanley of Santa Rosa, Moruca, Region 1, congratulated the Vice-President for the LCDS Strategy while expressing appreciation to the Government for its hard work in ensuring the improvement in the livelihood of all Guyanese.

Toshao Mario Hastings of Kako, Upper Mazaruni, Region 7, thanked the President for his presentation on the work the Toshias did on day two of the Conference while expressing alarmed at what was taking place at the NTC Conference. He conveyed that self-praise was no praise and indicated if people were treated as they ought, there would be no need for campaigning. He thanked the President for his expression of directed towards those who did not vote for him and stated that was the meaning of democracy. He then expressed his gratitude to be able to attend the Conference to express the views of his community, which included some issues for the communities in the Upper Mazaruni that were outstanding for years and desired those issues be addressed before endorsing any resolution.

The Toshao stated the following: 1: land cases were pending; 2: he desired a concrete commitment for the people of Chinese Landing who were suffering - those situations were mentioned when there were consultations at Kamarang and 3: access to land for farming in the Kato community. He shared the view that sidelining and labeling organisations as stymieing development was unfair whilst referring to the comment made about the Opposition being an illegal government when it was in power, and expressed the view that leaders needed to be careful about what they say. He then

gave the reason for his non-support of any government as a lack of trust. He concluded with an expression of respect for the Government because they were chosen by the people.

CDC Chairman, Priscilla Francis, Khanhill, Mabaruma, Region 1, thanked the Government for the work it had done, the types of assistance received and projects executed to build her community while stating that the community never benefited from the previous Administration. She then detailed for the Conference her community's need for water and electricity and requested the assistance of the President and his team to make Region 1 a better place.

Member of Parliament, Toshao, Yvonne Pearson-Fredericks, Mainstay/Whyaka, Region 2, greeted the Conference and stated that the Resolution was timely. She reminded the Conference that previously it passed a resolution for Dr. Jagdeo to discuss the forests at the international level and named the Toshaos who had given their support. She spoke of the benefits to be had from their continued support while expressing her pleasure at witnessing the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) between Guyana and the Kingdom of Norway and thanked the Vice-President for fulfilling his promises to Toshaos in areas she listed in which they benefitted.

The Toshao then repeated her call for full support of the current Resolution, using the words of the President 'to put our hands on the chain to pull together' since they were all promoting one Guyana, while extoling the virtues of the President. The Member of Parliament alluded to statements made that communities who received more land should not benefit from oil and gas and stated that she was anticipating the opportunity to defend the supplemental budget the President spoke about for communities to benefit.

She ended by reading the Resolution of the NTCC and stated that it must be included in all the discussions and that the National Toshaos Council was the legal representative of the Amerindian People in Guyana. She also urged continued promoting of the 'One Guyana' initiative.

See appendix for Resolution to recognise the NTC as the legal body

Mr. Fenton Ragnauth, CDC Chairman of Swan, Region 4, expressed gratitude to the Government for the work which had been undertake in Swan Village and thanked the Vice-President for making it possible for the residents who had been squatting on the One Mile turn, access to their own lands within the Swan 40 acres. He recalled the agreement and expressed appreciation for the initiative between the MOAA and Food for the Poor to construct 71 houses in the Swan Community.

The CDC Chair spoke of the neglect the community suffered under the APNU/AFC Government and repeated the promises which were made by President Ali for a school, a health centre and a better water system and thanked the President for fulfilling those promises. He also expressed thanks on behalf of the residents of

Waikabra and Tigerbone Banakari for the construction of Government buildings, ICT Hubs and vehicles which were provided to those communities.

Mr. Samuel Miguel, Toshao of Manawarin, Moruca, Region 1, stated it was a great opportunity to be in attendance at the NTC Conference. He stated Manawarin had a population of 704 residents and they were satisfied with the development which had been taking place in the village in the short time in which the Government had been in Office. Toshao Miguel remarked that, based on what was being said by the attendees, all hinterland and Indigenous communities and villages had been benefitting from Government. He pointed out that there was an issue with the land at southern Manawarin and requested that the land be demarcated for the benefit of the livelihood of the people.

Toshao (ag), Elvis Edwards South Pakariama Region 9, expressed thanks for the assistance which had been provided by the Government to the Village of Karasabai and pointed out he was in support of the system of governance, the manner in which the country had been progressing, the policies and the teachings of the PPP/C Government and party.

He expressed the view that Toshao should view themselves as Presidents of their respective villages and must be prepared to represent their villages when attending forums such as the NTCC. He opined that democracy belonged to all Guyanese and persons needed to recognise who they were and this could only be done through proper education. The Toshao stated that with education the rights of Amerindians will be represented.

Toshao Edwards stated that it was time Amerindians worked alongside the Government to reform themselves at the local level and reiterated that Amerindians were mature enough to move the country forward.

Toshao Lennox Percy, Pariuma, Region 7, commenced by addressing the Conference in his native language. He stated that he was there to dialogue, and as such an understanding was needed. Toshao Percy noted that leaders were not elected based on specific qualifications and acknowledged he would have been unable to sign the documents that were before him if he could not understand them.

Toshao Flagan Carter, Rockstone, Region 10, applauded the efforts of the Administration and noted the approach used by the President on the previous day was a good formulation with actions taken overnight which spoke volumes of the Administration and its work ethics. He commended it on initiatives in education and health and expressed the view that Toshao could borrow from those work ethics in being proactive in getting things done in their villages.

He concluded by declaring that the Resolution of the NTC was based on the Amerindian Act 2006, in particular, Articles 38-43, and that the ongoing debate on the Resolution was uncalled for. He proceeded to clarify some of the contentions which were raised in the Act.

A participant at the Conference urged that a round of applause be given to the persons who worked through the night to examine the recommendations of the Toshias and indicated their actions had inspired him. He commended the Administration on its work since in Office because his community had benefit and highlighted some of the works. He then urged the Conference to embrace the 'One Guyana' initiative, a purpose which was to develop the country and support the Government of Guyana.

Ms. Sherry Balkarran, Deputy Toshao of Paramakatoi, Region 8, joined in expressing appreciation to the Government for the work being done. She outlined that all villages in the sub-region were in possession of ATVs and tractors which were assisting the Toshias in undertaking their administrative functions. The Deputy Toshao indicated that \$15 million dollars which was granted her village, a population of 2000 persons, was used to purchase a truck and encouraged her fellow village leaders to care equipment and do their part to enhance the quality of life of their communities. She also commended the REO for his stellar work in the region along with encouraging persons who received training in various capacities to return to their regions to serve.

The Deputy Toshao requested that the airstrip be resurfaced, and a parking lot be constructed.

Ms. Jillian Williams, Toshao of Campbelltown, Sub District 1, Region 8, expressed thanks to the President for his vision in compiling the plans of the leaders. She joined with her colleague Toshao in requesting the intervention of the President in the matter at Chinese Landing.

Toshao Peter Persaud of the Amerindian Action Movement of Guyana (AAMG) commended the excellent interventions made by the Government since the commencement of the Conference. He stated that, under the Government, Amerindians could be assured of continued success.

Mr. Shamir Khan, Toshao of Yupukari, Central Rupununi, Region 9 outlined the rapid development that Yupukari had experienced since the Government had been in Office and stated this was in stark contrast to the lack of development under the previous administration. The Toshao pledged his support in working with the Government to better the lives of his community.

The Chairman at this point, stepped in and urged the Toshias and other leaders to focus their comments on the address which the President had delivered.

Toshao Troy Peters of Kwebanna, Moruca, Region 1, pledged his support to signing the resolution which was proposed.

Toshao Michael Williams of Annai, North Rupununi, Region 9, stated that he represented 16 villages and commended the work done during the afternoon session on day 3 of the Conference but acknowledged that a budget was needed to achieve

the things they had put forward. The Toshao highlighted the plight of 90% of farmers in the communities he represented, as a result of climate change and stated life would be difficult for residents after the last crop was reaped. He confirmed the people of the North Rupununi were looking forward to the supplemental budget to continue to live, help the development of their villages and support the development of the country.

Toshao Lemmel Thomas, Kamarang, Region 7, thanked the President for the opportunity to speak. He also confirmed what Toshao Williams said with respect to the plight suffered because of climate change and elaborated further on the effect it had on the cost of food items. He addressed the need for intervention with air transportation and enquired whether the Government could obtain an aircraft to assist with transportation to the hinterland at a reasonable cost. He also enquired whether the \$3 billion supplemental could be raised to \$5 billion.

The Toshao thanked the Government for the commitment given the day before and stated he was motivated to do more as a result. He commended the monitoring and evaluation aspects of the action plan and expressed the hope that such skills could be imparted to communities to check their progress. He revealed that the President's presentation the day prior spoke to his professionalism.

Toshao Esau Boyal, Santa Cruz, Moruca, Region 1, greeted the Conference and thanked the PPP/C Government for facilitating the development of Santa Cruz and the other villages in the region over the past two years. He indicated as with other regions, farming had been affected and their concerns were similar. He then stated that he supported what was said by the Toshao from Whyaka and thanked all the community workers in Region 1 for their diligence in the performance of their duties.

The Toshao informed the Conference that sometime ago Santa Cruz had applied for and was granted an extension of land but the map presented was for downstream instead of upstream land, with the same names of the creeks. He then requested assistance with verification of the area granted as extension of land.

The Toshao called attention to the presence of loggers in his area and gave the history of logging which dated back to Toshao Stephen Campbell while requesting assistance with establishing the boundary of his village. He also spoke to the requests for an extension of land and land titling for the villages of Asakata and Santa Rosa.

As Toshao Boyal was calling attention to the mistreatment of Amerindians by outsiders, the Chairman interrupted him to acknowledge his concern and reminded him of the commitment by the Minister to address said issue. The Toshao then ended by committing to work with the other Tshaos in dealing with the issue at Chinese Landing to facilitate a way forward and the fulfillment of the promises made during the previous day's activities.

The Chairman thanked all Tshaos for their comments and handed the floor to His Excellency, the President for his response.

Response by His Excellency, the President, Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali

His Excellency informed the Conference that he valued highly every comment made by each attendee. He pointed out that his Government had committed to being open and frank and mentioned everyone was blessed with intellect. He enquired whether any Toshao had been mistreated, disrespected at the Conference or whether any Member of Government had accused any Toshao or any community of showing greed when making points, to which the Tshaos responded in the negative.

The President pointed to the need for honesty and truthfulness to be exercised and noted that with freedom came responsibility. He reminded the Conference that the Government was not against any organisation and that it supported the right of each group to make its views known. The President relayed that every organisation, representative and stakeholder were included in the steering Committee of the LCDS, of which he was the Chairman, along with the documentation of each answer to questions raised and every minute of the meetings of the committee which were convened. He disclosed that should any Toshao request copies of the minutes and the questions and answers, they will be provided with same. He reminded about the transparent way Government operated.

On the issue of democracy, the President remarked that all needed to let their voices be heard when democracy was being disregarded.

With respect to the land issue, the President informed the Conference that himself and Minister Teixeira had visited the affected community to explain to the residents that there were three arms of government and that the Government/Legislature had no control over the Judiciary. The President assured the residents of Chinese Landing that the Government was standing in support with them and that Government would commence discussions with the residents of the village to derive

a solution. He urged, however, that the ruling of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) be respected.

The President reaffirmed that the entire process of the NTC Conference was in the remit of the NTC and that Government was committed to working with it to deliver in a better manner. He reminded the Conference that Government had an overall responsibility to every community and to listen to every leader.

The President reminded also that the Government understood what had been happening with the high cost of living and that discussions on the issue were held at the CARICOM Heads of Government Meeting.

The President remarked that he had reached out to the Aircraft Owners Association and stated that the association needed to hear directly from the village leaders. He added that the association was invited to have dialogue with the NTC on Friday 15th July at 10 a.m. The President stated that the Government was not seeking self praises but that it was working to deliver on promises and resolve issues being experienced in the communities. He stated, further, that the Government was committed to working with the village leaders to advance the process. The President reminded that all the issues had been documented and stated that land titling was a continuous process and encouraged all to be critical of Government.

The President assured the residents of Upper Mazaruni and Lower Mazaruni, Region 1 and Region 8 that the Government had committed to working with the people of the communities in those areas so that, together, stronger communities could be built, and better services could be delivered to the people in those communities. He reminded that the Government was on a trajectory to charter a development path, to listen, to work with the people and to ensure that there was the understanding that the Government was committed to the priorities of the hinterland and Indigenous communities.

Response by Vice-President, Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo

The Vice-President was next at the podium and requested that the NTC Conference applaud the President for the allotment of \$3 billion dollars for the development of Amerindian communities which should be spent before the end of 2022. He detailed for the NTC Conference that the \$3 billion will be utilised for youth development project and other initiatives. He informed the Conference that it was the hope of the President that each village will receive an allocation to address concerns in the areas of agriculture, health and education.

The Vice-President stated that, apart from the \$3 billion, the sum of \$1.2 billion will be allocated for distribution to every household in the hinterland and riverine communities to ease the burden and impact of high cost of living.

The Vice-President made mention of Toshaos being politicians at the local level too, whereby they had to contest elections in their villages and that they were all elected leaders. He stressed that the type of politician one was would be determined by whether that person was for development or not for the people and that the PPP stood on the side of development.

He too asked the attendees to trace the periods of both sets of governments and to assess their levels of development. He intimated that most of the initiatives for Amerindian communities were started under the PPP, including the land titling project, where almost \$2 billion were set aside to accelerate that process and that it was not an easy process and works were still being done to facilitate this process. He stressed even though it was difficult, efforts will continue to be made to persevere to solve those issues. When the PPP took office, it was approximately 6% that were

titled lands for the Amerindian communities and at present it was about 14% with work continuing to move it to approximately 20% said Dr. Jagdeo.

On initiatives; Dr. Jagdeo again intimated that for the ICT programme, moneys came from the LCDS project, one initiative which came into being to preserve the forest and biodiversity. He also stated in the draft Resolution document, which was consulted on, all Amerindian communities will benefit and not just a few from the revenues earned from those initiatives, with the Resolution stating people had a right to choose to be a part or not, of the benefits derived from the LCDS.

On the issues of food security, Dr. Jagdeo stated that he was sure the President would have wanted them to work on a special initiative to address this, whilst work was being done to resolve the issues in agriculture; farming and mayhem on the food production system due to the extra dry season. He indicated a commitment was given to send whatever resources were needed to help alleviate shortages in food supplies in the villages. He ended by reaffirming the Government's commitment in aiding in Amerindian communities development.

The Chairman thanked the Vice-President and requested the presence of both the President and Vice-President to witness the approval being given to the two draft Resolution documents during the afternoon session.

Afternoon session

NTC Chairman, Toshao Derrick John, joined the Moderator, Mr. Nazim, for the session in welcoming the President back.

NTC 2022 Resolutions

(1) Resolution on the Status of the National Tshaos Council

Secretary of the NTC, Toshao Shane Cornelius, stated that the Resolution reemphasised that the NTC was the legitimate body to represent all indigenous people of Guyana. He then read the Resolution and called for greater sensitisation activities to be conducted to increase awareness and understanding of the functions of the NTC. The Resolution gained the full support of the entire Conference of leaders.

(See Appendix for full resolution)

(2) Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030

Secretary of the NTC, Toshao Shane Cornelius, stated that the Resolution supported the Low Carbon Development Strategy and focused on issues such as water management, national development plan and the benefits accrued to the Amerindian communities from the Guyana Norway Agreement. The Resolution gained the full support of the entire Conference of leaders.

(See Appendix for full resolution)

The Moderator thanked the Chairman and stated that presentations were to be done for five minutes by Ministers who had not yet presented. After which questions and answers would be facilitated.

Presentation by Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Hon. Oneidge Walrond

“Cabinet Colleagues, Toshias and Senior Councillors, good afternoon. Five minutes, a very short time, but I will try to give an overview of Tourism and the tourism trajectory for Guyana. As you know, tourism is one of the priority sectors for this government. We have been pushing that as you have been hearing lots of talk about tourism. The Indigenous community has been in the forefront of Guyana’s ecotourism product. The Indigenous community has been the reason the ecotourism is world famous in the many prizes we would have gotten. You should give yourselves a hand for that.

Tourism is one of the sectors where we believe that partnership with the Indigenous communities can really be a benefit for all. You heard the President speak about everyone benefitting, and tourism is one of the sectors where we can truly work together in partnership so that all can benefit.

Tourism in Guyana – Tourism generally means people travelling for fun. This includes transportation – these are all aspects we can get involved in – accommodation, food and beverages, arts and your culture – cultural performances.

We have spoken about being mutually beneficial for all, the community led ecotourism model is the one that we are particularly excited about and promoting because it is one of the most promising models for partnership. And we are speaking a lot here about partnership where everyone benefits. Here you can own and operate

your own tourism facility and earn moneys for the community and community development.

One of the attractive things about this model is that this tourism product and experience consists of you basically sharing your everyday life. That is what people are interested in - sharing your experiences in sustainable living and your knowledge of your surroundings, tours – waterfalls – and everything that is around you, people will come to experience that. So that is one of the good things about this model. Some of the community led projects; you would have already seen had already started at Surma, Rewa, which has won many international recognitions and awards on many occasions. And more recently, we have had one in Marasabai, Karasabai, St. Cuthbert's Mission just to name a few.

We are looking to develop more partnerships like these in your communities. And I know that you have indicated, we have read your lists of your interests in the different villages for community led and community-based tourism and we are going to be adding some of these villages to the list. We will work with the community to develop so these are some of the examples of some of the communities where the tourism is owned and operated by the community. We are not looking to bring international investors in that will take away all of the resources and the community does not benefit; we are looking to stress the community led and owned tourism. There are other models to help develop tourism such as you can have an investor come in with an agreement, that investor will hire people from the village to work in the facility; there is also the private-public partnership models where moneys from the community and the private community are pooled and entered into an enterprise. There are various models and my staff and I are here to assist you in choosing the best fit for your community. But of course, we are pushing the community led and owned model is the most attractive and beneficial so far.

We have here the many ways in which the community led and owned tourism benefits by protecting the flora and fauna, to foster care for the environment as in accordance with the LCDS, shows sustainability, and the Indigenous people worldwide have been living with nature and so this kind of tourism will help to facilitate and continue with that practice. This is what many of the tourists want to experience and see, this way of life. This tourism is becoming more centered in local communities, it is something that is very attractive and so you have a readymade product for people to come and pay for the communities to benefit. Guyana is the only country where community-led tourism is a priority focus.

We move onto the benefits of tourism which protect the way of life. This shows how good tourism promotes communities. When a visitor comes, they will pay for the meals, the tours and the lodging. The tourism business will buy the goods and services and will pay the employees who would then use the moneys to buy goods and services. The employees, of course, are all persons from the villages. This goes to

show how the village and the communities benefit directly from the community-own good tourism, regardless of the model which is used.

There are six types of tourism development models. As Toshaos and leaders, I know that you will want to know more about these kinds of models because they have their peculiar nuance and benefits. The technical persons are right here in the room who are willing to work and talk with you about how your village or community can benefit from any or a combination of the models. The role of the Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA) and the Ministry of Tourism is to help you to identify the product.

There is a technical way in which the tourism product in your community will be developed. There is an evaluation spreadsheet in which we pull out the different criteria and indicators of what your tourism product will look like. All of this we do through the GTA and the Ministry of Tourism. We will help you with developing and supporting the tourism plans and products, training in the services and marketing and licensing, because when people come from abroad, they want to know that your facility is licensed. We will help you with your assessments. Those of you who have indicated that you would be interested in tourism, we will look at the list. There is a list of villages that we have that we will be working with this year. If you want your village to be added to the list, we will be doing an assessment from the Ministry of Tourism and the Guyana Tourism Authority.

There will be training, and mentoring, marketing, monitoring and reporting and we will work with you to set out a goal and a written proposal about how tourism is to be developed in your village. We are not going to leave you alone. We will help you to develop your tourism so that it will become marketable and attracted to international visitors. It is so that when people come, they could have a beautiful experience in your village with the support of the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce.

I would like to briefly mention that, under the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, we also have training for business development if you have a small business or is interested in developing a small business within your community. That is ongoing. We will help you with getting registered and getting business proposals done so that you can approach a bank. We can facilitate all of that at the Small Business Bureau. Again, the technical staff are here to walk you through the guidelines. There is the grant process which is on hold right now. When restart that, there will be an opportunity for grants.

Thank you very much for listening. If you have any more questions, we will be right here to answer you.”

Mr. Nazim invited the Hon. Minister of Labour, Mr. Joseph Hamilton, to make his five-minute presentation.

Presentation by the Minister of Labour, Hon. Joseph Hamilton

“I will use my five minutes wisely. I want to introduce to you some of the services the Ministry of Labour offers. Since we came back to Government, we have been able to establish labour offices in every region except Region 8 and that is only because the Government did not have facilities to do so there.

For Region 1, there are labour offices in Mabaruma and Port Kaituma;

For Region 2, there are labour offices in Anna Regina which services right up to Moruca;

For Region 4, there are labour offices on the East Bank which services right up to Pakuria;

For Region 5, there are two labour offices – one which services Mahaicony and includes Maraikobai

For Region 6, there are two offices – New Amsterdam and Skeldon which services Orealla and Siparuta;

For Region 7, there is labour office in Bartica and we are about to appoint officers at Kamarang to service the upper Mazaruni;

For Region 8, we are having difficulty with facilities;

For Region 9, there is a labour office in Lethem and in Aishalton; and

For Region 10, there are labour offices in Linden and Kwakwani which services the communities on the Berbice River.

Importantly, we are facilitating technical and vocational training and some of the villages represented here have already experienced Board of Industrial Training (BIT). It is being launched very shortly in some villages. For those who have never experienced and had the opportunity to have people in your villages trained in different technical and vocation skillsets, we are prepared to sit with you and to make that happen even before you leave Georgetown. Also, there are officers in your region with whom you can make contact to sit with you and put together programmes.

On labour relations, again, there are labour officers who can specifically look at labour relation issues. I know that a burning issue in villages is contractors, loggers and miners who were employing people to work but were not paying them. I offered Toshias and Councillors, and I will do that again, to make lawyers available to come into the villages to sit with councils and teach them how to write simple contracts. We can only act if there is a contractual arrangement between the aggrieved employee and the employers. I have had enough instances and experiences to know that people worked with people for two and three years but did not know the name of the employer. Toshias and councillors, I believe that you have a responsibility to your villages and, therefore, when people come into the villages to hire residents, you should ensure that a contract is established between the contractor and the employee.

Finally, the issue of occupational safety and health (OSH) is another important issue. We have officers who could pay attention to safe conditions under which people must work. For the regions that mining is taking place, we have had enough deaths on mining sites. They have drastically been reduced by 16% between 2020 and 2021. We hope to bring it to zero and you can help us in that regard.

I am available to answer any question that you may want to ask about what the Ministry of Labour was doing and how you can have BIT programme and other programmes happen in your villages. Thank you very much.”

Mr. Nazim invited the Minister of Public Works to make his presentation to the Conference.

Presentation by the Minister of Public Works, Hon. Bishop Edghill

“Good afternoon, respected Toshaos and elders and my Cabinet colleagues. What I will seek to do is to highlight what was happening in each region.

Region 1: We are continuing the ridged pavement concrete works in Port Kaituma. At Mabaruma, we are doing 4km and we are doing 2km currently, at Moruca. For Mabaruma to Morawannah, we are doing 500 meters pf concrete ridged pavement. At San Jose, there is approximately \$100 million dollars of work to do be done at Barabina Swamp Hill but there are some issues to be sorted out there. The internal roads at Kwebanna, Wauna, Akwero, Green Hill, Silver Hill and Manawarin will be continued.

Region 7: We are doing 2km of asphaltic concrete road to Bidrabu. We are improving access to Agatash and Daggg Point. I noticed one of the issues yesterday was about Agatash, the road was finished up to the crusher run stage but we have to try to get to asphaltic concrete. We are doing about 30km of laterite roads in the Bartica/Potaro/Butakari/Issano end and we are doing internal roads at Kaburi, Karrau and Agatash.

Region 8: In 2021, we did \$100 million dollars in community participation contracts in 15 villages in North Pakaraima villages. I am happy to announce that, in 2022, we did 29 such villages. The allocation had been increased and, so far, it is \$290 million. I am sure that all the Toshaos were busy getting their roads done. Some have asked about the 50% completion.

We are continuing the road at Mahadia – 2km of concrete road. The Toshaos there would know that I had upbraided the contractor about the half road he had given us. We are doing new maintenance projects for Mahadia main access and Tiger Hill, and

we are now putting in ridged pavement concrete roads at Salbora/Muruwa and the Muruwa access.

Region 9: Most of you would know that we have signed the contract for the building of the asphaltic concrete road from Linden to Mabura. While that construction is in progress, the 32 bridges from Kurupukari to Lethem would be changed from wood to concrete, international standards. We are preparing those bridges to carry the highway all the way into Lethem. We will have a super highway from Linden to Lethem and that is work which is ongoing.

We have to continue the maintenance. There is sectional maintenance in Lethem to Aishalton and to Annai. We have a new project to continue because this is very important and it may come up. Let me say that the connecting of Region 9, which is Yurong Paru to Monkey Mountain - we want to ensure that we can connect Region 9 to Region 8 to bring down the cost of getting goods and services into Region 8. In the areas where everything has to go by air, the cost is too high so, if we could get trucks moving, we will be able to bring the cost down.

We are continuing work in Lethem, we are doing six kilometres of road into the St. Ignatius area, and we are continuing development to the Lethem to Moco Moco hydro road, internal village roads at Potarinau, Katau and Baitoon.

In Region 10 we are doing \$800 million worth of work, but \$300 million particularly in Kwakwani and we have the roads that are continuing both to Muritaro and to Malali. We are getting those roads in. We are continuing internal roads at Hururu, Landersville, Bamia, Malali, and we are going ahead.

Internal airstrips are one of the big issues and I would be happy to discuss that with you this afternoon. We have currently, \$600 million in Budget 2022. The focus right now is on Eteringbang, Karasparo, Ekereku Bottom and Kaieteur. Work is moving on those and we are at different stages.

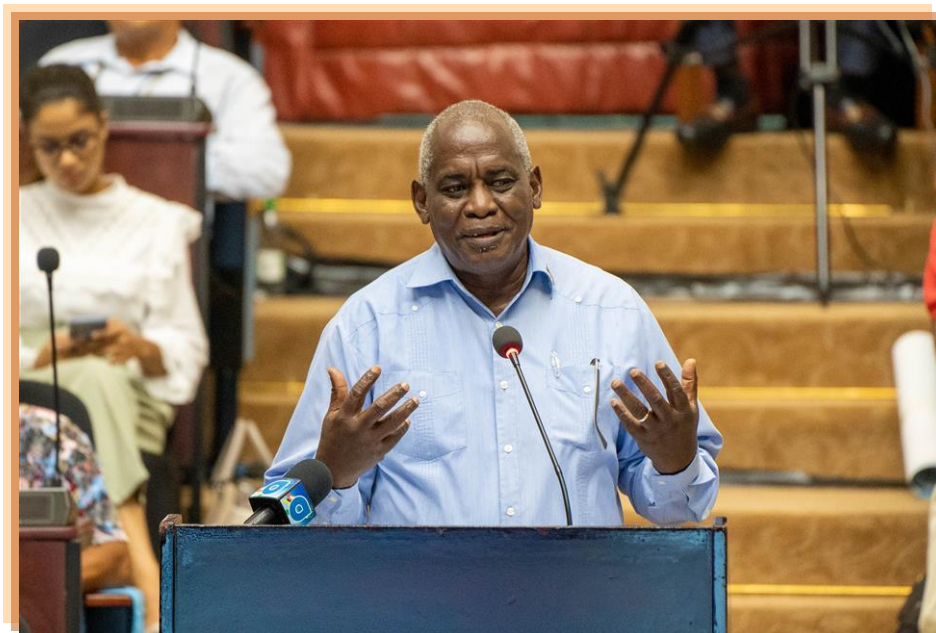
As it relates to ferries and stellings, Region 1 will see significant improvements. The villages should know that we already have the ferry that was launch. The completion for sea testing will take place in September and then we should be getting it down here. The improvements will be that it should be able to carry 100 more passengers than the one currently carries. The speed, to get there will be moving from 22 hours to about eight hours' travel time, so we are cutting travel time significantly.

The other thing I want to indicate to the people of the region as it relates to this, is that the ferry would be able to carry two trucks and 14 sedan type vehicles. Right now, it can only carry two vehicles on the ferry at a time. It cannot carry trucks. We are now moving to be able to carry two trucks and 14 sedan type vehicles. For storage, up to 150 tonnes cargo and we will have ten 10x10 containers so as to be able to carry in goods to Region 1. For farming and all the other areas of development for Region 1, this ferry will be a major game changer.

We have had some challenges which I am sure you are all aware of. Our time is gone, so I will leave the rest for the discussion phase. Thank you very much.”

The Chairman acknowledged the presence of the Hon. Prime Minister and welcomed to the podium the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs.

Presentation by Minister of Home Affairs Hon. Robeson Benn



“Thank you. Hon. Prime Minister and Cabinet Colleagues, particularly Toshao, Councillors and their facilitator and enablers from the different ministries, welcome.

Of course, it is impossible to speak about the things we want to present at the Ministry of Home Affairs in such a limited time, but I want to, perhaps, say quickly a few things which we view as critically important. When we speak of good governance and fast-tracking Amerindian development, we have to be aware generally of the fairly poor state of policing and of services which have to be given to our Amerindian communities.

Much of the issues which relate to poor services, bad behaviour, disdain in many cases, in fact, in giving service have a lot to do, I believe, with the lack of diversity in our forces. It is our belief even now while we are talking about increasing the peace in Guyana, a fundamental plank of that is to have a balancing of our forces. This means all other persons who are not represented, who do not look like Guyana in the forces, those persons must come into full measure in dealing with the critical task of security, of providing safety to the communities. You too must play a significant role in securing your communities and supporting the national interest in respect of security.

First off, I want to emphasise this point. We want to have young Amerindian people and others who are not represented as I said to rush to join up, whether it is the Police Force, the Army or the Prison Service, we want representative participation in those forces. If we are going to be more wholesome as a country, if we are able to protect each other, we have to move to a position of empathy, where we will respect each other, where we empathise with each other, where we are embed in each other's culture and have a full understanding of the culture so that we could move forward rapidly now in terms of development, particularly Amerindian development.

We had the five-year hiatus which was a disaster particularly for people in the hinterland communities, but a disaster for all of Guyana – the five years APNU was in Government.

We want to move the ball forward in respect of this issue. We want to encourage you to join up. We want you not to be intimidated in respect of this matter. We want you to find a welcoming environment in those forces because we know there are ways in which people are forced out and are made to feel ashamed and to resign the work even when they enter. This is a significant issue for us with respect to policing.

The Guyana Police Force could congratulate itself somehow, of course, having come out of the pandemic, having experienced the issues relating to democracy. That it has held together somehow and that with new changes we are able to remake and renew and, in fact, make a new Police Force which is what I speak to them about, having new Police Force. We cannot become new or renewed if we do not have a good mix, a representative mix of Guyanese who are represented in those forces.

I want you all to buy into this. To buy into the issue with respect to diversity for our forces and we stand ready to create the environment, to give the support to make this happen. To make it happen in good measure within three years we are hoping. We expect to get some support, not only from the Government but from some international institutions.

We have had increase in our Community Policing Groups (CPG) groups, particularly in the hinterland communities. The CPG groups had gone basically dormant throughout the country. They are being renewed. Mr. Das and his people have been going all over the country doing training and we hope that could provide a vehicle for training, for understanding and for movement upward in the Discipline Services. Just to say, I think we have more than doubled the number of groups country wide and, also, the number of membership of people from the communities in the community policing groups.

We have been working particularly in respect to building new police stations or rehabilitation. Some of those in the interior, particularly Charity, Imbamadai, Kamarang, Kurupung, Kato, Yarikita at this moment and we are doing the one at Baramita. All of these, of course, are not good enough or satisfactory in respect of what we would want them to be. Beyond the hard assets the most critical issue is the

quality and type of soft assets. The persons who are there in the communities carrying out policing.

When I talk about cultural embedment, I was earlier in the year in Karasabai and I was talking to a couple of coast lander policemen there. I asked them if they learned any word of Macushi and, of course, the answer was no.

Those are some of the issues we will have to deal with. We will have to get the language books. We will have to deal with those issues in relation to them feeling comfortable – that both sides are comfortable. But particularly, as I said, the question of empathy in relation to the work we do.

Even while we talk about the challenges of policing, we have issues too in the prisons. We are building new prisons and not because we want necessarily more people in the prisons, but our approach is to have a rehabilitative and a reintegrative process. We are talking about a fresh start where persons who are in prison are rehabilitated, but the term of reintegration is that they are trained up and given the tools of a new trade, a trade that they have been chosen and trained in to move on. If they are going to do welding or small engine repairs or electrical work, furniture and so on, we will give the persons the tools of those trades to move on rapidly into economic activities for their families. One of the challenges being for persons from the hinterland communities who find themselves in the prisons is the lack of support. We have been encouraging family visits and we are moving to the point where we will have to pay for family visits of some of these persons who come from the interior communities and are stranded in the prisons. They are stranded in the prisons, and they do not have enough emotional or psychological support, not enough familial support and contact in respect of the situation that they are in so that we can move them into an integrate process.

Of course, you are all aware of the challenges we have had with birth certificates, particularly, and death certificates. I went to Kurupung sometime ago and a man who I knew many moons ago when I was a Geologist, talking with him, he said he did not have a birth certificate. I felt so badly about it. He was in his 70s. So, even 20 or more years ago when I went through Kurupung, I met him there and saw him. Here was a man who was born in Guyana and did not have a birth certificate. That was the case with many children in the villages and many adults. We are working hard to overcome this issue. I know that, over the past day or so, over 100 applications are here. The law was changed so that the Toshaos could sign with respect to verifying the applications and endorsing them. We want to be able to move ahead quickly on that. The General Registrar Office (GRO) will go into the various communities. They have already been into a couple of regions already and will continue this process with weekly visits to different regions to deal with this problem with respect to the GRO. We want to move better to a process of online applications for issues relating to birth certificates and death certificates. This is because people keep running up and down.

One last thing – I know that there is the great and abiding interest in firearms in the communities for protection from animals and so on. Our intention is to give a firearm licence once you are sworn and, of course, checked out in relation to police issues – sworn as a rural constable, then you will be given a firearm. That is what we want to be able to do. That every Toshao, once they are sworn in and once they are a Toshao, we want to move to that point. The issue where you are taken advantage of, in terms of the cartridges, we want to deal with that by sending... I think beginning with Kamarang, the police are supposed to be carrying some number of cartridges to be able to give to community people at basically the price in Georgetown and not be exploited by policemen and others. Let me apologise for my inability to go through the many pages which I have here in terms of this presentation, but we are available. We intend not only to physically reach out to you, but virtually in terms of applications and representations in terms of contact with our people across the country.”

Presentation by Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, Hon. Gail Teixeira



“Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you. My colleagues here do not believe I can do a five-minute presentation, but if Bishop Edghill can do it, I certainly can. It is a great pleasure to be here with you at the National Tshaos Council Conference and to see many of the faces that I have seen throughout the years. The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance is not like some of the other Ministries. We do not give out tractors and tanks and build bridges and roads. We are not that kind of Ministry, unfortunately. We are a small and new Ministry from a recognition by our President and Government that parliamentary affairs and governance is an important component of the work we do as Government.

For many of you, you may not know much about our Ministry and so I thought I would give you an idea of what we do and what we are about. Many times, we take on things that are not part of our remit.

First of all, under parliamentary affairs, we manage Government business to ensure the safe passage of the Government's Bills and Motions, and guide and monitor Government performance in parliamentary committees. We ensure Government's parliamentary agenda is constantly being assisted and piloted through the various layers of Government and national stakeholders on the way to Parliament, and when it reaches Parliament, whether it gets debated and passed or whether it goes into select committees.

The Ministry also pilots and answers for the constitutional bodies in the annual budget process. Even though as a Minister I cannot instruct a constitutional body to do anything, someone still has to be in parliament to answer for their budget and answer questions from the Opposition, and that is what I do.

The third area under parliamentary affair is working with the Office of the President, the Attorney General's Chambers and, where required, the Office of the Leader of the Opposition, on the appointment of constitutional office holders and constitutional bodies, such as the Rights Commissions, as you know, Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), Women and Gender Equality Commission (WGEC), Rights of the Child Commission (RCC), Indigenous Peoples Commission (IPC); the service commissions, which are Judicial Service Commission (JSC), Public Service Commission (PSC), the Police Service Commission (PSC); the Office of the Ombudsman; Public Service Appellate Tribunal (PSAT), for example.

Let me be opportunistic. The Indigenous Peoples Commission is waiting on appointment based on the nominees that would come from the NTC. In accordance with the Constitution, there are three names that must come – one must be a woman – out of the National Tshao Council. The NGOs that are Amerindian must put up two names, of which one must be a female. We would like, as the Conference winds down, that you are able, as soon as possible, as a new NTC, to make those nominations. This is so that we can move forward in October, when we reconvene in Parliament, to appoint a new Indigenous Peoples Commission.

We must remember that the Constitution is the supreme law in Guyana and that we have in Guyana mechanisms for domestic redress. So, if there are issues to do with discrimination and violations of our Constitution, people have a number of avenues in Guyana, unlike in many other countries. So, one can go to the Rights Commissions or the constitutional bodies to raise their concerns, if one feels the Ministry or Government has not listened to their issues. The constitutional bodies have the powers to listen, hear and resolve. If that does not work, then there is the option of constitutional motions, to go to the judiciary on what may be violations of human rights or what may be believed to be discrimination. I am particularly raising that because a number of organisations in Guyana have gone to the United Nations (UN)

and the Organization of American States making claims about issues to do with treatment of Amerindians when, in fact, they have not exploited the domestic remedies first. As I said, in the domestic remedies, there are layers that are available.

Under Governance, there are, as said, human rights treaty obligations of Guyana. We have ratified seven of the eight Human Rights Conventions in the world and also the Organization of American States human rights obligations. We work towards bringing Guyana's human rights treaties into compliance and this is recognised by all international bodies as a progressive process. Not one country in the world has achieved any of the conventions in totality and that all are in a progressive move to be able to improve. There is no shame and blame at the UN and OAS levels as other countries are way behind Guyana. When it comes to Indigenous rights, we are one of the foremost countries in the world. Sometimes we do not blow our own trumpet, but we are the only country in the world that has a land titling system that is enshrined in law – the Amerindian Act – in which, so far, over 14% of Guyana's land mass is communally owned forever and absolutely. There is no other country in the world that has this system. Earlier, we discussed the Low Carbon Development Strategy. We are one of several countries that have been able to preserve a pristine and intact rain forest.

We have to do, as a Ministry, periodic reports on the human rights conventions. So, we have to, almost weekly, receive requests for more information from special rapporteurs from both the UN and the OAS as well as respond to petitions brought to the UN or OAS by bodies in Guyana. Right now, we are answering three that are before the UN and the OAS dealing with Guyana from Amerindian communities.

The Ministry, in order to be able to develop capacity on human rights, has set up a national mechanism for reporting and follow up on Guyana's human rights treaty obligations and it involves over 20 agencies in Guyana which have to monitor and report to the international treaty bodies on our progress and what conventions we have ratified.

We have to recognise our weaknesses. We have to be able to train people in the different conventions and on the Constitution of Guyana for people to understand what human rights are under our constitution as well as under the treaty bodies. Our constitution allows that certain conventions we have signed can be referred to in a court of law and are required by Administration. We have the support of the United Nations periodic review trust fund The Voluntary Trust Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the implementation of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to draft a human rights plan of action for consideration by the Government and stakeholders. It will include training on human rights conventions for the staff and focal points in different agencies and training of stakeholders in these human rights conventions. We are pleased, if there is a desire by the NTC, to have such involvement in the training programmes. We would be welcome, later in the year when we do the planning, to include the NTC Executive or however the NTC would

like. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) would be lending support with regard to the Rights of the Child Commission.

There are two anti-corruption conventions – the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption (IACAC), which is the oldest convention in the world and which Guyana ratified in 2001 and which we have examined and reported on constantly since 2006 and the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which Guyana ratified in 2008 and we are doing our second assessment.

Anti-corruption now is fashionable in the world and so it should be in the sense that we all strive to use taxpayers' moneys well, that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) use funding money well and that villages and local government bodies use available resources in a transparent and accountable way. We also have to report on the Lima Commitment and the UN General Assembly Special Declaration Against Corruption. These are the two most recent declarations.

In order to deal with the volume of work with anti-corruption, we have established a national coordinating committee on our obligations to the UN, to the Inter-American Commission Against Corruption. We published Guyana's first anti-corruption framework last month and we will be posting it on *Facebook* so that anybody who wants to see the anti-corruption framework of Guyana can quickly get an idea that we do have a framework.

We have resuscitated the national stakeholders meeting, which used to be held prior to 2015, and we have started having regular meetings – every two months – for consultations on the LCDS. I am happy that the former NTC, APA and other Amerindian NGOs such as The Amerindian Action Movement of Guyana (TAMOG) and South Rupununi were all part of these virtual meetings that we held.

Last but not least, Mr. Chairman, I am the Geographic Member of Parliament for Region 7. I have fallen in love with Region 7. I was sent to it as a political person in 2017 and Region 7 as well as the people have captivated me. I am very proud to be the representative. I have tried by best to represent the Region and to deal with what are sometimes governance issues of access to services, partnerships and communication. I am open to all the Toshaos to assist in whatever way I can. I am at your service.”

The Chairman informed the Conference that the Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh, was unable to make a presentation but had sent the Chief Statistician in his stead.

Presentation by Chief Statistician, Ministry of Finance, Mr. Errol La Cruz

“Good afternoon, everyone. I know it is the end of a long day and so I will try to be as brief as possible. I am the Chief Statistician at the Bureau of Statistic, which is an agency under the Ministry of Finance. The Minister in recognising the importance of what I am about to speak about today, has graciously given me a few minutes so that I can speak on what is the most important and exciting event in the data and statistical calendar of Guyana and that is the National Population and Housing Census to be conducted in the last quarter of this year.

The census is one of the oldest and most important data collection activity in any society. The census is a complete count of the population at a specific point in time, which is census day, and provides detailed information on the population size, date and age, structure, educational attainment, labour force, characteristics, housing and many other characteristics that are important for decision making.

The official census day, which would be announced later, is done by the Minister of Finance I accordance with Chapter 19:09, the Statistics Act.

As I said, censuses are extremely important and that is because they provide something that is of vital importance in decision making, which is data. I keep telling everyone that data is as if not more valuable than gold in the new economy and in the new information age in which we find ourselves.

Censuses are not done every 10 years. So, this is not something that happens every year or every two years. There is a significant period of time that occurs between one census and the other, recognising that it is a very expansive exercise. Many changes take place in that intercensal and these could be in the aforementioned areas – age structure, education, employment levels and so on – but all of this has important impact on how development policy takes place and the demand for social services

such as health, education, housing and other important services for communities across Guyana.

And of course, this information is used by policy makers for development planning, and not just policy makers, it is also used by the private sector, businesses, students, academics, researchers, international agencies, communities and many others. This is just the proverbial tip of the iceberg, just two graphs to give you a sense of the rich data that is collected during the census. And here we see how educational levels in Guyana have changed between the pre independence period of 1960 to the last census, which was done in 2012.

And if you look, you will see that those persons who have post primary education, that is, secondary education and above, in 2012, accounted for almost 75% of our population. Which is a drastic change from pre independence where there were less than 25% of the population. Now, if we were to look at our Indigenous peoples' population, in the period 1980 to 2012, we see that the percent of Amerindian people in the total population of Guyana, has almost doubled in terms of the composition of our national population. It shows that this group is growing in significance. And as I mention, these are just two graphs that spotlight two features of census data.

The reality is, that the census data goes way beyond this, it provides a wealth of information that guides decision-making. Again, I cannot emphasise it enough, it is vital at all levels; from the governmental level all the way to the student who is completing some research or homework for his/her assignment. The census activities include recruitment of temporary personnel which is done mainly in communities – persons are recruited from their own communities to work there and on that note, I should mention that there are a few communities in the hinterland areas, some of them are your communities, I believe, where we have not received applications. So, on Friday during the lunch hour, there will be staff from the Bureau of Statics who will be meeting with you to provide applications and to collect same for those who are interested in working on the census activity. Again, the enumerators will be spread out all cross Guyana and they will be visiting every household in every occupied part in this country.

You may ask how can I help? Well, why I am here is to encourage you and I hope you will also encourage others to participate fully in this exercise and to cooperate with the census takers, be inviting towards them. Remember, enumerators have many households to visit and so we are asking everyone all cross Guyana to do your best to accommodate them for us to have a successful census. Once again, am appealing to you to treat the census takers with respect, ask for their identification cards and assist them in getting the data we need. On a final note, your answers are strictly confidential which is protected by law and no one has access to your individual answers. It is only processed, aggregated and presented for analytical purposes at the combined level, which means, no individual answers can be gleamed from the census data. Thank you.”

The Moderator introduced the next presenter.

Presentation by Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports Hon. Charles Ramson



“Allow me to say, cabinet colleagues and everyone here in attendance at this Conference, what a pleasure it has been to be here, to work with you and to listen to all the issues that are coming out of your villages. It has been one of the most productive sessions that I have ever been in, witnessed and I can say safely as well, after experiencing what happened in the parliament, close to two years, with the stealing of the mace and so forth. This is a far more productive session we have ever had than in parliament.

You know the ministry is responsible for culture, youth and sport and I have had some one-on-one engagements over the last three days in a room over on the west wing. Some of those sessions I have led and have documented quite a few of your requests with the specifics to your villages. But there are a couple of things I need some help with. As much as you are making some requests here, for you to get the full benefit of the ministry’s programme, you need to participate in some things so that the people of your village can be aware and know how they may be able to participate.

What the ministry has done and in moving forward, is it has taken from the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, the full list of registrants along with their full contact information, so that whenever it requires your participation, you would be receiving that information on your whatsapp. Every single opportunity you hear about this afternoon from this ministry, you will be able to receive that information also via whatsapp. All you have to do now, is to take that to the residents in your villages, especially those that are connected to young people, so that they can apply and get the opportunity to benefit. Because there may be some programmes I speak on that

you might not have heard of, that may be a good idea and opportunity for - am being told my time is running out. I am really supposed to be heckled by the opposition but here I got some good friends.

Exclusively for the culture area, the ministry has introduced a grant called “cultural and creative industries”, and this is for anyone who has a specific talent related to craft, dance or performing that would require support. The ministry last year disbursed \$30 million dollars and a decision was made internally to assign at least one grant to every region. This information is for those who desire to commercialise their talent and those seeking to monetize their craft, this is where you can get some support. The grant is capped at \$1 million dollars.

Secondly, the ministry has tried to improve its data base on performing arts as it is also responsible for all national events and Amerindian culture features very prominently in all of our national events. And to this end, the ministry is designing a “creative industries register”. Once you become a part of this register, it gives you an opportunity to work across all sectors, both public and private as well as in other Caricom countries, where you will receive a CSME certificate that enables you free access. There is also the talent search segment whereby persons can send in their video pieces and the ministry staff assist to filter them, and then transport you here for training to commence.

For the youth portion, the ministry has reformed its entire training programme across all ministries, but the Kuru Kuru training college will now be concentrating specially on hinterland training for young people with the focus being in five areas, namely: carpentry, plumbing, electrical installation, welding and masonry. You will be receiving that information shortly, but this programme will have CTVET, a body that certifies technical, vocational education, along with CVQ level 1, which is the Caribbean Vocational Qualification. This will be the only institution in the country and probably the entire Caricom region to give young people a certified skill within three to four months. Residents of the hinterland region who apply, can enter the residential programme and within three to four months gain that certified skill, which is authentic and use the credential to obtain a CSME certificate to work in any of the Caricom countries, even though we desire you to stay and work here in Guyana.

The ministry is also in the process of issuing youth grants for businesses which was advertised last year and will be available this year as well. Here again, young people can access up to \$1 million dollars to set up a business which focus on a number of areas as well. All the information pertaining to this grant will be sent to your whatsapp for you to disseminate to the residents of your villages so that they can apply. There is another area for young people, and the ministry was a bit disappointed with the limited number of applicants received from Regions 7 and 8. It is the science fair which is scheduled to begin on Saturday, a regional science fair that will culminate into a national one. It is the ministry’s desire that every region

participate in the regional science fair but because of the low numbers received from the regions mentioned, they automatically qualify for the national competition. There will be lots of prizes to encourage participation as well as for the winners. Looking forward for your cooperation whenever the information is sent .

And finally, with regard to sport, the ministry has taken all information provided in relation to requests for sports gears and lights. But what the ministry believes is important is, how are you connecting to the national programme. It has therefore begun the “National Sports Academy” which is the first of its kind in this country and in any part of the Caricom region. The ministry in an effort to encourage your integration into the entire programme, will be creating by the end of the year, coaching manuals for all twelve core sports, where this will be shared with you along with visits by trainers to train the persons identified. There will also be the creation of an app with all twelve manuals on it, that will be downloaded on your cellular phones to assist with preparation and training for any tournament or competition. This is part of an overall training programme that can help to structure the development of your talent. Because in the absence of that structure it happens in an organic way and does not happen progressively.

The structure is what the national sport academy is designed to filled the gap on and achieve the purpose of building talent progressively. We are going to use the technology to help share that information on the coaching manuals. You will get that by the end of the year. Thank you very much.”

Mr. Nazim Mohamed introduced the final Minister to make his presentation, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Corporation.

Presentation of Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Corporation, Hon. Hugh Todd



“You would have listened to the President, Vice-President and several Ministers who spoke before me. Particularly, this morning when you listened to the President and he spoke about good governance and the quality of life and sustainable development, youth empowerment and your quality of life, it gives us the overarching framework of how we are going to operate as a Government in terms of our inclusivity. When you listened to the other Ministers, you would have seen, in many cases, tangible evidence of how we are pushing forward with development.

In the case of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Corporation, it may seem a bit remote to you because we do not actually build things, as Minister Teixeira mentioned, but we provide a very viable service to Guyana; we connect Guyana to the international environment.

The President himself sets the policy agenda for Guyana. You know most of those policy initiatives which Guyana has, and which are built into the Low Carbon Development Strategy and its expanded version for which consultations were recently held. For example, when we look at human rights and the conventions, we advocate at the level of the United Nations (UN) to ensure that we are not only taking care of your human rights, but to ensure that we are compliant as a country and as a nation.

We also advocate and champion, internationally for a Climate change, which is also part and parcel of our Low Carbon Development Strategy and our overarching development agenda. When we think about our democratic principles and values – and you know how hard we struggled for that back in 2020 – we want to ensure that

we commit to all of those conventions – The UN Charter, the regional initiatives such as CARICOM, CSME, OAS; and the Commonwealth.

Most of you who would have been following Guyana's development trajectory would have seen that there are a lot of engagements. When you get to the details of our foreign policy agenda, we focus primarily on our frontiers – Venezuela, Brazil, Suriname – to ensure they are protected. That is very important for us. We focus on economic diplomacy and ensuring that we can have access to markets and be attractive to markets outside of Guyana so that we can bring investments to Guyana.

Our diaspora is very important to us. As you know we have a very sizeable population living overseas. We have a new resuscitated diaspora which is focussing heavily on ensuring we have those engagements going.

Apart from that we have good and talented diplomats posted across Guyana's 21 missions and consulates across the globe who were representing Guyana's interest overseas. Apart from the headquarter in Georgetown, we have missions and consulates across the world as far as in New Dehli, India, South Africa, United Kingdom, Geneva, Brussels and right in in our own continent – Brazil and Suriname. We have missions and consulates with representatives protecting our interests. That is what we do in a nutshell in terms of our foreign policy.

One of the things I want to discuss, which I want you to take away this afternoon, is the fact that we need to have balanced representation in terms of diversity. When we look at the way our Ministry is presently, it does not reflect a true representation of Guyana. If we are going to be inclusive and a 'One Guyana' we need more Amerindian to be attracted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Corporation. I am not sure if the Ministry is not attractive to you or if we are not doing enough to sell our Ministry. I can tell you that you can have very promising careers as diplomats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Corporation. It will help us as well to sell our country because you are a reflection of who we are as Guyanese.

I can tell you that most recently that we posted one young diplomat, who resides in Lethem, to our mission in Boa Vista. That is a good start for you. For those of you who are interested, and if you have families and friends and colleagues who are interested, when you are looking at employment across the sectors and Ministries, please consider the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Corporation. Thank you very much."

Mr. Nazim stated that the Conference had heard from the Ministers of Tourism, Labour, Public Works, Home Affairs, Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, Culture, Youth and Sport and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Corporation. He invited the Conference to ask questions, receive answers and make suggestions.

Questions and Responses

Mr. Kelon Allick, from Koberimo, Mabaruma Sub District stated that his community's main issue had to do with the completion of the road in the village. He stated that it had commenced but had not yet been completed and requested an update on the status of the road.

Ms. Doreen Fraser, CDC Chairman, St. Dominic, Region 1, mentioned the new ferry which was scheduled to be delivered to Region 1 and enquired whether the ferry would have a schedule and pointed to the untimely schedules for the MV Kimbia. She enquired, also, whether the fare to utilise the boat and the condition of the accommodation on the ferry could be made known.

Ms. Rohilda Mendonca, CDC Chairman of Oronoque, Port Kaituma, Region 1, called the Conference's attention to the state of the roads in Matarkai where the GMI company was destroying the roads and not adhering to the policies of the Matarkai NDC. The CDC Chair requested that the Minister address the issue urgently.

The CDC Chair stated that the residents expressed dissatisfaction with the poor and incomplete work which was done to Cat Walk road. She requested that the issues of the large number of migrants within Oronoque Village who were occupying a building which was gifted to the village by Barama Company Ltd along with creating issues within the community be addressed.

Toshao Esau Boyal, Santa Cruz, Region 1, stated that 25 persons had volunteered to join the Community Policing Group and enquired whether a stipend could be paid to the policing group. He also informed the Conference that there were inadequate police at the station in Santa Cruz and requested the following: an additional officer be placed there; rehabilitation of the police station and the stelling, along with internet access at the police station.

Toshao Troy Peters, Kwebanna, Region 1, recommended a machine to conduct road works remain at Kwebanna or Moruca for maintenance of the roads.

A Participant enquired whether the 500-metre road which was being built included San Jose.

Toshao Gilroy Roberts, Barima Kariabo, Region 1, requested assistance to complete the road in the community linking Barima/Kariabo to Tasawini and stated the road would provide easy access for person traversing it.

Ms. Sharon Phillips, CDC Chairman, Matthews Ridge, Region 1, informed the Conference that many of the internal and other roads in Matthews Ridge had been destroyed by vehicles of the Guyana Manganese Inc. and requested an intervention as earliest as possible.

Toshao John Antonio, Hubu Hill, Region 1, requested that Amerindian persons be given the opportunity to become sailors on the new ferry in Mabaruma. He

requested, also, additional machines to be based in Mabaruma to assist with road maintenance.

The Minister of Public Works relayed that the continuation of the road project at Kobarimo, was being undertaken by the Regional Democratic Council (RDC). He indicated he was advised that the project would advance to phase two in the next cycle.

The Minister stated he was happy with the views expressed about the ferry. He also stated that beginning 1st October there will be online bookings and a schedule to facilitate bookings. The Minister asked the Minister of Housing and Water to work with the community to identify five persons to be trained so that they could work on the ferry. He signalled his intention to seek funding through MARAD to facilitate such training.

On the issue of the Guyana Magnanese Inc. destroying the roads in Matthews Ridge, the Minister alluded to Government's commitment to improving the lives of villagers while it also had to facilitate large scale investments at the same time. He said that he had been informed by the Minister of Natural Resources that there will be a contract very shortly for the International Imports/Exports company to do the maintenance of those roads.

The Minister of Public Works acknowledged the request for a machine to assist with the maintenance of roads in Kwebanna and insisted he would like to have further discussions with the region, since they already had a public works programme. He added that the machine was not the only resource needed in the maintenance of the road.

The Minister noted that the intent of the San Jose road was for the road to be built all the way to the school. He asked for further clarity on the issue raised about a dam in the area.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development disclosed that he had requested from Mr. Jeffery, the Ministry's engineer, who dealt with the hinterland, the map of internal roads in Matthews Ridge so that funding could be sourced. He estimated that within one month, some works would be carried out on internal roads. The Minister said that through the contract with the International Imports/Exports company, the Minister of Natural Resources would deal with the major thoroughfare of Matthews Ridge to Kaituma.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development added that for the Matthews Ridge internal roads as well as roads in Port Kaituma, the RDC had some funds for road maintenance and could collaborate with the Ministry of Public Works. He also alluded to the current weather as the reason why works had not commenced on those roads. He stated that a lot of concrete roads were being done in Port Kaituma.

The Minister added that as soon as the weather changes maintenance works would be carried out on the roads in Mabaruma.

The Minister stated that the first phase of the road to Kobarimo/Barima/Kariabo, was done by the RDC and that the Ministry was looking forward to working with the Ministry of Public Works in upgrading those roads. He further stated that works were carried out earlier in the year on the roads but that the Ministry was experiencing some challenges with the current weather. The Minister stated that it was his belief that the Ministry of Public Works would extend beyond Oronoque with a concrete road.

The Minister of Natural Resources added that the Matthew's Ridge to Port Kaituma main road had an existing maintenance contract which the manganese company had given a commitment to become involved in the maintenance of the road. He assured that GGMC would be following up with the company to ensure it honoured its commitment.

The Minister of Public Works stated that the ridged pavement concrete road, which was started at Moruca, would be taken all the way to Kwebanna.

Toshao Sonia Latchman from Bethany, Region 2, stated that the renovations at the health centre were completed and thanked the Minister of Public Works for the intervention and requested two drums of diesel for the main access road.

The Minister of Public Works announced that a community contract valued at \$1 million would be awarded to assist with the road works.

Toshao Areafa Shabeer of Mashabo, Region 2, stated that the community had an urgent need for road repairs and it was her understanding that a contract had been awarded for the works and enquired about the commencement date for same.

The Minister of Public Works assured the Toshao that the contract for the road works had been advertised and was currently in the mobilisation or evaluation stage.

Toshao Eve Samuels of St. Monica Karawab, Region 2, requested the construction of a revetment at the Karawab compound.

The Minister of Public Works gave an undertaking to have an engineer visit the community within two weeks to address the matter.

Toshao Rudolph Wilson of Akawini, Region 2, stated that he was in possession of a proposal for the building of a canal from Akawini to Pomeroon and requested that the Minister of Public Works examine same. He stated that, should the canal be constructed, it would be very beneficial to the community.

Toshao Wilson also raised the issue concerning the state of the road from Akawini to Kabakaburi, which resulted in the children not attending secondary school regularly. He stated that there was no secondary school in the community and as such, this was creating social issues such as teenage pregnancy.

The Minister of Public Works enquired whether the village had the capacity to fix the road and the Toshao responded in the affirmative. He stated that, within two weeks, a joint visit between the Toshao and an engineer from the Ministry of Public Works would be conducted to determine the community's ability to fix the road. The Minister posited that once that was determined, a community contract would be issued to execute the work.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development informed the Conference that the cost to upgrade the road to loam surface was in excess of \$300 million.

The Minister of Public Works stated that because of the amount, the contract could not be awarded to the community.

He stated that the Minister of Agriculture would examine the proposal concerning the canal.

Toshao Yvonne Pearson of Mainstay/Whyaka, Region 2, acknowledged the enormous cost for the Mainstay/Whyaka road project and enquired whether, in the interim, a rear blade tractor could be provided to the community to assist with the road works.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development informed Toshao Pearson that the rear blade tractor was at the RDC and would be handed over to the community.

Toshao Hilton Williams of Santa Aratak, Region 3, indicated he was making representation for residents of his community as well as those in Lower Kamini Creek and the riverine area. He stated that the public wharf at Timerhi was being used by persons from the areas mentioned to transport farm produce. But for the past two years, a lumber operation commenced which caused the life of the wharf to be short lived. The Toshao sought the following: removal of the lumber operation or expansion of the wharf to accommodate both sets of activities and a public washroom facility at Santa Aratak for passengers who were forced to utilise a privately owned facility.

CDC Chairman Julian Mohabir, Region 4, Laluni, desired to know when the road that was requested would be constructed.

Toshao Timothy Andrews, Region 4, St. Cuthbert's Mission, did not identify any issues but in directing his queries to the Minister of Public Works, wanted to know the date, since none was given, when the road project in his village would have begun. Also, he requested two drums of fuel monthly until the construction of the road to maintain a tractor.

He then directed his attention to the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport and requested of him assistance with the purchase of flood lights for the community cricket ground which was needed, as well as, issued an invitation to the Minister to

have a look at the second ground that was being prepared to accommodate the footballers.

The Minister of Public Works stated that the situation at the Timehri wharf was now being identified for the first time, thus, the issues would have to be examined to decide whether it was public or private land. He further stated that he was under the impression the wharf was private property being utilised by residents and committed to addressing the issues of no sanitary facilities at the wharf.

The Minister further clarified that the road linking Sand Hills to Bartica was being connected by two barges, one at Timehri and the other at Foul Mouth, Rivers View to facilitate travel to Bartica. Thus, an assessment needed to be done by the engineers to determine whether there should be one facility to accommodate the movements of the barge.

With respect to Laluni, the Minister informed that the road was in the process of being awarded. Also, savings from the repairs done to the Moblissa Bridge on the Linden Highway would be utilised to repair one of the collapsed bridges in Laluni while the other will be sent out for tender due to moneys from the savings being insufficient to repair both.

The Minister had offered an apology to St Cuthbert's Mission while stating that their project would also be sent out to tender, and at the same time accepted a recommendation put forward by the community. He then awarded them a \$1 million community contract to maintain the road for the remainder of the year which allowed them to receive fuel to use their tractor to maintain the road until the project was outlined.

Representative of the CDC, Karia Karia Essequibo, raised two issues: firstly, the road was sandy and when it rained would deteriorate - some houses were also affected by the heavy rainfall; and secondly, the playfield has no recreational facilities for the children. The Toshao sought assistance to raise the community ground located next to the school which was low and experienced flooding whenever it rained higher as well as for road repairs.

CDC Chairman, Fenton Ragnauth, Region 4, Swan requested from the Minister of Home affairs, a Police outpost be located in his village and thanked the Minister for the vehicle provided to their policing group. He also requested that the main access road in the village be addressed.

The Toshao then addressed some concerns along with a few requests to the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, those were as follow: the playground and residents of the area experienced flooding after it rained. The Toshao then requested a cast drain be built to prevent further flooding of the playground and an excavator to dig the small ravine located at the back of the village as a form of drainage for the residents who suffered flooding in their kitchen gardens, to let out the excess water.

A Representative at the Conference made a direct plea to the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport to have the Totem Pole located at the Umana Yana be erected. He also indicated the deep need to have history rewritten to reflect and recognise the fact that the Indigenous people were there since time immemorial and that Christopher Columbus did not discover the West Indies or the Americas. He further recommended duty free concessions be given to all the Toshao to assist with their daily duties as it would help them to fully utilise the new roads being built in their respected communities.

The Rep also raised a concern on behalf of a young lady from Ekeriku Mouth, Region 8, pertaining to mistreatment of Indigenous people by Brazilian miners and asked the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development to look into it.

A Toshao from Region 7 observed from the report that focus was on Bartica and its environs and requested that the other areas in the region be included in the workplan for 2023 with respect to roads and bridges.

The Minister of Public Works introduced his technical team for the hinterland and requested the Toshao to list his concerns in the area and meet with the team to have discussions.

Toshao Lewis Devair, Region 6, Orealla, highlighted the following issues: the need for a proper place to moor boats when produce and people came to the coastland; the required length for the stelling that was previously built and erosion taking place on the hills and the consequent damage to the roadways. He then made the following requests: assistance for the lengthening of the stelling along with a ramp to be built near the stelling; Ministry's assistance to seek the assistance of a contractor who was present in the village to transport laterite to maintain the road and the lengthening and heightening of the Taracury bridge.

The Minister of Public Works stated that he had visited the stelling and was aware of the issue when the water was low and informed the Toshao that a decision was made for the stelling to be extended to enable access on a 24-hour basis.

Toshao Ozias James, Apoteri, Region 9, requested an update on the proposal for the road which was submitted in 2014 and the status of the request for a boat and an engine.

Toshao Emran Austin, Kaibarupai, Region 8, thanked the Government for its hard work in the region and made the following requests: an airstrip for the village of Kaibarupai, they were forced to travel to Orinduik to get a flight in cases of emergencies; assistance with educational supplies and for officials to visit his community; an excavator and bulldozer for the entire region to assist with the maintenance of the roads. He opined that the airstrip would also help to promote tourism in his area and thanked the Minister of Public Works for the work which was done in his community.

Toshao Wenceslaus Albert, Achiwib, Region 9, indicated that the section of road being constructed would not solve their problems. He stated that their supplies came from Crowdar from which transportation was difficult due to the condition of the road. He requested the extension of the construction of the road from Crowdar to Achiwib and indicated that if the extension was done, they would be better able to make use of the bus which was provided.

Toshao Terrence John, Waipa, Region 8, request maintenance of the road from Chenapou to Peake and three bridges. He gave the dimensions of the bridges and stated that students and parents would benefit greatly. He thanked the Minister of Public Works for the grant they were given this year.

Toshao Samuel Fredericks, Nappi, Region 9, greeted the Conference and requested that the road linking the East-Central Rupununi communities be completed. He also requested a farm to market road be constructed in order to embrace the vision of the President.

Toshao Brian James, Parikwarwaunau, Region 9, stated that his requests for the South-Central Rupununi were for a bridge to be built at the Rupununi crossing; a tower to be built at South Central Rupununi, so that direct contact could be made with the Ministries and the bridge from Lethem to South Rupununi needed to be built higher so that Toshao from Achiwib could travel to Lethem.

Toshao Candacy Evans, Karisparu, Region 8, requested the upgrading of roads from Paramakatoi to Karisparu; from Karisparu to Chenapou and from Airstrip to the Karisparu Village. She thanked the Minister of Public Works for the works carried out in her community.

Toshao Thomas George, Moco Moco, Region 9, stated that he was happy to hear about the upgrade of the road from Lethem to Moco Moco and enquired how soon those works will commence since the bridges along that route were in a deplorable condition. The Toshao advised on how the works should be carried out on the road.

The Toshao recommended the construction of a road link from Nappi to Moco Moco since that road provided links to other communities and would save a lot of travel time. As well as, he requested a community centre be built which could accommodate the activities of the community.

Mr. Ronald Ignatius, Senior Councillor, Quiko, Region 9, requested information about the completion of the five miles access road with culvert from Quiko.

Toshao Melina Pollard, Riversview, Region 10, stated that her community needed assistance with obtaining crusher run sifting from the quarries in the area. She stated this was to assist with road development in the area.

The Toshao indicated that the main bridges in the area needed to be built to bridge the connecting areas and centralise the community. She also requested a motorcycle

or an ATV to allow access to certain areas when incidents occur and a police outpost at Riversview Central to monitor activities in the area.

Community Toshao Flagon Carter, Rockstone, Region 10, acknowledged the Minister of Public Works, members of the RDC, and other officers for their efforts in supporting the community and listed the following requests:

- ATVs for the community;
- The raising and repair of the bridge in Rockstone;
- Boat landing at Plum tree in the riverine areas; and
- Training conducted by MARAD for 12 residents to be trained as drivers for tours, *et cetera*.

The Toshao asked that the relevant Minister address those issues.

A participant greeted the Conference on behalf of the North Rupununi and requested training for the CPGs.

Mr. Martin Anthony, Quarrie, Region 9, who represented the Senior Councillor, requested a road be built from Bush Mouth to the falls since the village was an eco-tourism site.

Toshao Michael Thomas, Aishalton, Region 9, requested the relocation of the Aishalton Airstrip which he cited as being too close to the primary school and other residences.

The Toshao highlighted the flood situation at the Rupununi crossing which posed challenges to persons using the crossing and requested that the revetment to the bridge be raised.

The Minister of Public Works stated that the Moco Moco road project was already advertised and the contract, once evaluated and awarded, would commence within six to eight weeks.

The Minister stated that Maritime Administration Department (MARAD) had reached an agreement on the matters regarding the plum tree at Wismar and was being deployed to re-engage the community with an aim to proceed with the project. MARAD would visit in one week's time.

In relation to Foulmouth, Riversview community which had requested help with crusher run, he stated that the Ministry would issue a supplies contract in the sum of \$1.5 million to a quarry in the Bartica area to Foulmouth.

The Minister stated that the engineers would need to examine the requests for the bridge across the Rupununi crossing; the raising of the bridge and the road for Rockstone and whether there could be the possibility of an alternative route.

He assured that engineers from the Ministry of Public Works would engage the Toshaos to best determine how all other issues, such as the farm-to-market road and the eco-lodge, could be addressed. The Minister noted that if it was a project which could be undertaken by the community, it would be given to the community since community participation contracts up to \$5 million could be awarded in phases.

The Minister informed the Conference that the staff from his Ministry would be available throughout the remainder of the Conference to address their concerns.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development updated the Toshaos from Region 9 on the following road developments:

- Crowdar to Achiwib upgrade – a contract was awarded two weeks ago to execute the works.
- Construction of bridge along the Crowdar to Achiwib stretch – contract was awarded.
- Internal roads in Crowdar – some \$14 million in contracts were awarded.
- Potarinau to Katoonarib area – contract was awarded during the week of 3 – 9, July, 2022 to undertake work in that area.
- Tiger Pond to Pai Pang – a contract was awarded to construct a bridge.
- Pai Pang to Taushida – a contract was awarded to construct a bridge.

In relation to Karia Karia in Region 3, the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development stated that an assessment of the works to be undertaken would be done by engineers from the Ministry of Public Works. He pointed to the financial implications for such an undertaking but stated that, in the interim, works would be done to make the residents comfortable.

In responding to the Toshao from Chenapau, the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development stated that the projects would be completed with financing from the \$300 million which was announced by the Vice-President to undertake roads and bridges project in the North Pakaraimas.

In relation to Apoteri, the Minister stated that works will be undertaken on the trail during the dry season.

The Minister stated that the Regional Democratic Council would also assist the village of Pakuri/St. Cuthbert's Mission with fuel.

The Minister posited that the issue with Brazilians at mouth of the Ekereku River would be addressed. He stated that the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development would collaborate with the Ministries of Home Affairs and Natural Resources to address the matter.

In relation to the issue of migrants in Region 1, the Minister noted that the migrants had been relocated from Khan's Hill to a farm core. He stated that a settlement to

accommodate approximately 1000 persons was built there and efforts would be made to determine whether there are other migrants in Mabaruma who can relocate to that location.

The Chairman notified the Toshias there was no need to repeat their issues if they had already done so on day 3 of the Conference, as they were already documented and would be addressed.

Toshao Flagon Carter, commended the Ministry of Tourism and the Region 10 Tourism Authority for the work being done. He stated that the Ministry was aware of the issues being experienced and noted that they were collaborating to resolve same.

The Toshao stated that the community was in support of the establishment of a 'Fish Day' and 'Sport Day' on the tourism calendar of activities and requested the following: training in small business development for residents of the region; cellular phone service for the residents of Rockstone; a ball field at Malali and at least 3 firearms for every part of the district he represented. He publicly thanked the Ministers for their astute leadership in the Rockstone community and noted the community would make efforts to implement some of the proposals from the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport.

Toshao Lemmel Thomas, stated that the district games had always been supported by the Government and regional authority and indicated the district games in Upper Mazaruni was scheduled to be held in August, 2022. He thereafter requested the completion of the playground in Kako village which was the proposed venue and stated there was need for electricity, since the poles and other relevant infrastructure were already in place.

He stated they were proud of their under 17 female footballer from the Kamarang team, who represented Guyana in the USA, becoming the first Guyanese to score a goal at that level. The Toshao highlighted that there were talented persons in all the regions and noted what was needed was a way to reach those talents. The Minister of Education was thanked for her plans and programmes with support coming from the community.

The Toshao then requested from the Minister of Home Affairs, special arrangements for scholarship/funding for students attending the University of Guyana who were pursuing studies in International Relations to further enhance the diversity within the ministry. He also thanked the Minister for the new police station which was being constructed and for the proposal made to allow the Rural Constables located in the village to be armed. He also alluded to an allegation that the cost for shotgun ammunition, by the box, in the Mazaruni area was approximately \$30,000 dollars and requested of the Minister, an arrangement be put in place to facilitate cheaper ammunition for the residents.

The Toshao wanted to let the Minister of Governance and Parliamentary Affairs know he was not aware of the redress mechanism contained within... he also stated

that the new Amerindian Act would be on par with international conventions and treaties regarding Indigenous rights owing to the fact it was being looked at by this subject Minister.

Senior Councillor Timothy Williams, Region 1, Wallaba (Satellite village) had one concern which was directed to the Minister of Home Affairs. Approximately two years ago, a fellow Indigenous brother from the village of Manawarin, got entangled in an incident at Parika and has been locked up at the Lusignan prison. The case was tried three or four times with no evidence found against him. Due to the high transportation costs, his parents and relatives unfortunately, cannot visit him. It was requested that the matter be investigated by the respective Minister.

Deputy Toshao Deryck Martin, Region 8, reminded the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport of his proposal for cattle rearing which was an ongoing project that started in 2007 under the PPP/C administration.

The Toshao requested from the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development his own form of transportation, 4x4/ATV in order to do his work, since he had to travel to other villages to perform his duties. In addition, a request was made for the construction of another bridge which was promised to the villagers. He thanked the PPP government for all it has done for his village.

Senior Councillor Teckla Spencer, Region 9, Meriwau, thanked the government for the renovation of the health centre, while plugging requests for the following items; the construction of a waiting area and sanitary block; culverts as well as a multipurpose building with solar system which would be used as a meeting hall and the completion of a market to farm access road which to her knowledge had been stalled. She indicated the residents in her village were enquiring about ICT hubs and wondered how long before they receive the services of the internet? She also specified she had the names of the youths who had applied for the gold scholarship and was waiting to deliver same to the office of the Prime Minister. She also asked for more enhancement programmes within her community. The member thanked the government for all it had done for her community.

Toshao Cornel Edwards, Region 8, Micobie, raised a concern on behalf of the community policing group within his village, for an ATV to patrol the land and an outboard to patrol the waterways. He also stated that a request which was made to the Police stationed at Madhia to assist with fuel for their community policing group vehicle, had not been honoured, made mention of no commendation being offered to his policing group for a job well done and asked for training and firearm for the group as well.

The Toshao confirmed also there was an ongoing road project which was scheduled to be completed in seven days. He stated that the relevant authority needed to examine the road before the balance of money was paid and requested that it be examined before the end of the month. The Toshao thanked the Government for the

project and stated that the residents were committed to working together for the development of the Micobie Village and surrounding communities.

Mr. Deon Adams, Toshao of White Water, and Chairman, Community Policing Group (CPG) expressed gratitude for the supply of the ATVs and 40 outboard engines for the CPG. He requested stipends for the members of the CPG who had been working in collaboration with the Guyana Police Force.

Mr. Nazim reminded the leaders that their concerns had been captured the previous day and informed the Conference that the President would be hosting breakfast at the Conference Centre on Friday 15th July.

He then encouraged all to stand and take the “I CAN PLEDGE” in support of the fight against domestic violence. He informed the Conference that the initiative was spearheaded by the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security in collaboration with Community Advocate Network.

[The Pledge was requested by all]

Mr. Nazim informed the Conference that the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security would be fulfilling the requests for wheelchairs by distributing three wheelchairs to each of the village representatives which had made the request.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development informed the Conference that the President would be distributing very important gifts to the all the Toshaos who attended the function at State House in the evening of the current day.

Mr. Nazim thanked the Toshaos, representatives and village leaders for participating in the day’s activity.

Day 4 was adjourned at 6.28 p.m.

Day 5 – Friday 15th July, 2022**Call to Order**

The fifth day of the Conference was called to order at 9.30 am by the Chairman for the session, who lauded the results of the Conference over the preceding four days.

Presentation by Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, Hon. Mohabir Anil Nandlall

“My colleague Members of Parliament, Ms. Pearson and Mr. Charlie; Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and officials of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs; recently elected Toshaos; community leaders; Amerindian brothers and sisters good morning.

First of all, permit me to congratulate you on a very thorough and comprehensive engagement which you have had during the past few days, and to congratulate you on the many important decisions that you have made and programmes that you have worked out, which I am sure will be the engine in moving your communities forward in development and social advancement.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate the recently elected Toshaos on their assumption to office and I want to extend to you my best wishes and to charge you to take your responsibilities very seriously in ensuring that you advance the welfare of your people and your communities.

Now, over the past few days, you have raised many concerns. While I may not have been here for all of the sessions, I have been following closely this symposium and I have been following closely, also, the concerns which you have raised. Prominent among those concerns are equal treatment, protection of the law, protection against

discrimination and you have asked for a review of the Amerindian Act. Those are fundamental issues that form the foundation of everything else that you are agitating for. For example, if you are agitating for more economic opportunities and more jobs and more facilities in your communities, what you are essentially asking for is for you to have the same facilities that other segments of the population are enjoying in different parts of the country and that underpins your call for equal treatment.

In the same way you are asking that you must not be discriminated against in the allocation of resources, that again, is your seeking protection against protection. You feel, also, that the Amerindian Act, in its present construct, does not allow you to enjoy resources that fall within your communities. You have had constant legal battles with miners and loggers who ply their trade, either within your localities or in close proximity to your localities, and you have had a series of court rulings that have made it unclear about what your rights are under the Amerindian Act, what are the powers and rights that your Certificate of Title confers upon you, *vis-à-vis* existing claims as well as new claims issued in the mining and forestry sector. A review of the Amerindian Act will address those matters. Also, the Amerindian Act was passed in 1996 – some 30 years ago, by sheer passage of time, three decades is enough time to require a review of any law, more so the Amerindian Act. Thirty years of experience also has shown us, by sheer practical experience, the inefficiencies, the inadequacies and the weaknesses that are inherent in that piece of legislation.

Let me assure you, firstly, that the Government is committed to address, in a very comprehensive and pragmatic way, all of those concerns of yours to which I have made reference and even beyond, if I have omitted any. Let me inform you that most of those concerns fall under my responsibility as the Attorney General and the Minister of Legal Affairs. His Excellency has instructed me to ensure that those issues are addressed conclusively and, even more fundamental, that I engage you at every stage of that process.

Last night, you heard him say in his remarks that he had instructed me to visit every Amerindian community and to hold consultations with you, and I plan to do so.

I want you not to leave here with any degree of uncertainty regarding the Government's commitment to address the legal and constitutional issues which you have raised and, secondly, to assure you that we will work with you, through the agency of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and through your own local government structures, to ensure that these matters are addressed.

Significantly, we are also pursuing, at the level of the Government, constitutional reform, which is a different type of legal reform from reform of the Amerindian Act. The Constitution is the supreme law of our land, and in the Constitution Amerindian affairs and Amerindian rights form a central feature. It is in the Constitution that you are afforded protection against discrimination and that you are guaranteed equal treatment at every level of national life. It is the Constitution also that allows for if there is going to be discrimination as it relates to Amerindians, the discrimination

must be in favour of Amerindians. Let me pause to repeat that. The Constitution prohibits discrimination in any form or fashion. However, the Constitution also permits positive discrimination in favour of Amerindians. You are the only grouping of people in the country who the Constitution states can be the beneficiary of discrimination, but in a positive way. And our Government intends to deliver that constitutional guarantee to you, the Amerindian people.

It is the Constitution also that establishes the Commission for Indigenous People and all the fundamental rights and freedoms that people across Guyana and the world are guaranteed in any constitution. When we begin the process of constitutional reform, we plan to do it in a public consultative way and by a commission that would be established by law and that would be broad-based in its composition. That commission will engage you in your communities across the hinterland to solicit your views, your input and your recommendations. Those inputs, views and recommendations would be chronicled, taken down in writing and, at the appropriate time, examined for forward incorporation into the amended Constitution that we would be pursuing.

You have a very crucial participatory role to play in constitutional reform. Similarly, as it relates to the review of the Amerindian Act, you would have heard that the Government, through the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, has already budgeted a huge chunk of money to finance this initiative.

This initiative, again, would be driven through a committee established within or rather by the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Legal Affairs. They will then begin an engagement with you to first train persons to participate in the planned agenda of the review. Once we train a cadre of persons, that cadre of persons will be incorporated into the initiative. That body will then go village to village and engage you in discussions so that we can illicit and solicit recommendations and inputs from you. Those are the inputs and recommendations that will inform the amendments which eventually will be made to the Amerindian Act. At every stage of the process, you are going to be engaged in a constructive, practical and meaningful way so that your inputs will be extracted, filtered, and when I say filtered not changed, but fineness, so that they could be put into the new Bill that will seek to amend the Amerindian Act.

Importantly also, there is a new Bill that will be laid in the National Assembly next week, it is call the Restorative Justice Bill. Restorative justice is a new concept which we are introducing in our legal system. What it does is that it seeks, through trained personnel, to go into the families of persons who commit crimes and to investigate within those families and communities by extension what are the causative factors. What are the contributing factors that led to the commission of the crime? When that problem is identified, then we will begin to address that problem. The intention is to uproot the problem from the ground, from the root. You see, the justice system has shown that a man commits a crime, he is sentenced to prison, he comes out back and

he commits the same crime. You sentence him again, he comes out, he commits the same or similar crime, and the cycle goes on.

The reason being that no one is going to the root to find out why this guy or girl is committing this crime. Is it that he or she is going home to an environment that forces him or her to go back to that crime? It is believed, in many cases, that is the root cause. And once we find that root cause and we pull it out, then, hopefully, we break that cycle of in and out of prison.

Now, by its very nature, the community must be involved in the concept of restorative justice. I know that we have already trained a number of Toshias and Amerindian leaders in restorative justice. Please raise your hand for me if you have received such training. One – so we have a lot more training to do. What we did was, we trained the last Executive of the National Toshao Council. We have a new Executive and so we have to train all of you. Even if you have been trained, we will train you again. You will be going through a special training, a training for trainers. This is so that when you go back into your communities, you can train persons within your communities in restorative justice. That is how the system works.

You will get help from the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, the Probation Department; you will get help from the Ministry of Legal Affairs. That is also an important initiative that we will implement very shortly after the Bill is passed into the Amerindian communities and, hopefully, train you very quickly so that you become part, in an informal way, in the Restorative Justice System of our country. Not in the near future. Once we establish the structure, then you may even receive remuneration for this service until you get another source of income.

I have to go to court for 10 o'clock and I have 10 minutes to reach to the High Court. Unfortunately, I have to wrap up here now. Within the next half of an hour, the learned Chief Magistrate of Guyana will be here to administer the oath for those of you who have been elected Toshias and will have to function as Commissioners of Oath and Justices of the Peace in your respective communities.

I hope that I have shed some light on the important work that the Ministry of Legal Affairs will have to spearhead on behalf of the Government, the role that you have to play in the process and how we will engage you as we go forward.

Once again, I want to congratulate you on what have been, from all indications, a spectacular engagement over the past few days. I extend to you, on behalf of the Ministry of Legal Affairs and, of course, on behalf of the Government of Guyana our best wishes on a successful term as the new National Toshao Council and community leaders. I thank you very much for your time and attention.”

The Chairman thanked the Minister of Legal Affairs. He stated that the Conference could not have ended without the contributions from the Minister of Legal Affairs on some of the legal concerns and the work the Minister had planned for communities.

He invited the staff from the Minister of Amerindian Affairs to introduce the next speaker.

Mr. Nazim greeted the Conference. He thereafter introduced the Minister of Amerindian Affairs, pointing out all the hard work and efforts the Minister of Amerindian Affairs has made to the Amerindian community.

Closing Remarks by the Minister of Amerindian Affairs, Hon. Pauline Sukhai



“Thank you Management Development Officer (MDO). I do not know that I am that strong. I am only human, not a superwoman. What I do, I do on behalf of our Government. It is a job and I have committed myself to doing it years ago and here I am facing the challenges, Mr. Nazim. I think all the leaders make those same levels of commitment in their own capacity to ensure that the people they represent are adequately and fairly represented.

It gives me great pleasure today, at the end of our fifth day at the National Toshaos Council Meeting – in the Act it says ‘meeting’ but we have grown accustomed to saying ‘Conference’ – to have brought you thus far, and you are with us at the end already of these five days. It was so quick. I am sure you did not miss home. I am sure you are now thinking, for the first time, that you have been away for five or seven days already in some instances. But, yes, the National Toshaos Council has been elected and I want to formally, in front of all of you, congratulate the Executive. From what I have seen already in terms of the initiative they have taken to represent you and to provide leadership to you, I think that you have with you the crème of the crop, young ones, experienced ones and those who are willing to work and learn. That commitment immediately shone through in the first after they were elected.

Taking this Conference through with them, we have seen that they have been disciplined and, of course, that is what is needed at every event. A discipline from the coordinators, the organisers, and, of course, the supporting individuals. We have seen that they have been disciplined, they have not missed the session. They have move forward, they work overtime, they meet in between, they collaborate, *et cetera*. I want to make sure that I offer my congratulations to them. I see a very good one and a half years of service from you the Toshaos.

The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs on the other hand, of course, we have not many employees who are in charge of this session, but I also want to say that our staff has worked overdrive, not overtime. Our staff has worked overdrive to ensure that from the time the COVID-19 curfew was withdrawn and from the time His Excellency made the pronouncement that Guyana has been opened, they began to put together this masterpiece of a Meeting so that they will be able to fetch, in collaboration with the secretariat of the NTC, this event and they have done so. So, on both parts of the NTC Secretariat and the staff from my Ministry, I also want to let you know that the overdrive they have been in, over the last couple of weeks, is commendable.

Again, we have quite a lot of work on our hands, and we would also have to respond to many of the naysayers. I want to say clearly, while I did not get to say it in my opening remarks, that we were accused of many different situations, but I want to clear with the Toshaos this issue. The National Toshaos Council's notice which was published one month prior to the Conference is a legal binding situation that we have to publish. And that was conveyed to the National Toshaos Council Secretariat, they were with us on the publication by PS, who had signed the letter to them, indicating that this event was on the agenda and the publication of the notice, as required by law, was done. Our staff, along with the NTC secretariat, met also with the Chairman of the outgoing National Toshaos Council and at that meeting, I am advised by my PS and others who were there, including Mr. Roberts, who is in charge of leading the work as it relates to governance - because the NTC conference is an event that falls under his portfolio – they had a meeting and at that meeting, a commitment was made by the outgoing National Toshaos Council's Chair that he was going to be in attendance, prepare the report and that arrangements on our side would be put in place for him to be in attendance.

At that meeting also, I am advised that the agenda was discussed. When the agenda was put together and put in an arrangement, it was sent to the NTC Secretariat, unless my PS was misleading me. We waited and got no communication in terms of whether there was an addition, some suggestions or we needed to reformat the agenda. Of course, time does not allow us to wait forever and, therefore, we came to this Conference with the agenda as was discussed in that early meeting. We want to clear the air, there was no intention of hijacking your meeting or your Conference but if you understand the partnership, the Government hosts and funds it on behalf of the NTC until such time as the NTC may be able to stand on its own two feet. We do not know at what time in the future they will do so, but Government has given from

day one, the commitment that it will ensure that leaders are allowed the opportunity to engage with it along with Cabinet, who are the decision makers that can affect the changes in development that will impact your village and people.

There is no other major bloc of decision makers that can make that happen. It is the government of the day that has the decision as to how far you want to go, and it will meet you there. The event that was held in terms of the breakout sessions has proven this in reality. You described, recorded and presented what you would like to see Government support in your village to engineer further development. It came from you, and it is the Government who received that in the form of our leaders, who then examined it, looked at analysis, as it was presented, and made the decision. It is not an external organisation that could really *en bloc* and provide such significant support in a cohesive and coordinated manner to allow for the fast tracking of your initiatives that were presented to our Government, His Excellency and the Leaders of this country. We also wanted to clear the air on that too.

I was very happy that the Executive was able to push through a motion whereby a resolution was made that you are the leading Council as it relates to the representation of the leaders and their people, and we, the Government, recognised this from day one. We set the foundation for the NTC to be established so that they will have an executive of leaders who are legitimately put in place to represent you at all times. In that engagement, one of the major key stakeholders you engage with is our Government and any other stakeholder as you see fit to engage with.

The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs continues in its work with you as partners and I want to say that our Welfare Department has had instances of a lot of patients coming to the city through the regional health system that refers the patients to the tertiary level institution where they receive higher level medical attention for terminal and other related illnesses. When the patients would have completed their hospitalisation, those patients are discharged. The Government do not allow the patients to be discharged into thin air or into the streets of the city, they are released via a system whereby the hospital alerts us on the patients' discharge and we get our team together which consist of nurses and nurses aid who then take the patients from that institution. We have had complaints of people taking too long to return to their homes and this is mostly from people who are onlookers and observers. Many times, patients do take a long time to go home because they would have scheduled between the time they leave for home and a return visit for check-up with the doctors before they are fully released. Those patients are usually kept within the period when they have to return for a check-up to alleviate the issues of no-show owing to missed appointments, thus preventing them from having an incomplete medical file.

That is one category of patients who will be around for one or two weeks or sometimes a month in our residence where we accommodate, provide dietary support and the institutions provide support as well. There are some patients who sometimes do not understand our Ministry has a process by which we also make

arrangements with airlines and the Ministry of Finance in terms of vouchers – payments and the whole gamut. We would like to tell you also that there are patients who come with supporting relatives, and we take care of them too. We have been trying to improve that institution over the period and I am happy to report that we have Indigenous meals incorporated into that institution. We are currently looking to recruit individuals who can prepare delicious Indigenous meals, and this has always been a very difficult undertaking within the city. We have a combination of dietary support now in terms of the creole Guyanese dishes and Indigenous food. We have improved on that.

We have been able to improve on the physical facility by changing the roof, repairing the ceiling and the plumbing issue that was there for approximately five years. When I returned as Minister, I understood there was a sewage matter that I made my engineer deal with immediately by visiting GWI. I was tough on my engineer in those days, but we have managed to fix the issue and we have improved quite a lot. Benabs were erected to assist patients with outdoor facilities. The vendors who have been there perennially, were placed in a better construct now. Things are improving within the last couple of years.

I would like to say a few words on governance. I want to suggest to the leaders, you are not new anymore. In May 2020, you were elected and in terms of governance, you were new to leading your village and you may not have totally read the Amerindian Act. But what we have found is that there are a few leaders who continue to breach the Amerindian Act. They continue to be authoritative to the villagers who elected them without giving them a fair chance of enjoying a leadership that will provide support to them other than cutting them under. I want to provide advice to you the leaders. When you are elected, you are selected to ensure you administer the affairs in conjunction with your council. It is the Council that administer the affairs of the village and not the Toshao. The Toshao is the chair of that Council. What we have found over this couple of months is that some Toshaos have become very authoritative, they do not listen. They have destroyed some peoples' homes and they have changed the construct of their villages. I want to say this because I know my friend up there may say I am targeting him, but we cannot do that. There is a section in the Amerindian Act that allows for an appeal by the aggrieved party and the intervention by the Minister whose decision is final. I need to make sure that you understand when the Minister steps in these cases, the decision is final. There is no way that any leader will say that the Minister does not have a say. The law allows me to have a say to protect villagers when there is unfair treatment meted out, having been examined, investigated and the findings presented to the Minister.

There is another matter I wanted to talk about, and it concerns mismanagement of village finance and State funds. We have had cases, not a lot but one case is too many for the Ministry. The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, through the budget, has to defend that budget. We have to justify why the money is needed which is coming from the demands and the requests of the village leaders, Council and the people. We

go to the Parliament and defend that budgetary allocation. When the money is approved, we disburse it to the village, some through cheques and some through the bank account. We want to implore the leaders that you practice using a proper accounting system as you administer the finances for your village. The Toshao again is not the treasurer, however, the Ministry uses the leadership of the Council to conduct the transaction from uplifting to the placement into the account. Once the fund is in the account, whether by hand or by bank, it is the Council that makes the decision with the treasurer who keeps all the records. There must be a process. We have had to examine and investigate some of the leaders over the last couple of months and some have been suspended as we speak, based on mismanagement of State funds. The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs has to defend this, we have to face the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) like any other ministry to defend our spending. So, I am asking you to be careful and put in place a process – we spoke on this last year. We have trained some Tshaos, with more training to come to ensure that we support the growth of good governance and accountability among the leaders. It is important, because you cannot utilise your village funds for your own purposes or use it based on your direction, it has to be approved by the village - all the expenses and projection of what income is coming out, and once the approval is given, then the money is disbursed based on what you have to spend it on.

This is because, at the end of the day, we want development, and we want people-driven development. We do not want anyone dictating what they think is right for the village, they have to have a consultative process at the bottom. Every eye is on Government in terms of accountability and governance, but every structured institution has the same role to play of having proper governance systems in place. So, we are going to work with you on governance, as I said in my opening remarks.

In terms of projects, we fund Presidential Grants. This year and last year we provided \$300 million to villages. I want to ask that every village council prepare its Presidential Grant based on the process outlined, early in the year. We still have a few leaders who, through their councils and their people, have not yet presented Presidential Grant proposals to our Ministry. We have a financial year within which we work, and we would like to have all 2022 grants completed within 2022. That is how it works. If you do not, we would have what is happening now.

Some leaders are now attempting 2021 projects in 2022. When we have auditors or checks and balances and they select a village and decide to audit the village – the Auditor General's Office would not tell us which village – and find that 2021 projects have not been started and find out from us that we have disbursed and no money is there, then you know what happens. It is an indictment on our staff because our Management Development Officers (MDOs) and Community Development Officers (CDO), who are the liaison to the Ministry, and the MDOs who monitor the implementation of the projects because it is funded by the State funds, are in trouble. We cannot be partners and be putting each other in trouble. So, I implore that you do

your Presidential Grant proposals early. All Toshias were told that by 30th March is the final date of receipt for Presidential Grant proposals.

Our staff takes those proposal, reviews them for feasibility, if there is any adjustment, we then talk to the Toshao, or when they come down, we make that adjustment so that proposal has to be reviewed by the Project Department. If it comes in early, we are able to review it early, then if it is approved and all the supporting documents from the villages are validated, we can move to prepare the cheques. When that is not done, it delays our work. The implementation of how we proceed with our work at the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs is checked by our Cabinet. We have to report on our Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) like any other Ministry. If we have a low implementation rate, then it tells a story. It tells that we cannot handle it. We cannot say the Toshao did not submit. We have staff on the ground who liaise with you, we have staff at the Project Department who have a responsibility to make sure all comes in. Then, what I usually tell my staff is, if you do not get it in by 30th March, you are going to have an evaluation that may be poor. So Toshias help them, also, not to get a poor evaluation. This is because when you get a poor evaluation, the likelihood of you getting your gratuity is shaky. We want everyone to be happy. We want you to be happy, we want your people to be happy that projects are implemented in a timely manner, and my project officers to be happy that their performance is not put to question. We have a few of those Toshias who we are working with. I can count them on my fingers but that is not my job to point out who they are. They know themselves. I will ask that you pull yourselves together. The others who are listening, do not fall in the same boat or ocean. Do what is right. The Act says that you must provide an annual plan of action and that plan must be approved by the village in terms of what income you expect for the coming year, what expenditure you have. It also states that you must supply the Minister, and the Ministry basically, with a copy of the financial report. Most of you are still in breach of the Amerindian Act. We want to change it. We want to revise it. Do we want to revise it to have no accountability and no transparency? I do not think so. So, I am saying to you, follow the Act.

I want to speak a little about the rules in your community. The Amerindian Act sets out the areas and locations and what types of rules you are allowed to craft. Read your Act, discuss it with your Council. For those who have draft rules, this year and the following years we are hoping that we will bring to conclusion the rules or the bylaws for the villages to have those gazetted. When you do your draft, that draft goes through a review process and is finally cleared by the Attorney General's Office before we move to gazette them.

The other thing that I want to talk about is your projects. Please work on your projects. In terms of the expenses on your projects we found that many of the projects have a top-heavy labour cost. I want to say that the project is your project, you are the beneficiary, you have to contribute towards it. If you are building an office and you have \$3 million to build it, we find that almost \$1.8 million goes in

labour cost. That leaves almost nothing for you to complete your building. If that happens then you will have an incomplete building staring you in the face. When I travel around, there are a few of those types of buildings. It is your project, your facility, you use it, it is for your best interest as you administer your village, and you have to solicit community support so that people buy-in to these facilities and your asset, because it becomes the village asset. Do not have a top-heavy labour cost to your project. It does not do well for your success in completing your projects.

As we move on to how the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs will operate, we now have a bigger mandate from the action plan that has been crafted here. It is a lot of work to do together. I know my time has expired as we were waiting on the aircraft association. I would like to make a few announcements.

My staff will deal with housekeeping and logistical arrangements for your travel back home. Make sure they put everything in place so that you will have a free flow getting back home.

For the CDC Chairs, I have a very special announcement to make. His Excellency and the Vice President agreed last night that you will receive the same stipend of \$25,000 as Senior Councillors. The CDC Chairs are asked to hand in their tablets as a decision was made by our leaders to provide you with laptops.

I think Region 7 has a special arrangement with their caucus head. This evening I have a special arrangement and as caucus for Region 8 Toshias, you will be duly informed. I want to say on behalf of His Excellency, the Vice President, and the Hon. Prime Minister, that we truly believe that this partnership which was forged here today, with all of you, both returning Toshias, those who are holding for a second time their seat in leadership, and the new Toshias, the experience you have had here at your first NTC is truly a strong partnership.

With respect to your resolution on the Low Carbon Development Strategy, it is providing our Government with a stronger position to ensure that our standing forest, or the forest services, support our country in a big way. By so doing you are benefiting equally or there is equitable benefit coming your way. It is that support that will propel the Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030 to implementation, as we proceed in fine-tuning and refining it through consultation with you and all stakeholders across this country. I am very proud that you have seen the need to support it so that we can move ahead in a firm position to realise our strategy as the biggest national development strategy which will propel our transformative plans to make Guyana a prosperous nation.

Thank you very much. I wish you a safe journey back home. You will be seeing me around. We have Cabinet this morning so I will be in and out, I suppose, if I am allowed.

I want to say that we have had a very successful five days and we look forward to the work that has now begun. The plan of action has to be rolled out. On Thursday, I am

heading to the National Assembly to defend that \$3 billion allocated for Amerindian development. Please do us proud because \$3 billion is not everything, but it can do so much for you and your people. It will also signal to us and everyone else that, in Guyana, our Government is working in partnership with the First People.

You will recall that the Belize delegation has been here to learn all that we do so that they can, not copy, but use the good experiences and successes from our model with their people for the very first time.

I want to thank you. Safe journey. You have another assignment here and you will collect your dues and then there will be the housekeeping part to take you safely back home. Success to you for everything you do, from now until your term ends. I am sure many of you, if you do well, will be back with us after this first term. Thank you.”

Presentations by Aircraft Operators



The Minister within the Ministry of Public Works, Mr. Deodat Indar, in addressing the issue of the high cost of flights into interior locations, stated that representatives of the Aircraft Owners Association of Guyana (AOAG) were present to address the Conference.

President of the Association, Captain Gerald Gouveia Jr., introduced the team that was present, including Captain Andre Farina from Trans Guyana Airways; Mr. Chris Chung, General Manager of JAGS Aviation Inc.; Mr. Kit Nascimento, representative of the Aircraft Owners Association; Captain Learie Barclay of Roraima Airways; Ms. Annette Arjoon-Martins, Air Services Limited (Guyana); and Captain Emil Jahan, Air Services Limited (Guyana).

Presentation by Captain Gerald Gouveia Jr., President of Aircraft Owners Association



Captain Gerald Gouveia Jr. stated that their presence at the Conference signalled their commitment to working with the Government and the Amerindian communities to ensure that the airlines offered safe and effective travel. He acknowledged that the cost of aviation was high and pointed out that it was a global issue. He pointed, also, to a number of first world countries and international airlines which had been affected as a result. Captain Gouveia Jr. stated that the airlines in Guyana would accumulate all flight associated costs such as maintenance, fuel and civil aviation compliance for safety, in order to determine a flight cost. He disclosed that the airline association was interested in developing a partnership with the Government and Indigenous communities to examine ways to reduce the cost.

Captain Gouveia Jr. pointed to the challenges which the airlines experienced in flying Guyana's peculiar interior locations, which included the length of the runways, denseness of the forestation, and the changing weather patterns.

Questions and Answers

Toshao Lemmel Thomas, Kamarang/Warwatta, Upper Mazaruni, Region 7 informed the Conference that the Upper Mazaruni District had prepared a statement to present to the NTC. He stated that he was proud of the services which had been provided through private partnership with the aviation association. The Toshao stated that the aviation association had been vital in bridging the communication divide between the hinterland communities and the coastal communities. He commended their services, commitment and safety record in their years of service to the interior.

The Toshao stated that it had been observed that issues which affected the airline industry redounded to the hinterland communities. He outlined the following observations:

- Frequent increase in the cost of freight to hinterland communities had become burdensome and survival was at stake. He stated that their dependence on farming was being severely impacted by the changing weather patterns and the of destruction of crops by pests and wild animals.
- Brokers or ‘middlemen’ were exploiting the situation.
- Cost of Chartered flights – the Toshao gave the example of the cost of a chartered flight to Parima being \$762,434 for 2600 pounds, which was inadequate to supply rice and flour for the community with a population with approximately 800 persons.
- The possibility of an additional airlines to provide competition.
- Absence of a Government aviation service

Following Toshao Lemmel Thomas outlining the issues affecting the hinterland communities he suggested that the following be considered as solutions:

- A fixed or special rate for transporting food, patients and out-patients until the issue of the high cost of living was under control.
- The Government subsidise the transportation cost so as to control the price of goods at the community end.
- The sky van being made available to transport goods free of cost or at half the current cost.
- The development of road transport so there would not be dependency on the aviation sector only.
- Private aircraft owners developing a task force to allow for better communication and understanding with stakeholders.

The Toshao opined that the issues had to be faced by the Indigenous Community, the Government and the Private Sector so as to achieve the ‘One Guyana’ movement.

Ms. Doreen Frazer, CDC Chairman, St, Dominic’s, Region 1, expressed concern about the high cost for the weight of cargo and travel on the aircraft.

Captain Gouveia Jr. acknowledged that the prices in the aviation industry were increasing. He pointed to a 70% increase in aviation fuel and increases in other areas which had been driving increases in other areas. Captain Gouveia Jr. stated that the issue was being examined and that the industry was trying its best to manage the situation. He explained that with the increases there was only so much that could be done and if the prices continue to increase, there would be need for a better partnership with the communities and the Government. He posited that some of the suggestions by Toshao Lemmel Thomas may even help.

Captain Gouveia Jr. highlighted the various aviation costs in the Caribbean and did a comparison between the Caribbean and Guyana. He highlighted the challenges the aviation industry was facing in Guyana which in turn limited the types of aircraft that could be used. He noted that the only aircraft that could be used in Guyana was the caravan because the larger aircraft were very expensive.

Captain Gouveia Jr. stated that if the runways were lengthened and 5000 feet accomplished in Kamarang, then bigger aircraft could be sourced which would bring the costs down. He noted that the Government had started to increase the length of the runways and to address other issues which would assist the aviation industry in obtaining larger aircraft.

Captain Gouveia Jr. agreed with some of the areas suggested by Toshao Lemmel Thomas. He pointed to other jurisdictions where governments were partnering with communities to address the issue of cost in the aviation industry. He expressed a willingness as the President of the Aircraft Owners' Association to engage the communities and Government to work towards a solution for Guyana.

Captain Gouveia Jr. explained that if the sky van assisted with the delivery of food, it would not be able to do military work which was crucial to national security. He suggested that focus could be placed on the suggestions for assistance by Toshao Lemmel Thomas.

Captain Gouveia Jr. noted that the subject Minister was working on road transportation and expressed the view that the aviation industry would not be as needed in the future.

The profit margins for Guyana were smaller than the Caribbean in the aviation industry. Captain Gouveia Jr. indicted that the assistance programme suggested by Toshao Lemmel Thomas would work for the communities and the aviation industry to better the aviation costs in Guyana.

Captain Gouveia Jr., as the President of the Aircraft Owners' Association, made the commitment that he was more than willing to participate in the taskforce recommended by Toshao Thomas to work with the NTC and the Government to have ongoing engagements with the community.

Remarks by Air Services Limited representative Ms. Annette Arjoon-Martins,

Ms. Arjoon-Martins commended Toshao Lemmel Thomas for the suggestions put forward. She stated that aviation was a very expensive sector. Ms. Arjoon-Martins clarified with Toshao Lemmel Thomas that there was no monopoly between Air Services Guyana and Trans Guyana Limited.

Ms. Arjoon-Martins requested that airstrip conditions be looked at because her agency provided services to a lot of small airstrips that the other airlines did not. She referred to the cost involved in operating and requested that airstrips be attended to in order to alleviate those costs. She opined that attention should be given to where airstrips were placed and to how many communities would benefit. Ms. Arjoon-Martin then spoke to the combination of flights to villages and short shuttling, thereafter, to areas which have accessible roads. Ms. Arjoon-Martins called on Captain Jahan to speak.

Remarks by Air Services Limited (Guyana) representative Captain Emil Jahan,

Captain Jahan greeted the Conference and stated that he had a list of solutions since they were all facing similar issues.

The Captain referred to the cost for the flight to Paruima and detailed the safety issues involved in the service. He revealed that discussions had taken place with the Government with respect to a solution to reduce the operating cost. He informed the Conference that flights were now being chartered by businessmen who consolidated the flights. He stated, however, that consideration had been given to restart the service to the area with the assistance of the Toshao.

Captain Jahan stated that flights to Region 8 had continued and the cost had been stable. In view of increases, they had added a fuel surcharge to the prices for the services in some areas and had arrived at their limit. The Captain stated, however, that they had given a commitment to the Government of Guyana to review of the factors to service the region at an affordable cost.

The Captain called attention to a comment made by Ms. Fraser of Region 1. He stated that scheduled services were not offered and, thus, the matter involved the flight agent. He then indicated that consideration would be given to restarting services to the area so that everyone could benefit from affordable flights.

Toshao Michael Williams, Annai, North Rupununi, Region 9, stated that for a few years there has not been scheduled flights to the North Rupununi area though there was a population of 8,000 persons. He then expressed gratitude for the road network but expressed the hope that regular, scheduled flights would return to his community. The Toshao stated that the airstrip had been upgraded and was available for flights. He requested that companies consider negotiations with Government in order to assist with the return of flights.

Remarks by Aircraft Owners Association representative Mr. Kit Nascimento



Mr. Nascimento alluded to the fact that he was the oldest to address the Conference and pointed to his many years of service with respect to hinterland development. He stated that he was now consulting in the area of the aircraft industry.

Mr. Nascimento stated that he asked to speak to endorse some of the remarks and, perhaps, expand on the remarks of Captain Gouveia Jr. He thanked the President for facilitating the present discussions with the aviation industry and stated that it was a privilege to be a part of it.

Mr. Nascimento referred to the presentation by Toshao Thomas and indicated that, rather than a subsidy, they could consult with the President for a partnership to address the costs for seats to interior locations. He stated that such an approach was taken worldwide. Mr. Nascimento then detailed the *modus operandi* of the approach for the partnership with Government.

Mr. Nascimento then called attention to the fact that airstrips in the interior needed to be expanded to facilitate the available aircrafts. He gave the names of areas which could benefit should the airstrips be expanded and revealed that the expansion would enable safer flights, lower cost and shorter flight times. Mr. Nascimento stated that expansion was a longer-term project but was absolutely important and critical.

Mr. Nascimento then spoke to the condition of the airstrips and its effects on the aircraft's maintenance cost. He urged that the airstrips be repaired and maintained. He referred to the suggestion of Toshao Thomas for a partnership with Government, specific to areas and eligible populations, to reduce the cost of seats for flights as a quick, doable solution. He expressed the view that other airline operators would be willing to import larger aircrafts to better serve the interior locations should the airstrips be upgraded.

Questions and Answers

Senior Councillor Earl Rodrigues, Santa Rosa Village, spoke on the issue of unmet medivac requests which resulted in unthinkable situations and sought reassurance to have this resolved.

Region 10, Rockstone – Flagon Carter – Toshao humbly suggested that the NTC, along with the Government and other stakeholders, continue further discourse on the way forward with respect to the aviation sector.

Captain Gouveia Jr. expressed gratitude for the issues raised pertaining to medivac services. He alluded to the turbulent weather conditions experienced sometimes and the poorly lit runways in some communities which were not safe. He also told of reactions he received detailing his medivac experiences to his international counterparts who believed he was describing a movie. Captain Gouveia Jr. opined that, generally, the military executed emergency medivac services and that system ought to be in place to ensure the military was equipped to respond to such services whether night or day.

Captain Gouveia Jr. highlighted that the private sector traditionally performed that service, but with no dedicated system in place to facilitate pilots and doctors on call or medical equipment to respond immediately, time was taken up locating those persons and equipment which caused unnecessary delays. Also, with commercial flights being facilitated during the day, many of the pilots were unable to respond to emergencies at night because it was mandated by law to rest pilots for a certain amount of time. Captain Gouveia Jr. emphasised the need to lobby for a dedicated military medivac system operating 24 hrs.

Captain Gouveia Jr. explained that the Association, along with Government, were in the process of working out solutions to implement proper lighting on runways which would increase the safety factor thereby allowing for frequent flights at nights and increased production of timely weather reports. He ended by stating that the Association was willing to work with any community in conjunction with the taskforce as was mentioned prior, and also with Government.

Minister within the Ministry of Public Works, Mr. Indar, summarised what was said by participants of the segment. He noted that from the floor there were calls for:

- special rates to be considered for food items and passenger transport in special circumstances.
- the use of the sky van or the addition of operators to the sector.
- goods sent into the regions via the sky van being free of cost or at half the cost.
- construction roads if the aforementioned suggestions were not feasible, thus reducing the excessive need for air transport.
- create a taskforce between the operators and the communities to improve the lines of communications.

- lengthening of runways and regular maintenance to minimise the impact of wear and tear on the aircrafts.
- the resumption of scheduled flights for Annai and other areas as a result of their runways having the capacity to handle the 'highlanders'.

The Minister also highlighted the suggestions proffered by Mr. Nascimento and the President of the Aircraft Association which were as follows:

- Consideration of population density for particular runways to accommodate larger aircrafts.
- Lighting and weather reporting for medivac services at the particular airstrips where the medivac was being requested.

The Minister declared that the main discussions were captured and would be placed in the report of the NTC. He stated that His Excellency will be engaged after this meeting with the team from the aviation sector to work out solutions as quickly as possible.

The Chairman, on behalf of the National Toshaos Council, thanked the aviation association for engaging in dialogue with them on crafting a solution on the way forward. He then moved to the next item on the agenda which was the swearing in of Toshaos. Justice Cummings-Edwards was thereafter invited to oversee the activity.



The Chief Magistrate administered the Oaths and swore in the following:

Region	Number of Toshao Sworn in
<i>Region 1 Barima-Waini</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Region 2 Pomeroon-Supenaam</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Region 3 Essequibo Islands-West Demerara</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Region 4 – Demerara Mahaica</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Region 5 Mahaica-Berbice</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Region 6 East Berbice-Corentyne</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Region 7 Cuyuni-Mazaruni</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Region 8 Pataro-Siparuni</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Region 9 Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Region 10 Upper Demerara-Upper Berbice</i>	<i>8</i>

See Appendix for the full list.

Following the swearing in of the Justices of the Peace and the administering of Oaths there was the distribution of certificates of instruments of appointment.

The newly appointed Justices of the Peace received a round of applause.

Assistant Commissioner of Police, performing the functions of Deputy Commissioner, Operations, Mr. Budhram swore in all Tshaos as Rural Constables as was stipulated by law, except the Tshaos from Region 9 who were sworn in before.

See Appendix for detailed list.

Presentation by Mr. Budhram, Assistant Commissioner of Police performing the functions of Deputy Commissioner, Operations



Mr. Budhram informed the NTC Conference that the Amerindian Act provided for all Toshaos to be sworn in as Rural Constables (RCs) and to be empowered with the authority to take certain actions which included making arrest. He reminded that the Amerindian Act gave them certain power as heads of their villages and the police were not to direct them as to what to do in their villages. Mr. Budhram also reminded them that any visitor to their villages should consult with them first. He then cautioned the Toshaos with respect to their conduct and revealed that their titles were revocable and listed reasons for which such action could be taken.

The Assistant Commissioner congratulated the newly appointed RCs on behalf of the Commissioner of Police. He informed that training programmes would commence in order for the Toshaos to be enlightened with respect to their functions as RCs.

Mr. Budhram informed the RCs that they needed to uplift their precepts before they left.

The Chairman then invited the Director, National Intelligence and Security Agency, Col. Omar Khan, to make a brief presentation.

Presentation by Director, National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA), Col. Omar Khan



Col Omar Khan congratulated the newly appointed Toshao as Rural Constables. He encouraged Toshao to examine the Acts and regulations which empowered them to perform the security duties to which they had sworn, and which governed their portfolios. The Director outlined for the NTC Conference the nexus between development and the security forces, and the role the villages leaders would play in such a nexus.

Col Khan briefed the NTC Conference on the brief history of the Agency and its evolution. He stated that since the Agency's establishment in 2020, its mission statement was to provide security personnel to protect Guyana from foreign and domestic threats, and the national intelligence information flow.

The Director alluded to the importance of decision making in the personal lives and professional lives of Toshao which included the service which they provided to their communities. He noted that the plan of the agency was to engage and collaborate with villages to promote the development of hinterland and Amerindian villages in a safe environment. He reminded the leaders that the Guyana Defence Force (GDF), the Guyana Police Force (GPF) and Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit (CANU) were committed to working with the communities to create a safe environment for development to unfold without or with minimum challenges.

Questions and Answers

Mr. Lemmel Thomas enquired whether there was a direct communication channel between NISA and the villages. He enquired, further, whether systems were in place to administer orientation and training since the agency was new to most Toshaos. The Toshao sought to be better informed about what was meant by ‘domestic threats’ and asked whether there was a scope for information sharing among regions, villages and communities. He enquired from the Director the possibility of village leaders visiting the NISA.

Col Khan informed the Conference that contact cards containing e-mail address, contact numbers and other relevant details would be provided to all village leaders. He informed the Conference that one of the decisions coming out of the Regional Security Conference, which was held in 2021, was to visit hinterland communities to provide training about the awareness of the environment. That process had commenced at the regional level and NISA will explore how such a training could be filtered down to the village level.

The Director called the Conference’s attention to a programme in the form of an application to be installed on phones which the NSIA had undertaken. He stated that the National Security Information Network (NSIN) is a programme which was in the testing phase and the NSIN application would be rolled out in all regions. The application was versatile, flexible and provided for networking which would allow for the documentation and reporting of observations.

Vote of Thanks



Mr. Shane Cornelius, in his capacity as Secretary of the NTC, delivered the vote of thanks. He noted that the Conference had achieved what it had set out to achieve – “Good Governance and Fast-Tracking ‘Amerindian Development’”

The Secretary of the NTC announced that copies of the LCDS in the various Amerindian languages were available and could be uplifted by Toshaos for their respective communities.

The Conference adjourned at 1.00 pm.

APPENDICES

MINISTRY OF AMERINDIAN AFFAIRS
Minister's Secretariat
Absolute Grants and Certificates of Title Delivered at NTC Conference
Monday July 11, 2022

Type	No.	Reg.	Title No.	Type of Document	Villages	Area	Toshao Receiving Title
Titling	1	2	G - 7902	Grant	Capoey (extension)	13 sq. miles (approx.)	Ralph Hendricks
Titling	2	2	G - 7903	Grant	Mashabo (extension)	14.5 sq. miles (approx.)	Areafa Shabeer
Demarcation	3	2	2022/432, 2022/433	Certificate of Title	St. Monica (extension)	12908.08 Acres	Eve Samuels
Demarcation	4	2	2022/424, 2022/425	Certificate of Title	Mainstay - Whyaka (extension)	9437.5 Acres	Yvonne Pearson
Demarcation	5	7	2022/426, 2022/427, 2022/428, 2022/429, 2022/430, 2022/431	Certificate of Title	Tassarene	390,578.19 acres	Alvin Joseph
Demarcation	6	7	2022/416, 2022/417, 2022/418, 2022/419, 2022/420, 2022/421	Certificate of Title	Kangaruma	214,927.74 Acres	Alfred Joseph
Demarcation	7	9	2022/422, 2022/423	Certificate of Title	Yupukari (extension)	145.7081 sq. miles	Shamir Khan

National Toshiha Council (NTC) Conference 2022**Day 2, Morning Session****2022-07-12****Matrix of Issues Discussed**

Sector:	Prime Minister's Office		
Name	Issues/Comment	Toshao Name	Action Point
Prime Minister – The Honourable Mark Phillips	Energy: Manifesto – Hydro power, solar and wind. Commitment: 1. Completion of Amaila falls 2. Invest in solar and wind systems in off grid areas. 3. Expand the hinterland Electrification Programme. 4. Take urgent action to develop the national grid. 5. ICT – is key to villages and the economy for the future and supporting national development. 6. Will promote e-governance. 7. Liberalized the telecommunication sector in Guyana. 8. Remove VAT on Data. 9. Recognize that ICT is an enabler.		
GEA CEO Dr. Mahendra Sharma	Solar initiatives in Guyana The procurement of 30,000 SHS for Homes in the hinterland. This will happen in the first quarter in 2023.		
Sector:	Prime Minister's Office		
Name	Issues/Comment	Toshao Name	Action Point
	Asked about the recycling of solar batteries in villages.	Jeremy Boyal Warapoka, Reg. 1	OPM will look into this.
Ronald Harasayack	ICT Access and eServices for Hinterland Poor and Remote communities. Hubs in Villages Fast tracking Amerindian Development: The OPM conceptualized a programme before 2015 to deal with ICT in Amerindian communities. We need to reinvigorate the project. Do date there are 200 villages to benefit initially from this project. Region 7 there are 25 communities. 10 would have been issued to date. 90 villages out of 200 have benefitted to		

	date. Training: a series of training will begin in august for personnel to run the ICT Hubs. They will be certified at the end of the training. Training in operation and management of these hubs.		
National Data Management Authority – Christopher Dean			
Name	Issues/Comment	Toshao Name	Action Point
	There is a need to be connected. 130 locations were established by the NDMA. What are we providing for our village?		
Industry and Innovation Unit within OPM			
	Orealla Solar Farm was mentioned and Annai central was not mentioned. Rupunau – Have no internet access presently. Need officials from OPM to check on the ICT Hub. didn't hear anything about her community. Within the system of issuing ICT hubs is Matthews Ridge is within that. Upper Pakura needs electricity. They also have an area marked off for a solar farm.	Micheal Williams Annai, Region 9. Sharon Phillips Maththews Ridge, Region 1.	OPM will look into this soon. Ronald: we need to see what we can do to deal with the ICT Hub within your village. Attempts were made to reach the village Your ICT hub will have a stand-alone system. Prime Minister: Phillips the NDMA will be looking at how best they can improve ICT in Matthews Ridge. Power expansion: procurement already have started. They have problems with shipping but it will be done in 2023.

Name	Issues/Comment	Toshao Name	Action Point
	Electricity to public buildings is needed. Is Kwebanna included? If when trainees are finished training if they will be getting a stipend or salary.	Troy Peters – Kwebanna, Reg 1.	Kwebanna will get a mini grid. No stipend but they will be certified. But will spoke to MOAA to utilized someone who is already stipend. Minister Sukhai: will utilized the CSOs within the village.

	Fal Mouth: they do not have any ICT hub and internet connectivity. Can the OPM furnished the ICT hub if the village construct same? Awaiting visit to village by Mr. Harsayack to check the village.	Melena Pollard Rivers View, Region 10. Achiwib, Region 9	Prime Minister: immediately direct the NDMA to visit Fal mouth and install same. Ronald Harsayack: will visit the village
Name	Issues/Comment	Toshao Name	Action Point
	The CSOs will not be capable of being an ICT Technician in most villages. Internet providers- what are the plans the OPM have to boost the internet speed in the villages?	Morris Torres Santa Rosa, Region 1	Prime Minister: Right now, we are exploring the options and we want to give you the best service. We are exploring the best options. Minister Sukhai: The CSOs are not selected by the Ministry but by the VCs. We expect that the VC will fairly select the Candidates. Minister Ramson: I reject the notion or statement that the CSOs are not capable. The Government are very confident in them. Minister Sukhai: the CSOs are geared towards vulnerable youths to give them a second chance in life. There must be a balance.
Name	Issues/Comment	Toshao Name	Action Point
	Indeed, the CSOs are capable. Rockstone has overspent on its budget on the ICT Hub. Schools: Is there any plans to include schools in the internet connectivity?	Flagan Carter Rockstone, Region 10. Paul Chekema:	Prime Minister: Internet is costly and we are exploring the best options to get internet connectivity to all villages Prime Minister: We will

	The internet is shut down within the village	Cashew Island	continue to monitor the climatic conditions. We have the NDMA on standby to go into your village to look at your village issue. We will get into your area as soon as possible.
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Minister of Education: Priya Manickchand

Name	Issues/Comment	Toshao Name	Action Point
	For the govt, education is the strategic pathway for us to change this country. Bringing equity and equality to the sector. Tis the main pillar of the country's education pillar. To get better quality education we have to make significant investment in teacher training. Textbooks for your children will change the abilities of your children. 623-0249 Thanks for equity education in Guyana. One Recommendation: Moruca District Council: The schools must be built with single classroom or one separate classroom for the TV.	Jeremy Boyal Warapoka, Region 1.	The planning department has a projection on size of buildings. 51% of the schools in Regions 1,7,8 and 9 have the learning channels within the schools. We are checking each home of the children and where there are exceptions, we will work with that.
Name	Issues/Comment	Toshao Name	Action Point
	There is a shortage of teachers in the school. There are 2 CSOs in the school. 60 students to one teacher. There is a lot of children not attending school. We need a welfare officer in the area. We need dorm parents. We need cleaners for the school. Hotmeal programme for secondary schools in the area.	Trevor Matheson Baramita, Region 1. Stephanie Miguel Canal Bank, Region 1.	We will talk with you soon to deal with that. Minister Priya: The Dorm mother issue we will deal with that urgently. Bigger boat: we will look at it.

	Extension of Arakaka Primary School. Canal Bank: issue with transportation for school children for secondary school. Need a bigger boat to help in this area. Over 300 students travelling to PK Primary, it is costly. If 4 miles can have a Primary school. Need outdoor equipment for the Nursery School.	Royston Bumbury Four miles, Region 1:	Marti DeSouza: We will review the list and have it
Name	Issues/Comment	Toshao Name	Action Point
	Asking for a new school to be built in Agatash. Internet service for the Primary school. Need transportation for the village, particularly a minibus. Need to know about the bilingual education programme. Need it within the primary school. Need renovation for HM Quarters. Need renovation to the Primary School in Sawariwaru. Under the present govt life has improved tremendously in the village. Need a technical institute within Santa Rosa	Gwendolyn Jeffery Agatash Community, Region 7. One Mile, Port Kaituma Sawariwau Region 9: Stravos Stanley: Santa Rosa	Minister Priya: Agatash is on the list for ICT. Minister Priya: Noted Minister Priya: We are now piloting it in the Primary schools. All 15 villages in Santa Rosha have hubs but not completed but will be completed shortly

Name	Issues/Comment	Toshao Name	Action Point
	Need a research centre in Santa Rosa. Urgently need a schools welfare officer in the Moruca Sub Region. Transportation for school children is a big issue too. We have two buses but it is inadequate to transport the large number of children from the outlying villages. There is no school building, the school is using dormitory building for classrooms, There is a lab building but no equipment.	Delph Isaacs Waramadong, Region 7	Minister Priya: We have our eyes set on a new school for the upper Mazaruni but attendance and consistency

	The female dorms are not in a good condition. Needed internet systems to study – teachers and students. Waramadong itself: Extension of Waramadong Nursey. Youth skilsl training centre need equipment in music etc.		is low. There is a school building but it needs repairs. Dorms will also be under repairs soon.
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Name	Issues/Comment	Toshao Name	Action Point
	Need a secondary school within the area because they are very far away from Mabaruma. Primary school students reaching school wet and dirty and need a minibus to assist these children. Need and extension of the Waramuri Secondary Department. And also, to have the school buildings fenced. A nursery school is needed in Mariaba area. Need security guards for the school buildings. Thanked the Government The school was built for 60 children but now has 160 children. Need furniture. Need a teacher's quarters. Need a nursery school in the village. The Solar system in the school to be repaired.	Barima Kariabo, Region 1. Vivian Edwards: Waramuri, Region 1. Oren Williams Batavia, Region 7	Minister Priya: Minister Local Govt and I will figure it out with you. Whatever we will do we will figure it out with you in the area.
Minister of Health – Minister Frank Anthony			
Name	Issues/Comment	Toshao Name	Action Point
	We are in a better place because we are in a better place to test for the virus. For persons 18 years and older, we did 160 doses of vaccines yesterday.		

	We are one of few countries to source the vaccines at very high costs. About 69,000 booster doses are done to date. Covid-19 is not over. It's still around. Omnipron have 5 different strains. Presently there are 36 persons in the hospitals. We have invested more than 1.8 billion dollars within the health sector within Amerindian villages.		
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Name	Issues/Comment	Toshao Name	Action Point
Health Continues			
	Total population is 1,000. From this September, we have a new primary school. Requesting a Health Post for the Community. Requesting for Annai Health Centre to be a District Hospital. Need 2 ATVs for the Annai Health Centre. There is a matrix for the 16 villages of the North Rupununi. Over January to June, 2022 there were over 200 persons who were referred to GPHC. Happy for presence for medical doctors in Kamarang. There are two personnel within the hospital who haven't received his salary since January 2020.	Swan, Region 4 Mike Williams, Annai, Region 9. Ronald Thomas, Kamarang	Minister Anthony: we will consider your request but for now we will do some periodic visits to the village. Minister Anthony: We need to think about district hospital now. Minister Anthony: we will check on the people who comes out to GPHC. Salary: We will look into this, give the official their names. We need your help with getting vaccination out for the people. For the people to take same.
Name	Issues/Comment	Toshao Name	Action Point
	Transportation is needed for Health personnel to visit riverain communities. Requests: Boat and engines for the Health workers and also to transport patients out to Mabaruma.	Three Brothers, Region 1.	Minister Anthony: We will look into this to see what is possible.

	Thanked the govt for the return of the Doctor to the village. Request an extension to the Health Centre. Request the Extension of waiting area at the Health Post. Need extension of Medex Quarters. Requesting for Internet system at the Health Post. Need an ambulance to take patients to Orealla.	Lloyd Perreira, Wakapou Region 2. Siparuta SC, Region 6:	Minister Anthony: we will look at it.
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Name	Issues/Comment	Toshao Name	Action Point
	Need 2 persons to be trained as CHW for the village Maratakai Sub- Region 1: Repairs is being done to most health posts in the sub district. There is difficulty in Transportation of patients. There is shortage of Drugs in the sub-district. Need Malaria personnel within the sub-district. Need more CHWs to be trained in Arakaka Oronoque: Who is responsible for burying deaths	Four Miles, Region 1	Minister Anthony: on the next batch, we can get the two persons from your village Minister Anthony: the govt provided an ambulance to the sub district. But this was broken up in the district. We will check on the shortage of drugs. Training is done in Mabaruma.

Name	Issues/Comment	Toshao Name	Action Point
	Need transportation in the village to transport patients. Need a Health Post within the village. Whenever the medical teams visit the	Allan Williams, Tobago, Region 1.	Minister Sukhai: this year we are providing a Mini-bus for the village from the Investment fund.

	village, they should stay overnight. Need a better fuel system in place for the river ambulance. Need a boat house to accommodate the River ambulance. Request an allowance accommodation and meals whenever they come out to Corriverton.	Louis Devir, Orealla, Region 6	Minister Anthony: Once the VC provide the accommodation, they will stay overnight. If the village will provide the wooden materials, we will talk about the cost. Minister Dharamlall: If you have the names of all the young people who are willing to be trained as teachers, CHWs and so on, get the names to the Ministers or the REOs.
Name	Issues/Comment	Toshao Name	Action Point
	Need rehabilitation programs for Alcohol addicts. There were three deaths within the village. Requests: A minibus to help with transportation of patients to Lethem hospital. Need extension of health post to become a health centre. Need the Doctor apartment to be furnished. Need a person to be trained as a Dentist and Microscopist. Need transportation such as boat and engine for the health within the village	Flagan Carter-Rockstone, Region 10. Katooka Village, Region 9. Samuel Miguel Manawarin, Region 1	Minister Anthony: Thank you for the comment. But we are working on Mental Health. We are working on building two rehabilitation centres Minister Sukhai: In the month of September, 2022 the village will be presented with a pick-up. Minister Anthony: The team from Regional Health Services will look into this. Dharamlall: Upgrade of road to Manawarin is also being done.

NATIONAL TOSHAOS CONFERENCE 2022**DAY 2, Afternoon Session****TUESDAY JULY 12th, 2022.**

Name	Issue/Comment	Action Point
Minister of Natural Resources – Minister Vickram Bharrat		
	- You are here to represent your villages. - Sustainable and responsible mining. - We have to work together. - We have to do it together. - There are some people who are pro-environmentalists. - We need to understand the economics. - Development must take place. - Every single Guyanese deserve a better life. - To resolve mining issues, it cannot be done with GGMC alone. It has to be done in collaboration with you. - Mine Officers are not police officers. Minister Bharrat number: 592-643-4045 - We must have an agreement that everyone is comfortable with. - That's a zero tolerance in Marudi Mining. They must respect Amerindians in Region 9. There must be no drugs, alcohol and prostitution in Marudi. - There must be no use of Mercury in Marudi. - Prospecting license was issued to the large company. - Chinese Landing	

Name	Issue/Comment	Action Point
	- They are a number of persons who owe GFC. - Look at ways in which you can go into processing.	
Esau Boyal, Santa Cruz, Region 1.	The forest ranger at Kwebanna do not have transportation. The officers must get a transportation.	Minister Bharrat: Transportation is an issue over the entire country. We will definitely get transportation for Kwebanna Forestry officers.
Bradford Allicock, Fairview, Region 9.	Have a problem with Forest Officers. The Forest Officers said that they do not have control over village lands.	Minister Bharrat: We have sub-surface rights but it has to be done under the regulation of GGMC and GFC.
Peter Persaud:	The residents of bamboo landing, region 1 are	Minister Bharrat: These are the information that we need. Toshao of Kariako mentioned some of the same issues are happening in his village. As

	migrating because of the reckless behaviour of miners.	early as next week a team from MNRE will be in the area.
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Name	Issue/Comment	Action Point
Melena Pollard, Rivers View, Region 10.	Thanked the Government.	
Emanuel Henry, Eclipse Falls, Region 1.	- Waiting on land demarcation for the village to be titled. - There are 20 to 30 illegal drudges on the village lands. Who have to look into these issues?	A team will be sent into the village.
Jillian Williams, Campbelltown, Region 8.	Needs GGMC to come in and do prospecting in the village. Need GFC to come and do a forest inventory. Need a Wood Mizer from MNRE.	Minister Bharrat: We are working with this village.
Sonia Latchman Bethany, Region 2.	GFC and GLSC map of the village is different. Need GL&SC to go into the village to verify boundary lines.	Minister Bharrat: You will get 1 GPS before you leave on Friday.
TAlvin Joseph, Tassarene, Region 7	Need 2 GPSs for the village. - Pollution of the waters of Tassarene Creek. - Revoke the mining permits of the miners around Tassarene creek. - What benefits can come between a miner and the village?	Minister Bharrat: Any agreement should be between the Village Council and the Miners. The Ministry will not come between that. We will send in a team next week into the area.

Name	Issue/Comment	Action Point
		Minister Sukhai: Spoke of the agreement between the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and the Miner. Asks Toshao who like to make back door agreements to desist from it.
Flagan Carter Rockstone, Region 10.	License for the bauxite for Muritaro. Community concession for Rockstone. More support initiative for NTC Body.	Minister Bharrat: the MNRE is paying rent for the NTC Secretariat and the new building is more than 50% complete.

Micobie, Region 8	Responsible mining. Need training programs for miners. All miners and not just the GMs but other workers as well. Miners apply to mine through the village council.	Minister Bharrat: In mining villages, GGMC is looking to train villagers and miners.
Michael Thomas Aishalton, Region 9	Have already selected two persons to go on the training. Temporary Mines Officers. One from Aishalton and one from Kraudarau.	Training to start in two weeks. 3 persons are from Lethem as well.

Name	Issue/Comment	Action Point
Sand creek, Region 9.	We do small mining in Sand Creeks We need two persons to be trained as Mines officers as well as two other persons to be trained in Forestry.	Minister Bharrat: Speak to GGMC and GFC soon after. We can employ a regional coordinator for Region 9 with Mining and Logging. We have started a Gold Smith Training course that will end sometime in August, 2022. We need young people from the hinterland to be trained in this area.
Waramuri, Region 1.	We should be concerned about the Chinese Landing issue.	Minister Bharrat: The Gov't is concerned about this issue too
St. Monica. Region 2	Boundary issue between St. Monica and Kabakaburi. How long are we going to wait?	

Name	Issue/Comment	Action Point
Orin Fernandes Chinese Landing, Region 1.	Gave a brief history of Chinese Landing. The village was never apart of any of these court ruling. They seek legal advice. There are more than 500 miners. A number of non-residents and Brazilians.	Minister Bharrat: I will look at it and see if it can happen.
Agatash, Region 7.	Need a community tractor.	
Aiden Jacobus Aranaputa, Region 9	Royal Logistics went into the village with a Quarry Proposal and needed a No Objection letter. Minister are you aware if same? Applied for Forestry Concession.	

Oil and gas sector		
Name	Issue/Comment	Action Point
Minister Bharrat	Oil and Gas Sector Real discovery was made in Region 9. In 1999, we signed the exploration license with Exxon Mobil. We have moved beyond one FPSO to two FPSO. We have already signed two other licenses. We have nine off shore blocks. The production now is now happening in the Stabroek block. The PSA is only for the stabroek block. Only when you start production, then you sign a PSA. We are starting to utilization and monitorization of our gas. The gas energy project...is running pipes to the shore and then use it to generate electricity. Guyana is net Zero. There are 40 different services and the targets.	

Name	Issue/Comment	Action Point
Jeremy Boyal Warapoka, Region 1.	From the oil and Gas could there a percentage going into the ADF to deal with patients who have to go overseas for treatment?	Minister Bharrat: we want the thing that Guyanese going overseas for treatment be a thing of the past.
Shane Cornelius, Karrau	Also, for small projects within villages example Tourism. If we can have access to flyers to educate our villagers about the oil and gas sector. All leaders need to start thing about our Village Plans. We need human resources – Indigenous peoples. We need building, lights, water systems in the interior.	Minister Bharrat: We need to disseminate information. Guyana Technical Training to be established in Berbice before the end of the year. Minister Bharrat: We have to ensure that our children make use of educational opportunities available.

Name	Issue/Comment	Action Point
Michael Williams Annai, Region 9.	We need our people's capacity to be build there in the North Rupununi. Annai VC has approved a piece of land for our CPCE teachers. Need a CPCE branch in Annai.	Minister Hamilton: We have signed an agreement with Bina Hill Institute. Minister Ramson: Development is a very complex thing.
Three Brothers, Region 1	Why is it Guyana producing gas and the price is still so high? If the oil and gas sector could fund some money to tourism in the village.	Minister Bharrat: We have to take the crude to another country to a refinery.
Region 7 Toshao	----- The NTC needs to think about the NTC national Plan What safety measures are there if there should be an oil spill?	All of us need to think bigger and education is always the key. In terms of the oil spill. He have it in plan and systems are in place to deal with same.

Off-grid Solar PV Mini-grids for Public Buildings in Hinterland Villages

Region	Village	Number of Public Buildings
1	Baramita	6
1	Canal Bank	6
1	Haimacabra	4
1	Kwebanna	14
1	Karaburi	4
1	Sebai	6
2	Wakapoa	11
2	St. Monica	10
2	Capoey	10
2	Tapakuma	7
7	Waramadong	25
7	Jawalla	14
7	Paruima	15
8	Kurukabaru	9
9	Karasabai	21
9	Aishalton	21
9	Kraudarnau	12
9	Annai	28
10	Riversview	8
Total		231

Areas in which ICT Hubs had been installed

- Caria Caria
- Kumaka
- Huradiah
- Kwebanna
- Rincon
- Baramita
- Tapakuma
- Bethany
- Karawab
- Lower Bonasiak
- Santa Aratak
- Saxacalli
- Paruima
- Laluni
- Siparuta
- Karrau
- Kartabo
- Batavia
- Maicobe
- Princeville
- Kwatamang
- Sarama
- Annai
- Meriwau
- Shulinab
- Toka
- Riversview

National Tshaos Council Conference 2022

Concerns Raised and Requests Made – Day 3

Region #	Name of Community / Village	Name of Tshao/Representative	Issues Raised	Requests Made	Government Commitment
Region 1	Santa Rosa	Stavros Stanley - Tshao	Job opportunities	Additional investments were made in agriculture Investments be made in aquaculture Request for training to be undertaken with the members of the Local Boards of Guardians	The Minister of Agriculture agreed that 1,000 farmers will be trained by the end of 2023. The Minister assured the Tshao that, following the training, the Ministry of Agriculture will work the village to develop the crops in Santa Rosa. Seven agro-processing plants will be built across the country by the end of 2023. The Minister of Human Services and Social Security stated that members of Local Boards of Guardians were trained in June and were also trained in 2021.
			Water Farmers	Request for water service to extend to Three Miles and Kamwatta. Assistance to plant acres of various crops	Minister Croal stated that a team would visit on Saturday to assess the issues of the village
Region 1	Morawanna village	Egbert Henry - Tshao	Lack of employment and housing for residents of the village. Lack of electricity – solar power, or lighting plant;	Requested the preparation of farm lands which were swamped.	The Minister of Housing and water noted that Morawanna was scheduled to be included in the first phase of the hinterland housing programme.
232	Page Final	Report-National Tshao	Council Conference 2022		

			Lack of potable water. ... result of lack of drainage		The construction of a new well was part of the future year programme.
Region 1	White Water	Deon Adams - Toshao	Overcrowding in the primary school. Challenges with transporting school children. Need for more CIIP workers.		
Region 1	Hosororo	Mr. Shrikumar - Renato CDC Chairman	Remittance of NIS contributions .	Enquired whether a collaborative effort could be made to have NIS contributions remitted.	Minister of Finance asked that the relevant information be forwarded to his Ministry's for it to be addressed.
Region 1	Three Brothers Village/Bumbury/Red Hill/Barima/Koriabo/Tasserene	Desmond James - Toshao		Requested assistance with setting up of housing schemes. Requested that contracts be awarded to village council of Mabaruma subdistrict. Payments for CSOs to be done on a monthly basis. And not have to wait months to receive a monthly stipend. Redhill is still waiting on the excavator that was promised. Grateful if Government will lobby Digicel to install a tower.	Minister of Housing and Water: Redhill housing scheme request: not every village could have benefitted- areas identified for Mabaruma subdistrict are: Smith Creek, Morawana cluster; Black Water Savanaha. This is just phase 1. Minister of Agriculture: Make available an excavator for Red Hill shortly. The HESAD project will be extended. Minister of Human Services: Single parent grant - this has not been done. What was approved was two

				Grateful if HESAD project can be extended to other areas not yet involved. Not yet in receipt of the single mothers' grant. Still awaiting the extension for the Red Hill village.	25,000 one off cash grants to persons living with disabilities and public assistance recipients.
Region 1	Kwebanna	Mr. Troy Peters - Toshao	Water facilities. The need for gears and fuel. Unfinished casava factory. Financial assistance. The need for a Probation Officer.	Enquired whether Kwebanna was on the list to receive water facilities in 2022. The provision gears and fuel from the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. Ministry of Agriculture to The intervention of the Ministry of Agriculture in the completion of casava factory. Financial assistance for persons in the area. Installation of a Probation Officer.	The Minister of Housing and Water stated that Kwebanna was part of Moruca's programme for the digging of wells and expansion of water sources. The Minister of Agriculture noted that there was misappropriation in relation to the casava factory. He indicated that he would be working with the Minister of Amerindian Affairs and the Toshao to complete the factory. The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development informed the conference that for school and medical purposes, the respective regions would provide fuel for the buses and boats.

Region 2	Capoey	Ralph Hendricks – Toshao	Concern about water system for residents on the eastern side of his community. Enquired whether there was a cut off point for public assistance Challenges being with experienced with the Community Enhancement Workers The deplorable condition of the roads in Capoey		The Minister of Housing and Water agreed to the construction of a new well in Capoey in 2023. The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development stated that evaluation of the road was currently being undertaken. President had given an undertaking that the road would be upgraded
Region 2	Mashabo	Ms. Areafa Shabeer - Toshao	Water issues. Housing. Accommodations to hold meetings and house officials on visits.	The installation of a larger pump. Black tanks. Housing. Fog machine, shade house, drugs and tools. Multipurpose building. Provision of a bus.	The Minister of Housing and Water stated that in relation to Mashabo, the Minister stated that allocation for a larger pump would be placed in the 2023 programme. The Minister of Public Works stated that in relation road issues in Mainstay, Moshabo and Agatash, the overall intent of Government was to have all access roads fixed to a standard that was durable and beneficial to communities. The Minister of Agriculture stated that although he was unable to make an immediate commitment, he would work along

					with community of Moshabo to ensure that they received the fog machine, shade house and tools requested. The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development stated that the multipurpose building at Moshabo will be addressed.
Region 2	St. Denny's	Mr. Aubrey Fredericks – Toshao.	Water purification system. Shade house. Deplorable roadways. Upgrade to roadways. Electricity.	A water purification system. Shade house. Road link from Mainstay to Tapakuma. Electricity.	The Minister of Housing and Water noted that the water purification system project for St. Denny's would be addressed under a future programme. The Minister of Public Works stated that in relation road issues in Mainstay, Moshabo and Agatash, the overall intent of Government was to have all access roads fixed to a standard that was durable and beneficial to communities. The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development stated that he was informed by the Minister of Public Works that 1000 metres of road in the area was slated to be fixed and the region would undertake the maintenance. The Minister noted that the road on the Tapakuma side up to the Mainstay High bridge was estimated to cost \$1.040 billion.

					The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development stated that the Guyana Energy Agency (GEA) had procured a solar grid system for the community to commence installing off the grid power. It is expected to power the government facilities with the excess power being used to power households.
Region 3	Saxacalli Mission	Helen Williams – CDC Chairman	Issues concerning NIS being remitted by the security company for the guards; Issues with pension books which had been addressed;	Guard huts for guards Repairs to the two bridges within the community; Repairs to the community centre; Request a dental chair for the riverine team	
			Farming Poultry NAREI CDC Guard huts	Request for a farming group be formed Request for more black giants Notification of visits from NAREI Request for elections of CDC Request for guard huts	The Minister of Agriculture instructed NAREI to visit to assist with the farming group and tools would be provided. NAREI would inform communities before visiting The Minister of Local Government spoke to Chairman of the CDC about elections He said that budget would be looked at for the guard huts
Region 4	Pakeri St. Cuthbert's Mission	Timothy Andrews – Toshao		House lots and housing facilities being provided for Indigenous people	The Minister of Housing and Water encouraged persons to make an

				who had migrated to the coastland to access better education and better jobs Requested that his village benefit from the housing programme Request for a deepwater well Update on the completion of the road	application at any regional office or at the Ministry head office. Promised that, at the Ministerial level, requests would be examined and intervention will be made. The Minister of Public Works stated that the project had been redesigned and would commence shortly.
Region 4	Swan	Fenton Ragnauth – CDC Chairman	Water well. Delivery of water. Roads Poultry programme	Training for well operator for Swan. New well for Banakari. Gas for tractor to deliver water to residents. Mud to patch holes as an interim measure. That all three CDS be included in the poultry programme	The Minister of Public Works committed to engineers visiting in two weeks to assess the works to be undertaken. The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development said that the VP had committed to visit the area to visit all the CDS that were established. The Minister of Agriculture committed to the extension of the poultry programme to the three CDC areas.
Region 6	Orealla Siparuta	Lewis Devair – Toshao		Cost to operate the water system in the community	The Minister of Housing and Water indicated that the construction of a well in 2024. Government would discuss the possibility of assisting with cost of fuel.

			New housing scheme Benab	Technical assistance Repairs to benab	Minister of Housing and Water will provide assistance. The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development will assist with benab
Region 6	Siparuta Village	Shirl Valenzuela – Senior Councillor	1. Upgrade of well dug twenty years ago.	Request barrels of fuel for generator and ATV Electricity extension due to population growth Requested an excavator.	Minister of Agriculture: Clarified not every village received an excavator. However, places like Siparuta and Orealla can benefit from Region 6 which has about 15 excavators.
Region 7	Agatash	Gwendolyn Jeffrey – CDC Chairman	Raised concerns about dissatisfaction with the construction of the ball field road	Requested 30 solar lights to be placed around the ball fields Requested that an expert be sent to assess the state of the road. Requested that the community be included in the rearing of the black giant bird.	The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development gave a commitment to speak to the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport to procure lights for the community. The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development stated that the regional engineer would be tasked with examining the road to the ball field in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works and the contractor would be made to undertake corrective action. The Minister of Agriculture assured that the black giant poultry programme would be extended to all hinterland communities.

Region 7	Karrau, Lower Mazaruni	Shane Cornelius – Toshao	Poor internet making it difficult for persons who were granted GOAL scholarships to pursue studies	Requested that the Ministry of Public Service partnered with the Office of the Prime Minister in relation to the internet service. Requested construction of safe houses for victims of domestic violence and child abuse Recommended that the services of Psychologists be employed in the school system Requested to partner with Ministry of Housing and Water to provide housing for vulnerable persons in the village	Responses to be provided on day 4 of the conference.
Region 7	Pariuma, Upper Mazaruni	Lennox Percy – Toshao	The state of the solar farm project Low percentage of farmers who had received grant for farming Non-renewal of firearm licences	Requested that village leaders be involved in the decision-making process for the community. Requested support for community policing group Requested that each Ministry assign a designated personnel to assist the community.	Responses to be provided on day 4 of the conference.
Region	Rupunau	Michael Wilson Jr. – Toshao	Water catchment Road Health post Water transportation	Update on the water catchment. Access road from Rupunau to Sand Creek. Rehabilitate health post Water supply for Werimore	The Minister of Agriculture was ready to begin the water catchment The Minister of Housing and Water stated a new well for Rupunau.

				Request for Four by four pickup	
				Request for tractor	
Region 9	Sand Creek	Eugene Andrews - Toshao	Management of the water system by the CSOs. Overcrowdin g in schools. Upgrade of the medical facility in Sand Creek.	Training of a villager to manage the water system. Extension of the primary school. Extension and upgrade of medical facility to a cottage hospital.	The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development stated that a new well had been construct a month ago at the Sand Creek Secondary School. He stated maintenance work had been carried out at the secondary school, but budgetary allocation would have to be sought for any extension next year.

National Toshias Council Conference 2022
Concerns Raised and Requests Made – Day 4

Region #	Name of Community / Village	Name of Toshao/Representative	Issues Raised	Requests Made	Government's Response
Region 1	Santa Cruz	Esau Boyal - Toshao	Stipends for CPG. Inadequate officers at the police station. Boundaries	Payment of stipend to CPG members. An addition officer for the police station. Repairs to the police stations and stelling. Internet access. Verification of extension area which was granted. Requests for extensions of lands to be attended to	
Region 1	Kwebanna	Troy Peters - Toshao	No machine to carry out road maintenance.	A machine to remain in the village to do road maintenance.	The Minister of Public Works said he would like to have further discussions with the region since the region already had a public works programme. He added that the machine was not the only resource needed in the maintenance of the road but that there were other resources that would be needed.
	San Jose	Participant	Whether the 500-metre road which was being built included San Jose.		The Minister of Public Works disclosed that the intent of the San Jose road was for the road to be built all the way to the school.

Region 1	Barima Kariabo	Gilroy Roberts - Toshao	Insufficient funds to complete road.	Assistance in completing road linking Barima Kariabo and Tasawini.	The Minister of Public Works stated that the project for the continuation of the road was with the RDC and will advance to phase two in the next cycle. The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development said that his Ministry was looking forward to working with the Ministry of Public Works to upgrade those roads.
Region 1	Matthews Ridge	Sharon Phillips – CDC Chairman	Roads being destroyed by Guyana Manganese Inc.	An intervention by Government in fixing the roads.	The Minister of Public Works said that he had been informed by the Minister of Natural Resources that there will be a contract very shortly for the International Import/Export Company to do the maintenance of those roads. The Minister disclosed that he had requested from Mr. Jeffery, the Ministry's engineer who dealt with the hinterland, the map of internal roads in Matthews Ridge so that funding could be source. He estimated that within one month some works could be carried out on internal roads. The Minister said that through the

					contract with the International Imports/Exports company the Minister of Natural Resources would deal with the major thoroughfare of Matthews Ridge to Kaituma. The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development added that for the Matthews Ridge internal roads as well as roads in Port Kaituma the RDC had some funds for road maintenance and could collaborate with the Ministry of Public Works.
Region 1	Mabaruma	John Antonio - Toshao	Amerindian sailors. Maintenance of roads.	Amerindians to be trained as sailors to work on ferry in Mabaruma. Machines to assist with road maintenance.	The Minister of Public Works asked that five persons be identified to receive funding for training with the Transport and Harbours Department (T&HD in order for them to work on the ferry.
Region 1	White Water, Mabaruma	Deon Adams – Toshao	The regularisation of issues related to birth certificates	Sanitary facility be established to cater for the needs of people who were awaiting the ferry.	
Region 1	Wallaba (Satellite village)	Timothy Williams - Senior Councillor	Plight of brother from Manawarin	Region 1	
Region 1	Manawarin, Moruca	Mr. Samuel Miguel, Toshao,		For the land at Southern Manawarin to be demarcated.	
Region 1	Kabrina, Mabaruma Sub District	Kellon Allick – CDC Chairman		The status of the road	

Region 1	St. Dominic	Ms. Doreen Fraser – CDC Chairman	Timely schedule for the ferry	Update on the new ferry and whether it will have a schedule Fare to utilise the ferry and the condition of accommodation on the ferry	
Region 1	Oronoque, Matarkai	Rohilda Mendonca, CDC – Chairman	Destruction of roads by GMI company Poor and incomplete work done to Cat Walk road poor condition Migrants	The migrant situation within the village of Oronoque	Minister of Local Government and Regional Development stated that migrants had already been relocated to a settlement the government had constructed and effort would be made to relocate the others.
Region 1	White Water, Mabaruma	Deon Adams - Toshao		Stipends for the members of the CPG.	
Region 2	Bethany	Sonia Latchman - Bethany		Two (2) drums of diesel to assist with powering machinery for road works	The Minister of Public Works stated that a community contract valued \$1 million would be awarded to the community
Region 2	Mashabo	Areafa Shabeer – Toshao	State of Road	Requested an update on the commencement of the contract for repairs	The Minister of Public Works stated that the project had been advertised and was currently in the mobilisation or evaluation stage.
Region 2	St. Monica Karawab	Eve Samuels – Toshao		Construction of revetment at Karawab compound	The Minister of Public Works gave an undertaking to have an engineer visit the community within two weeks to address the matter
Region 2	Akawini	Rudolph Wilson - Toshao		Examination of proposal to build canal from Akawini to Pomeroon	The Minister of Agriculture would examine proposal

			Deplorable state of road		Minister of Public Works stated that regional engineer would visit within two weeks to determine the community's ability to fix the road
Region 2	Mainstay/Wh yaka	Yvonne Pearson – Toshao		A rear blade tractor	Minister of Local Government and Regional Development stated that the rear blade tractor was at the RDC and would be handed over to the community.
Region 3	Santa Mission	Hilton Williams - Toshao		Remove the lumber operation or placed at another site. No public washroom facility at Santa Aratak.	Minister of Public Works stated that the situation at the Timehri wharf was now being identified with a determination whether it was public or private land. He committed to address the issue of no sanitary facilities at the wharf.
Region 3	Santa Aratak	Hilton Williams – Toshao	Issue of wharf at Timehri		
Region 4	Laluni	Julian Mohabir - CDC Chairman		Requested timeframe for road construction.	Minister of Public Works relayed that the road was in the process of being awarded. Also, savings from repairs done to the Moblissa Bridge on the Linden Highway, would be utilised to repair one of the collapsed bridge in Laluni, while the other one will be sent out for

					tender due to moneys from the savings being insufficient to repair both.
Region 4	St. Cuthbert's Mission	Timothy Andrews - Toshao		Requested timeframe for road construction Requested two drums of fuel monthly and flood lights for a playground. Invited the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport to view new sports ground.	Minister of Public Works stated that their project would also be sent out to tender, while accepting a recommendation put forward by the community. He awarded them a \$1 million dollars community contract to maintain the road for the remainder of the year. Thereby allowing them to receive fuel to use their tractor to maintain the road until the project was outlined.
	Karia Karia Essequibo	Representative of the CDC,		Raise the ground higher.	
Region 4,	Swan	Fenton Ragnauth - CDC Chairman		Police outpost. Main access road. Cast drain. An excavator	
		A Rep.		Totem Pole to be erected at Umana Yana. History of Indigenous peoples be rewritten. Duty-free concession for Tshaos. Mistreatment of Ekeriku Mouth residents.	
Region 6	Orealla	Lewis Devair	Mooring on the coast Road	A place to moor boats on the coast A ramp to be built near the	A decision was made for the stelling to be extended.

			Bridge	steling. Request for Ministry to seek assistance of contractor in village to transport laterite to maintain road. Request to repair the bridge.	
Region 7	Kamarang	Lemmel Thomas - Toshao	Cost of living Aircraft	Completion of playground at Kako, including installation of electricity, to facilitate the holding of the Upper Mazaruni District Games. Request for a hinterland aircraft. Request for the supplemental budget to be raised to \$5 billion Scholarship Cheaper ammunition	
Region 7	Kako, Upper Mazaruni	Mario Hastings – Toshao	Concerns about what was taking place at the NTC Conference		
Region 7		No name given	Areas other than Bartica and its environs be Roads and bridges	Request that the areas be included in the work plan for 2023 Repairs	The Minister of Public Works' team to meet Toshao at the end of the session
Region 8	Kaibarupai	Emran Austin	Airstrip Roads	Request for airstrip Request for ezcavator and bulldozer for the region.	
Region 8	Paramakatoi	Sherry Balkarran – Deputy Toshao		The resurfacing of the airstrip	

				Construction of parking lot	
Region 8	Campbelltown, Sub District 1	Jillian Williams – Toshao		Resolution of the matter at Chinese Landing	
Region 8		Deryck Martin - Deputy Toshao		Cattle rearing	
Region 8	Micobie	Cornel Edwards - Toshao		Transportation ATV to patrol the land and an outboard to patrol the waterways. Fuel Training and firearm Relevant authority to examine the road for the remaining balance of the money to be paid to the village.	
Region 9	Meriwau	Senior Councillor Teckla Spencer		Waiting area and sanitary block Culverts, multi-purpose building Completion of market to farm access road. ICT hubs More enhancement programmes.	

NATIONAL TOSHAOS COUNCIL**Resolution on the Status of the National Toshaos Council**

DATE: July 14, 2022

PLACE: Arthur Chung Conference Centre

TIME:

Pursuant to a duly made motion, the National Toshaos Council Executive presents the following resolution:

1. Whereas the National Toshaos Council is a body corporate duly established by the Amerindian Act, Cap. 29:01 of the Laws of Guyana; and
2. Whereas the functions of the National Toshaos Council are clearly outlined and defined in the said Amerindian Act, Cap. 29:01 of the Laws of Guyana; and
3. Whereas the National Toshaos Council is a collective body comprising of membership of ALL duly elected Toshaos (Amerindian Leaders) of Amerindian Villages across Guyana; and
4. Whereas the National Toshaos Council is, therefore, the legitimate non- governmental organization representing the Amerindian People of Guyana; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the National Toshaos Council calls for greater sensitization activities to be conducted to increase awareness and understanding of the functions of the NTC, and to promote recognition of the National Toshaos Council as the legitimate non-governmental organisation representing the interests of Amerindian People of Guyana; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the International Community and all local partners be called on to recognise, and engage with, the National Toshaos Council as the legitimate non - governmental organisation representing the interest of the Amerindian People of Guyana.

National Toshias Council Conference 2022

Concerns Raised and Requests Made – Day 5

Region #	Village	Toshao/Representative	Issues raised	Requests Made	Government Response
Region 1	St. Dominic's	Doreen Frazer – CDC Chairman	High cost for cargo weight and travel on aircraft.		
Region 1	Santa Rosa Village	Earl Rodrigues -Senior Councillor	Unmet medivac requests.		Chairman of the Aircraft Owners Association Mr. Goveia Jr: Reported that the association in conjunction with the government were soon to implement the following: proper lighting on runways which will increase the safety factor; increased production of timely weather reports and a dedicated 24 hrs. military medivac service. Minister within the Ministry of Public Works summarised what was said by all who participated during that segment as follow: A special rate for food and passenger transport in terms of special circumstances; the use of the sky van or additional operators into the sector; goods sent into the regions via the sky van free of cost or half the cost; build roads if those suggestions were not feasible thus reducing the excessive need for air transport; create a taskforce between the operators and the communities to improve the lines of communication; lengthening of runways and regular maintenance to minimise the impact of wear and tear on the aircrafts; resumed

					scheduled flights for Annai and other areas. He alluded to suggestions by Mr. Nascimento pertaining to population density in relation to particular airstrips and by the Aircraft Owners Association as listed above. He also declared that the main discussions that were captured would be placed in the report of the NTC. Also, His Excellency, the President would be engaging with the Aviation.
Region 7	Kamarang	Lemmel Thomas – Toshao	Burdensome nature of frequent increase in cost of freight to hinterland communities Brokers exploiting the situation Cost of chartered flights The need for additional airlines Absence of a Government aviation service Direct communication channel between the NISA and the villages Systems in place to administer orientation and training What was meant by domestic threats		The President of the Aircraft Owners' Association of Guyana pointed to the 70% increase in the cost of aviation fuel and in other areas. If prices continued to increase there would be need for partnership among the communities, Government and airline association. These responses were by the Director of NISA: Visits will be conducted to hinterland communities to provide training about the awareness of the environment National Security Information Network application programme was in the testing phase prior installation onto phones

			scope for information sharing information between regions, village and communities Possibility of village leaders visiting the NISA		Cards with contact details would be disseminated
				A fixed or special rate for transporting food and patients and out-patients until the high cost of living in under controlled. The Government subsidise the transportation cost so as to control the price of goods at the community end. The sky van being made available to transport goods free of cost of at half the current cost. The development of road transport so there would not be dependency only on the aviation industry. Private aircraft	Mr. Gouveia, as the President of the Aircraft Owners' Association, made the commitment that he was more than willing to participate in the taskforce recommended by Toshao Thomas to work with the NTC and the Government to have ongoing engagements with the community. He explained that if the sky van assisted with the delivery of food, it would not be able to do military work which was crucial to national security. Mr. Gouveia noted that the subject Minister was working on road transportation and expressed the view that the aviation industry would not be as needed in the future. Mr. Nascimento stated a partnership with Government would be than a subsidy.

				owners developing a task force to allow for better communicat ion and understandi ng with stakeholders .	
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Toshaos sworn in as JPs

		TOSHAOS			
No.	Name	Designation	Villages		
1	Compton Thompson	Toshao	Sebai	54 Lennox Percy	Toshao
2	Trevor Matheson	Toshao	Baramita	55 Fel Fel Bennett	Toshao
3	Royston Bumbury	Toshao	Four Miles	56 Lincoln Singh	Toshao
4	Orin Fernandes	Toshao	Chinese Landing	57 Barry Joe	Toshao
5	Rufus Rodrigues	Toshao	Kokerite	58 Sebastian Scipio	Toshao
6	Eric Williams	Toshao	Waikarebi	59 Alwilson Lewis	Toshao
7	Collis Samuels	Toshao	Kariako	60 Horacio Barbosa	Toshao
8	Jeremy Boyal	Toshao	Warapoka	61 Robert Peters	Toshao
9	Errol Charles	Toshao	Assakata	62 Terrence John	Toshao
10	Esau Boyal	Toshao	Santa Cruz	63 Emran Austin	Toshao
11	Stavros Stanley	Toshao	Santa Rosa	64 Peter Francisco	Toshao
12	Troy Peters	Toshao	Kwebanna	65 Elvan James	Toshao
13	Vivian Edwards	Toshao	Waramuri	66 Basil Pablo	Toshao
14	Samuel Miguel	Toshao	Manawarin	67 Stanford John	Toshao
15	Gilroy Roberts	Toshao	Barima Koriabo	68 Candacy Evans	Toshao
16	John Hernandez	Toshao	Bumbury Hill	69 Jillian Williams	Toshao
17	Christopher Mariano	Toshao	Arukamai	70 Cornel Edwards	Toshao
18	Riley Henry	Toshao	Kamwatta (Mab)	71 Grennison Roger	Toshao
19	Deon Adams	Toshao	White Water	72 Shamir Khan	Toshao
20	Desmond James	Toshao	Red Hill	73 Vibert Ignace	Toshao
21	Kingsley Baptist	Toshao	Three Brothers	74 Peter Stanislaus	Toshao
22	Allan Williams	Toshao	Tobago	75 Samuel Fredericks	Toshao
23	Allan Antonio	Toshao	Hobodeia	76 Thomas George	Toshao
24	Owen Singh	Toshao	Hotoquai	77 Nash Peter	Toshao
25	Lloyd Pereira	Toshao	Wakapoa	78 Lenny Moses	Toshao
26	Rudolph Wilson	Toshao	Akawini	79 Micah Davis	Toshao
27	Sonia Latchman	Toshao	Bethany	80 Brian James	Toshao
28	Areafa Shabeer	Toshao	Mashabo	81 Michael Williams	Toshao
29	Ralph Hendricks	Toshao	Capoe	82 Bradford Allicock	Toshao
30	Aubry Fredericks	Toshao	St. Denny's	83 Dickie Alvin	Toshao
31	Monty Simon	Toshao	Kabakaburi	84 Handley Thomas	Toshao
32	Eve Samuels	Toshao	St. Monica	85 Ozias James	Toshao
33	Yvonne Pearson	Toshao	Mainstay/Whyaka	86 Gerald Johnny	Toshao
34	Hilton Williams	Toshao	Santa Mission	87 Evangilista Melville	Toshao
35	Timothy Andrews	Toshao	St. Cuthbert's Mission	88 James Davis	Toshao
36	Derrick John	Toshao	Moraikabai	89 Reginald Francis	Toshao
37	Lewis Devair	Toshao	Orealla	90 Stanley Jacobs	Toshao
38	Orin Williams	Toshao	Batavia	91 Michael Thomas	Toshao
39	Jermin Welcome	Toshao	Kaburi/72 Miles	92 Jason Caitan	Toshao
40	Shane Cornelius	Toshao	Karrau	93 Apollo Issacs	Toshao
41	Timothy Lewis	Toshao	Kurutuku	94 Wenceslaus Albert	Toshao
42	Dhaness Larson	Toshao	Isseneru	95 Ambrose Bento	Toshao
43	Alfred Joseph	Toshao	Kangaruma	96 Charles Simon	Toshao
44	Alvin Joseph	Toshao	Tasserene	97 Michael Wilson Jnr	Toshao
45	Jackson Joseph	Toshao	Arau	98 Eugene Andrew	Toshao
46	Marlon Williams	Toshao	Kaikan	99 Gregory David	Toshao
47	Delph Hunter	Toshao	Kambaru/Ominike	100 Bernadine Fernandes	Toshao
48	Jonah George	Toshao	Chinoweing	101 Clarence Rudolph	Toshao
49	Mark Joseph	Toshao	Phillipai	102 Paul Ckekema	Toshao
50	Delph Isaacs	Toshao	Waramadong	103 Leroy Thomas	Toshao
51	Mario Hastings	Toshao	Kako	104 Denzil Hartmen	Toshao
52	Lemmel Thomas	Toshao	Kamarang/Warwatta	105 Mark Gomes	Toshao
53	Veron Henry	Toshao	Jawalla	106 Orlayne Williams	Toshao
				107 Nick Estwick	Toshao
				108 Melina Pollard	Toshao
				109 Flagon Carter	Community Toshao
				110 Kenki Yaimo	Community Toshao
					Pariuma
					Taruka
					Monkey Mountain
					Paramakatoi
					Tuseneng
					Kanapang
					Itabac
					Kamana
					Waipa
					Kaibarupai
					Kurukabru
					Kato
					Kopinang
					Chenapou
					Karisparu
					Campbelltown
					Micobie
					Katoka
					Yupukari
					Shulinab
					Potarinau
					Nappi
					Moco Moco
					Yakarinta
					Massara
					Toka
					Parikwarwaunau
					Annai
					Fairview
					Rewa
					Crashwater
					Apoteri
					Taushida
					Rukumuta
					Tiger Pond
					Yurong Paru
					Tiperu
					Aishalton
					Shea
					Karadarnau
					Achiwib
					Mururanau
					Awarewaunau
					Rupunau
					Sand Creek
					Katoonarib
					Sawariwau
					Parabara
					Konashen
					Great Falls
					Wiruni
					Hururu
					Malali
					Muritaro
					Riversview
					Rockstone
					Cashew Island

Toshaos sworn in as Rural Constables 2022 without Region 9

No.	Name	Designation	Villages	Sub Region	Region
1	Compton Thompson	Toshao	Sebai	Matarkai	Region 1
2	Trevor Matheson	Toshao	Baramita	Matarkai	Region 1
3	Royston Bumbury	Toshao	Four Miles	Matarkai	Region 1
4	Orin Fernandes	Toshao	Chinese Landing	Moruca	Region 1
5	Rufus Rodrigues	Toshao	Kokerite	Moruca	Region 1
6	Eric Williams	Toshao	Waikarebi	Moruca	Region 1
7	Collis Samuels	Toshao	Kariako	Moruca	Region 1
8	Jeremy Boyal	Toshao	Warapoka	Moruca	Region 1
9	Errol Charles	Toshao	Assakata	Moruca	Region 1
10	Troy Peters	Toshao	Kwebanna	Moruca	Region 1
11	Vivian Edwards	Toshao	Waramuri	Moruca	Region 1
12	Samuel Miguel	Toshao	Manawarin	Moruca	Region 1
13	Esau Boyal	Toshao	Santa Cruz	Moruca	Region 1
14	Stavros Stanley	Toshao	Santa Rosa	Moruca	Region 1
15	Gilroy Roberts	Toshao	Barima Koriabo	Mabaruma	Region 1
16	Desmond James	Toshao	Red Hill	Mabaruma	Region 1
17	Kingsley Baptist	Toshao	Three Brothers	Mabaruma	Region 1
18	John Hernandez	Toshao	Bumbury Hill	Mabaruma	Region 1
19	Christopher Mariano	Toshao	Arukamai	Mabaruma	Region 1
20	Riley Henry	Toshao	Kamwatta (Mab)	Mabaruma	Region 1
21	Deon Adams	Toshao	White Water	Mabaruma	Region 1
22	Allan Williams	Toshao	Tobago	Mabaruma	Region 1
23	Owen Singh	Toshao	Hotoquai	Mabaruma	Region 1
24	Allan Antonio	Toshao	Hobodeia	Mabaruma	Region 1
25	Lloyd Pereira	Toshao	Wakapoa	Pomeroon/Supenaam	Region 2
26	Rudolph Wilson	Toshao	Akawini	Pomeroon/Supenaam	Region 2
27	Sonia Latchman	Toshao	Bethany	Pomeroon/Supenaam	Region 2
28	Areafa Shabeer	Toshao	Mashabo	Pomeroon/Supenaam	Region 2
29	Ralph Hendricks	Toshao	Capoey	Pomeroon/Supenaam	Region 2
30	Aubry Fredericks	Toshao	St. Denny's	Pomeroon/Supenaam	Region 2
31	Monty Simon	Toshao	Kabakaburi	Pomeroon/Supenaam	Region 2
32	Eve Samuels	Toshao	St. Monica	Pomeroon/Supenaam	Region 2
33	Yvonne Pearson	Toshao	Mainstay/Whyaka	Pomeroon/Supenaam	Region 2
34	Hilton Williams	Toshao	Santa Mission	Pomeroon/Supenaam	Region 3
35	Timothy Andrews	Toshao	St. Cuthbert's Mission	Pomeroon/Supenaam	Region 4
36	Derrick John	Toshao	Moraikabai	Pomeroon/Supenaam	Region 5
37	Lewis Devair	Toshao	Orealla	Pomeroon/Supenaam	Region 6
38	Kenki Yaimo	Community Toshao	Cashew Island	Pomeroon/Supenaam	Region 6
39	Oren Williams	Toshao	Batavia	Lower Mazaruni	Region 7
40	Jermin Welcome	Toshao	Kaburi/72 Miles	Lower Mazaruni	Region 7
41	Shane Cornelius	Toshao	Karrau	Lower Mazaruni	Region 7
42	Timothy Lewis	Toshao	Kurutuku	Middle Mazaruni	Region 7
43	Dhaness Larson	Toshao	Isseneru	Middle Mazaruni	Region 7
44	Alfred Joseph	Toshao	Kangaruma	Middle Mazaruni	Region 7
45	Alvin Joseph	Toshao	Tasserene	Middle Mazaruni	Region 7
46	Jackson Joseph	Toshao	Arau	Upper Mazaruni	Region 7
47	Marlon Williams	Toshao	Kaikan	Upper Mazaruni	Region 7
48	Delph Hunter	Toshao	Kambaru/Ominike	Upper Mazaruni	Region 7
49	Jonah George	Toshao	Chinoweing	Upper Mazaruni	Region 7
50	Mark Joseph	Toshao	Phillipai	Upper Mazaruni	Region 7
51	Delph Isaacs	Toshao	Waramadong	Upper Mazaruni	Region 7
52	Mario Hastings	Toshao	Kako	Upper Mazaruni	Region 7
53	Lemmel Thomas	Toshao	Kamarang/Warwatta	Upper Mazaruni	Region 7
54	Veron Henry	Toshao	Jawalla	Upper Mazaruni	Region 7
55	Lennox Percy	Toshao	Pariuma	Upper Mazaruni	Region 7
56	Fel Fel Benette	Toshao	Taruka	North Pakaraimas	Region 8
57	Lincoln Singh	Toshao	Monkey Mountain	North Pakaraimas	Region 8
58	Barry Joe	Toshao	Paramakatoi	North Pakaraimas	Region 8
59	Sebastian Scipio	Toshao	Tuseneng	North Pakaraimas	Region 8
60	Alwilson Lewis	Toshao	Kanapang	North Pakaraimas	Region 8
61	Horacio Barbosa	Toshao	Itabac	North Pakaraimas	Region 8
62	Robert Peters	Toshao	Kamana	North Pakaraimas	Region 8
63	Terrence John	Toshao	Waipa	North Pakaraimas	Region 8
64	Emran Austin	Toshao	Kaibarupai	North Pakaraimas	Region 8
65	Peter Francisco	Toshao	Kurukabru	North Pakaraimas	Region 8
66	Elvan James	Toshao	Kato	North Pakaraimas	Region 8
67	Basil Pablo	Toshao	Kopinang	North Pakaraimas	Region 8
68	Stanford John	Toshao	Chenapou	Sub District 1	Region 8
69	Candacy Evans	Toshao	Karisparu	Sub District 1	Region 8
70	Jillian Williams	Toshao	Campbelltown	Sub District 1	Region 8
71	Cornel Edwards	Toshao	Micobie	Sub District 1	Region 8
72	Evangelista Melville	Toshao	Rukumuta	Karasabai District	Region 9
73	Leroy Thomas	Toshao	Great Falls	Karasabai District	Region 10
74	Denzil Hartmen	Toshao	Wiruni	Karasabai District	Region 10
75	Mark Gomes	Toshao	Hururu	Karasabai District	Region 10
76	Orlayne Williams	Toshao	Malali	Karasabai District	Region 10
77	Nick Estwick	Toshao	Muritaro	Karasabai District	Region 10
78	Flagon Carter	Community Toshao	Rockstone	Karasabai District	Region 10
79	Melina Pollard	Toshao	Riversview	Karasabai District	Region 10

Resolution of the National Toshias' Council Conference
Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030
July 15, 2022

The National Toshias' Council, at its Conference of July 11-15, 2022, adopts the following resolution:

Whereas the National Toshias' Council (NTC) recognizes Guyana's leading role in forests and climate action nationally and globally, and recognizes that through the joint effort by Government and Indigenous Peoples, along with other stakeholders, Guyana has maintained over 99% of forest cover over many years; and further notes that this is testimony to Guyana's strong stewardship on forests and Guyana's continued contribution to the global fight on climate change.

Reaffirming that the Low Carbon Development Strategy 2009 has been a visionary Strategy that showed how inclusive, sustainable development can take place, while simultaneously maintaining the country's forests, to help meet some of the most urgent challenges the world faces.

Recalling that the LCDS 2009 laid the early framework for low carbon development in Guyana, including forest carbon credits; and was subject to extensive national, regional, and community-based consultations, and one of the widest national consultations exercises completed in Guyana in recent history.

Emphasizing that the LCDS 2009 was discussed at the Community and National Toshias' Council levels and received full endorsement.

The National Toshias' Council notes that:

- Projects based financing and additional resources from national-level programmes, benefitted Amerindian Villages across Guyana.
- Phase I of the approach to Forest Climate Services saw Guyana earn a total of US\$220M from the Guyana-Norway Agreement for the period 2010-2015.
- These revenues were channeled towards financing a wide range of programmes, including those that are aimed at improving the quality of life of Indigenous Peoples, including:

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- two separate phases of the **Amerindian Development Fund (ADF)** Project which used funds earned under the Guyana-Norway agreement to implement the Community Development Plans (CDPs) of Amerindian communities and villages. The development of the CDPs was led by the communities and villages and approved at their Council meetings. The first phase funded 26 communities and villages and the second phase funded 154 communities and villages. The project aimed to strengthen the entrepreneurial and institutional capabilities of the village economies of Amerindian communities; improve linkages with the private sector to further develop value chains; and strengthen institutional frameworks to support local economies. CDPs implemented were categorised under the following sectors: agriculture, village infrastructure, tourism, manufacturing, village business enterprise, and transportation. Between both phases of the project, the CDPs of 180 communities and villages were funded and implemented at an approximate value of US\$4,412,540 or G\$911,189,465.
- The **Amerindian Land Titling (ALT)** Project, which is still ongoing, seeks to accelerate the legal demarcation and titling of Amerindian lands for a total budget of US\$13.3M or G\$2.8B. Amerindians total approximately 14 percent of Guyana's population and currently own in excess of 15.65 percent of Guyana's territory, up from about six percent in the early 1990s. The ownership of land empowers and allows Guyana's first peoples the liberty to engage in and promote investments towards their own social and economic advancement. Under the ALT project:
 - 15 villages were issued with absolute grants, bringing the total number of Amerindian villages titled with Absolute Grants to 111.
 - 26 villages were demarcated and 24 were issued with certificates of title in what is the final step in the titling process. This brought the total number of villages demarcated and issued with Certificates of Titling to 101.

The principle of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) continues to be an important and respected principle that is applied under the Project. Amerindians are provided with enough information well in advance of planned or proposed activities to allow communities and villages to agree or consent to the execution of those activities. Under the project, over 210 persons were trained in FPIC to ensure that not only do Amerindians understand their rights but importantly, for other

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stakeholders to recognise and understand those rights and practically apply the principle of FPIC during project implementation. A Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) was established as an alternative for helping to resolve land titling disputes. Twenty-three persons were trained as GRM liaisons, 254 community members were trained in mediation and 378 persons were part of cluster awareness exercises on the core function of the GRM.

- The **ICT Access and e-Services** for Hinterland, Poor, and Remote Communities Project. This project restarted in 2021, is still ongoing and ICT hubs are being established in 200 communities and villages. Each hub will be equipped with printers and televisions, as well as 20 laptops and software. Once complete, this project will provide the necessary infrastructure, equipment, hardware, and software necessary to enable access to high-quality ICT, training and e-services in all parts of Guyana, with particular attention given to vulnerable groups and remote communities who might otherwise be excluded.

Highlighting that Guyana's pursuance of a new Low Carbon Development Strategy, LCDS 2030, expands to a broader ecosystem approach, to include biodiversity and water management, and one which creates a model for avoiding deforestation and maintaining forests; investing in urban, rural and Amerindian development; protecting the coast and hinterland from climate change; creating jobs in a suite of low carbon sectors; and aligning the education and health sectors with low carbon development.

Recognizing the commitment to Free Prior and Informed Consent in Guyana's LCDS 2030.

Recognizing that a central tenet of the LCDS 2030, like the LCDS 2009, involves communities benefiting from revenues earned from the sale of forest carbon services; and where the LCDS 2030 sets out new opportunities for new revenues.

Noting that the LCDS 2030 seeks to advance the work started under the LCDS 2009 and charts the path for a sustainable future towards 2030.

The National Toshaos' Council:

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Welcomes Guyana's pursuance of an expanded Low Carbon Development Strategy, LCDS 2030, and the proposal to move to a second phase for accessing forest carbon financing, to continue the approach outlined in the LCDS 2009.

Recognises that extensive national scale and community-based consultations, conducted over the past seven months, have informed the main aspects of LCDS 2030.

Welcomes the commitment expressed in the LCDS 2030 to continued consultation and engagement with Indigenous Communities and Villages as the LCDS moves to implementation.

Agrees with Guyana's national approach of engaging with forest carbon financing that is aimed at bringing benefits to Guyanese and particularly Indigenous Villages and Communities.

Notes and welcomes the information in the LCDS 2030 that from 2022, there is a strong possibility that Guyana's sale of forest climate services can be structured around high-quality voluntary carbon markets that could include private, as well as international public sector, financing.

Welcomes and supports the proposal which resulted from the national consultation that:

- The LCDS, and engagement with carbon markets, nonetheless will create new *opportunities* to opt into revenue-sharing mechanisms where Amerindian and other local communities can choose to access revenues through a combination of:
 - o national programmes as outlined in the draft LCDS 2030 (e.g., renewable energy, land titling, protection against climate change), and
 - o community/village-led programmes for indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) as set out in Village Sustainability Plans or equivalent, put together by communities themselves.
- All Amerindian communities will have the opportunity to engage with both pathways for carbon market revenues, in accordance with the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).
- A dedicated 15% of all revenues from forest carbon markets will be allocated for Amerindian communities. These funds will be available to the villages to support development initiatives. This will be supplementary to the considerable funds communities are expected to receive from national-level programmes.
- This dedicated revenue stream will be shared equally with villages and communities, including those that are covered with forest as well as those in non-forest ecosystems
- Communities are free to opt into this dedicated revenue mechanism for local communities.
- No deadline will be set for opting in.



Support by the National Toshao's Council Executive Committee
Resolution on Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy (2030)

July 15, 2022

NATIONAL TOSHAOS COUNCIL

SIGN: 

DATE:
Derrick John- NTC Chairman


Sonia Latchman- NTC Vice Chairwoman


Shane Cornelius- Secretary

Executive Members


Compton Thompson
Kenny Maer
Desmond James
Orlayne Williams
L. Dengel
Shamir Khan
M. Thomas
C. Evans
Lewis DeVoir
Jenny Byal



AGENDA

OPENING CEREMONY

Master of Ceremony – Ms. Michella Abraham-Ali

08:30 – 09:30	Registration
09:45	Arrival of Dr. Bharat Jagdeo, Vice President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana
09:50	Arrival of Hon. Brig (R'td) Mark Anthony Phillips, Prime Minister of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana
09:55	Arrival of His Excellency, Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana
10:00 10:05	Call to Order - Master of Ceremony
10:05 – 10:08	Prayer in Makushi Language – Toshao Grennison Rogers
10:08 – 10:10	National Pledge - All
10:10 – 10:18	Welcome & Opening Remarks – Toshao Derrick John
10:18 – 10:26	Remarks by Outgoing NTC Chairman – Mr. Nicholas Fredricks, AA
10:26 - 10:29	Amerindian Man – Leon Couchman/St. Cuthbert's Cultural Group
10:29 – 10:39	Remarks by Hon. Pauline Sukhai, MP, Minister of Amerindian Affairs



10:39 – 10:43	Poem – Spoken words by Daniela Araujo
10:43 – 10:45.	Introduction of His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali – Ms. Esther Marslowe – Miss Amerindian Heritage Queen
10:45	Feature Address by His Excellency, Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana
	Matapi – Mighty Pakuri/St. Cuthbert's Cultural Group
	Hand over of Land Titles
	Vote of Thanks – Hon. Alister Charlie MP
12:00– 1:00	LUNCH
	AFTERNOON SESSION
Chairperson	- Ms. Sarah Brown, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Amerindian Affairs
1:00	Presentation by Hon. Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, Vice President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana
2:30	Elections – National Toshaos Council Executive Body
	Adoption of the NTC Agenda; Presentation of NTC Report
	Amerindian Land Titling (ALT) – ALT Department
	Low Carbon Development Strategy
	CLOSE OF DAY 1



DAY 2

TUESDAY JULY 12, 2022

Chairperson NTC Executive Member/MoAA

07:30 – 08:30 Registration

Sectoral Issues - Dialogue with Cabinet Members

9:00 – 10:10 Office of Prime Minister (Public Affairs, Energy, ICT)

10:10 – 11:20 Ministry of Education

11:20 – 12:30 Ministry of Health

12:30 – 13:30 **LUNCH**

1:30 – 2:40 Ministry of Natural Resources:
GGMC/ GFC/EPA/PAC/GLSC

2:40 – 3:00 **BREAK**

3:00 pm – 5:30+ Ministry of Natural Resources:
Oil & Gas/ Local Content

CLOSE OF DAY 2



DAY 3

WEDNESDAY JULY 13, 2022

Chairperson NTC Executive Member/MoAA

7:30 – 8:30 Registration

SECTORAL ISSUES - DIALOGUE WITH CABINET MEMBERS

09:00 – 10:00 Ministry of Housing and Water

10:00 – 11:00 Ministry of Public Service
(Scholarships & GOAL)

11:00 – 12:30 Ministry of Local Government &
Regional Development (Regional
Health/Education/Infrastructure/
Works)

12:30 – 1:30 **LUNCH**

1:30 – 3:00 Ministry of Agriculture
(NAREI, GLDA, GMC, Agri Projects)

3:00 – 3:30 **SNACK**

3:30 – 4:30 Ministry of Tourism

4:30 – 5:30 Ministry of Labour

Close of Day 3

DAY 4

THURSDAY JULY 14, 2022

07:30 – 08:30 Registration

Chairperson NTC Executive Member/MoAA

SECTORAL ISSUES - DIALOGUE WITH CABINET MEMBERS

09:00 – 10:30 Ministry of Human Services and Social Security

10:30 – 12:00 Ministry of Public Works

12:00 – 1:00 **LUNCH**

1:00 – 2:30 Ministry of Home Affairs

2:30 – 3:30 Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs & Governance

3:30 – 4:00 Break

4:00 – 5:00 Ministry of Finance

CLOSE OF DAY 4





DAY 5
FRIDAY JULY 15, 2022

08:00 – 09:00 Registration

Chairperson NTC Executive Member/MoAA

SECTORAL ISSUES - DIALOGUE WITH CABINET MEMBERS

09:00 – 10:30 Ministry of Legal Affairs

10:30 – 11:30 Ministry of Culture, Youth & Sports

11:30 – 12:30 Ministry of Foreign Affairs

12:30 – 1:30 Lunch

1:30 – 2:00 Video Presentation – MoAA

2:00 – 3:30 Swearing-in of Toshaos as Rural Constables and JPs & Orientation (MoHA)

3:30 – 4:00 Housekeeping

