

**STATEMENT BY
THE GOVERNOR FOR
GUYANA
THE HONOURABLE WINSTON JORDAN**

Mr. President, fellow Governors, Government Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I bring you cordial greetings from the dear, green and great land of Guyana. Allow me, please, to express my profound appreciation for the warm welcome and great hospitality extended by the Government and People of Trinidad and Tobago. To our gracious hostess and Chairperson of the Board of Governors, the Honourable Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Ms. Camille Robinson-Regis, I offer my sincere congratulations on a well-arranged meeting.

Mr. President, in 2018, Guyana's economy returned a growth rate of 4.1%, the highest since 2014, and is continuing the trend of positive economic growth that has averaged about 3% over the last four years. Prices remained relatively stable, with inflation under 2%. There was a modest deterioration in the exchange rate while debt was contained to a sustainable level. All of this is indicative of our prudent management of the economy, in face of a difficult, and sometimes hostile, international and domestic climate. In spite of this relatively good performance, Guyana's economy remains fragile, and will need tremendous assistance going forward. This is why I wish to emphasise that, although graduation from the Special Development Fund concessional resources is inevitable, it is important that it does not occur prematurely.

At this point, I would like to thank President Smith and his staff for their sterling efforts in support of Guyana's development, in 2018. Guyana benefited from a signal level of project approvals and a very respectable disbursement level of USD6.7 million (mn), while our project portfolio grew to USD150 mn. These resources were used to good effect to narrow our infrastructure gap; strengthen our sea defenses; improve our road network; expand and enhance our potable water system; and expand our education system, including upgrading facilities of the University of Guyana; among others.

Mr. President, as salutary as the Bank's efforts have been, outflows from Guyana to the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) were about USD4 mn more than disbursements. While occasions of net negative flows to any country may occur, we expect that those will be infrequent. I, therefore, urge the Bank's management to pay close attention to the repayment of loans and the pacing of loan and grant flows to its borrowing members.

Like most of Guyana's development partners and friends, CDB has celebrated the news of our impending "good fortune". I speak, here, of our oil reserves, which have been conservatively estimated at over six billion barrels by oil analysts. These resources will represent a quantum leap from those to which we have been accustomed; providing us with an opportunity to significantly transform our economy and improve the lives and well-being of our citizens. However, there are challenges. Guyana has major capacity and capability gaps, which must be filled, if we are not to experience the paradox of plenty - that dreaded cliché which spells sleepless nights for economic and financial managers.

Yes, it is true that our gross domestic product growth is forecast to average 12% per annum, for the next 10-15 years. Nevertheless, we will need to ensure that growth emanates from a modern, diversified and inclusive economy – one that is resilient and capable of withstanding and absorbing shocks without major disruptions. We are quite aware of the risks that we face and will need to mitigate, including unstable public finances caused by volatile oil prices and diminished competitiveness of our local products. We will need to plan carefully, think strategically about managing our fiscal affairs, and implement systematically. In addition, with weak institutions, our administration will be further challenged - but we are up to the task.

The Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana is committed to delivering a good life to all Guyanese. This implies not just improved incomes, livelihoods and well-being, but, also, enhanced living conditions, including a natural environment that is preserved and managed for future generations.

Mr. President, we continue to aspire to be the bread basket of the Region. The CARICOM import food bill runs to billions of dollars, yet Guyana possesses rich agricultural land in abundance which, when blended with investors' capital and know-how, can allow us to consume what we produce and produce what we consume. In doing so, we will be creating jobs, adding value and keeping our hard-earned resources in the Region.

Mr. President, my cards are on the table. Guyana has many needs, assistance for which we look to our partners. I therefore, enjoin the Bank to step up and provide us with the support we need, and offer the insights and guidance required. Help us to push our faltering project portfolio and build up a pipeline of bankable investment projects. With an anticipated steep growth in public investment, our Region's premier lending institution must be in the forefront of Guyana's charge to transformation.

I thank you.