



Генеральная Ассамблея

Distr.: General
12 May 2025
Russian
Original: English

Совет по правам человека

Пятьдесят девятая сессия

16 июня — 11 июля 2025 года

Пункт 3 повестки дня

**Поощрение и защита всех прав человека,
гражданских, политических, экономических,
социальных и культурных прав,
включая право на развитие**

Посещение Суринама

Доклад Независимого эксперта по вопросу о правах человека и международной солидарности Сесилии Байз* **

Резюме

Независимый эксперт по вопросу о правах человека и международной солидарности Сесилия Байз посетила Суринам с 20 по 28 января 2025 года. Основная цель посещения заключалась в изучении и понимании политики и действий, осуществляемых государством и субъектами гражданского общества для реализации права на международную солидарность и обязанности проявлять ее. Независимый эксперт также стремилась определить достигнутый прогресс и сохраняющиеся проблемы. Она отмечает, что недавнее открытие месторождения нефти у берегов Суринама дает государству реальную возможность взять на себя обязательство проводить стратегию солидарности в интересах ликвидации неравенства и структурной изоляции и обеспечения осуществления прав человека для каждого жителя страны, включая женщин, детей, лиц с инвалидностью, мигрантов, коренные народы и народы, ведущие племенной образ жизни.

* Резюме настоящего доклада распространяется на всех официальных языках. Сам доклад, содержащийся в приложении к резюме, распространяется только на том языке, на котором он был представлен.

** На основании достигнутой договоренности настоящий документ издается позднее предусмотренного срока его публикации в связи с обстоятельствами, не зависящими от представляющей доклад стороны.



Приложение

Доклад Независимого эксперта по вопросу о правах человека и международной солидарности Сесилии Байэ о ее посещении Суринама

I. Introduction

1. The Independent Expert is grateful to the Government of Suriname for inviting her to conduct an official visit from 20 to 28 January 2025 with the aim of understanding the policies adopted and action taken by the Government, civil society and other relevant stakeholders to implement the right and duty of international solidarity. She sought to identify the progress made and remaining challenges.¹
2. The Independent Expert is appreciative of her meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and Police, the Office of the President, the Office of the Vice-President, the State representation in international hearings, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of the Interior, the National Assembly, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Entrepreneurship and Technological Innovation, the Ministry of Finance and Planning, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Land and Forest Management, the Ministry of Regional Development and Sport, the Ministry of Spatial Planning and the Environment, the Youth Parliament and the Office of the Attorney General.
3. During the visit, the Independent Expert also met with representatives of the diplomatic community and international organizations, including the United Nations country team and United Nations agencies. She consulted representatives from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the International Monetary Fund, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the World Bank and the Organization of American States. She visited Opa Doeli Youth Detention Centre and delivered a lecture at the Anton de Kom University in Paramaribo.
4. The Independent Expert extends her gratitude to the representatives of civil society, trade unions and international corporations in Suriname who gave her a broader understanding of international solidarity in practice. She visited the communities of Pomona, Nieuw Koffiekamp, Palumeu and Hollandse Kamp.
5. The Independent Expert expresses her appreciation to the staff of the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office and the United Nations Development Programme for their extensive support in preparing and facilitating her visit.

Context

6. The visit came at an important time, when increased inequality, polarization, political violence and fragmentation around the world were underscoring the need to identify best practices for international solidarity. Suriname was a colony of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and attained its independence in 1975. It may be regarded as the very embodiment of solidarity through the peaceful coexistence of its diverse population (623,236 persons), which includes intermarriages between East Indians, Creoles, Javanese, Maroons, Chinese and Indigenous and tribal peoples. Recent migration from Brazil, Cuba and Haiti has added to the melting pot. As described by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Suriname affirms that “unity in diversity” is actually possible to realize within societies. The Surinamese are proud of the fact that the capital has a synagogue and a mosque next to each other and the communities cooperate on practical and cultural matters. The society is based upon a tradition of commitment to the principle of brotherhood that lies at the foundation of

¹ The Independent Expert is also grateful for input and support provided by research assistants, students and experts.

solidarity. This is reflected in article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

7. In its Constitution, Suriname recognizes the principle of international solidarity in its relations with other countries in its preamble, providing that its people are “determined to collaborate with one another and with all peoples of the world on the basis of freedom, equality, peaceful coexistence and international solidarity”. In article 7 (4), it contains a commitment to combating racism and neocolonialism: “Suriname promotes solidarity and collaboration with other peoples in combating colonialism, neocolonialism, racism, genocide, and in the fight for national liberation, peace and social progress.” These norms attest to the fact that the history and future of Suriname are transnational and require sustained attention to neocolonial structures or policies that inhibit the inclusion of all, in keeping with equality and non-discrimination norms.

8. The coat of arms of Suriname was adopted in 1975 and provides a visual depiction of Surinamese national identity. It shows two Indigenous men carrying a shield, a trade ship representing the country’s colonial past and present, a palm tree representing the rainforest (timber), a diamond representing the mining industry (bauxite and gold) and a star indicating the five continents from which the inhabitants of Suriname immigrated. This image calls for recognition that Indigenous and tribal peoples are entitled to full inclusion within the sustainable development aims of the nation. Tribal peoples, who are the descendants of escaped slaves (Maroons), and Indigenous Peoples mostly live in the interior of the country and are far removed from infrastructure, social services and banking systems.

9. The recent historic discovery of oil off the coast of Suriname presents an opportunity for the State to commit to pursuing a solidarity strategy in order to reduce internal inequality and structural exclusion. The State is at a unique juncture at which it is able to invest in social services and infrastructure in order to guarantee the right of all members of society to participate in the enjoyment of the rights to quality education, accessible healthcare and an adequate standard of living, including decent work, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 16. The present report provides an overview of good practices and challenges in relation to implementing international solidarity.²

II. Encouraging initiatives and good practices

A. Solidarity education: solidarity for children and young people

10. Suriname teaches solidarity within the school system, as children and young people are encouraged to celebrate each other’s cultural holidays by singing songs, wearing traditional costumes and sharing food. This education in mutual respect provides a foundation for the peaceful coexistence that lies at the core of Surinamese culture.³ The focus on solidarity education is a lesson for countries around the world that are confronting engrained patterns of violent cultural polarization. Suriname has a National Education Policy that requires financing in order to improve the training of teachers, provision of adequate and fully functional infrastructure, and access to education in the interior. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has taken international solidarity initiatives in Suriname to provide mental health and psychosocial support for children and young people to fight suicide and depression.⁴

11. In 2024, Suriname approved the Children’s Ombudsperson Act, which provides for the creation of an independent complaints mechanism to address administrative action that

² For an overview of inequality in Suriname, see Rosita Sobhie, “Exploring the standard of living between ethnic groups in Suriname”, in *Ethnic Relations in Plural Societies: Social, Economic and Political Dimensions*, Maurits S. Hassankhan and others, eds. (Delhi, Manohar, 2023).

³ See R. Kirtie Algoe, *Religion, Power, and Society in Suriname and Guyana: Hindu, Muslim, and Christian Relations* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2022).

⁴ UNICEF, “Strengthening mental health and psychosocial support services for children and youth in district Nickerie, Suriname” (8 October 2024).

affects children and to monitor compliance with children's rights. The Independent Expert encourages the State to set this mechanism up in a timely manner.

12. The Youth Parliament and Youth Ambassadors programmes engage in the promotion of environmental projects in schools and help participants to acquire leadership skills. These programmes should be expanded to include more young people from the interior of the country, including Indigenous and tribal peoples.⁵

13. It is estimated that over 400 Surinamese children attend school in the border town of Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni in French Guiana. An international solidarity initiative, the "Rive droite – Rive gauche" (left bank – right bank) project, seeks to promote the teaching of French and Dutch in schools located along the River Maroni.⁶ The project also seeks to improve cross-border mobility for teachers and students, to train teachers at a digital academy to be opened in Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni and to adopt a university programme on sustainable development. This serves as an example of regional solidarity to promote integration that should be further expanded.

14. It is notable that the Anton de Kom University of Suriname and Leiden University in the Kingdom of the Netherlands have a cooperation programme in place to promote research and student and staff exchanges within the framework of the Biodiversity Research and Education Programme Suriname. The programme promotes diversity in academia and biodiversity in Suriname, thereby serving as a strong example of international solidarity. Similarly, Surinamese students have attended the University of the West Indies and undertaken internships in the Caribbean Community, thereby strengthening regional solidarity.

B. Gender solidarity

15. The Independent Expert was impressed by the number of women representing ministries and participating in civil society meetings. The Minister of Defence is a woman and the Minister of Social Affairs is an Indigenous woman. They are both important role models for the nation. The Inter-American Development Bank provides international solidarity support for the empowerment of Surinamese women in programmes such as Reigniting Empowerment of Tribal Women in Suriname through Engagement in Transformative Technology. This type of gender solidarity initiative merits expansion and replication in other sectors. The progress made by women is unfortunately in contrast to the situation of young men's education and skills, as discussed in the section on challenges below. Notably, Surinamese law prohibits discrimination and hate speech based on sexual orientation.

C. Health solidarity

16. While the population of Suriname is rising, life expectancy remains lower than the regional average. While maternal and infant mortality have decreased since 2000, they remain high. Infant mortality decreased from 20.2 to 14 deaths per 1,000 live births between 2000 and 2017 and maternal mortality reduced by 65.3 per cent between 2000 and 2017.⁷ One problem is that many people in the interior and many migrants lack access to insurance as they do not have insurance cards.

17. In Suriname, primary healthcare is provided by government-subsidized non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private physicians. Healthcare workers receive day-to-day guidance online and by telephone from physicians and nurses.⁸ The NGO that has

⁵ CRC/C/SUR/CO/3-4, para. 16.

⁶ See <https://sr.ambafrance.org/Immersion-of-teachers-from-the-Rive-droite-rive-gauche-project-Saint-Laurent-du>.

⁷ Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), "Health in the Americas: Suriname – country profile" (17 October 2024).

⁸ PAHO, "Suriname: medical mission seeks to secure data quality on local and national levels with a more efficient health information system".

provided access to health in remote areas, often to Indigenous and tribal peoples, is Medical Mission Primary Healthcare Suriname.⁹ Its mission statement – “A unique kind of care, with a heart for each other” (“Een zorg apart met een hart voor elkaar”) – summarizes the embodiment of solidarity.¹⁰ Given the insufficient infrastructure and the lack of government-funded clinics in the interior, Medical Mission Primary Healthcare Suriname has set up 51 clinics that mainly attend to Indigenous and tribal peoples, as well as migrants.¹¹ It also collaborates with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). It led a project entitled “It takes a village to save a woman’s life from cervical cancer”, which was conducted in Kwamalasamutu, a remote village where cervical cancer screening and treatment are not available, resulting in cervical cancer being the second most frequent cancer among women in Suriname.¹² The project led to 90 women being screened, with one woman being diagnosed and treated. An important facet of the project was the emphasis on engaging the entire community. Education sessions were organized to discuss cultural myths and beliefs about cancer, which enabled women to speak openly about their cervical cancer screenings, thereby encouraging other women to partake. The success of the project has resulted in the Ministries of Health and of Education working jointly with Medical Mission Primary Healthcare Suriname on an outreach campaign for cervical cancer screening and plans to expand the project to the eastern region of the country.¹³ Nevertheless, there are concerns that such missions do not reach everyone and that there is a lack of transparency in the budget, resulting in financial gaps.

18. Another example of health solidarity is the eradication of malaria from Suriname through the sustained efforts of the Ministry of Health for over two decades, with the cooperation of PAHO. The adoption of procedures to educate communities and respond quickly in order to isolate cases is an inspiring example of solidarity for health in practice, buttressed by the State’s unwavering political will. Elimination was enabled through solidarity projects such as programmes that trained people living and working in gold mines to use rapid diagnostic tests and diagnose and treat uncomplicated cases of malaria.¹⁴ It is an impressive achievement that serves as a model for replication to achieve other solidarity aims.

19. A major complication with providing healthcare, particularly in remote areas, is the lack of infrastructure, as well as language and cultural differences. An important lesson learned from the fight against malaria is that the treatment and diagnosis should be close to the people in need.¹⁵ This is particularly important since communicable diseases, if not treated in every part of the country, can cause a problem for the whole region.

20. Non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer, are of concern, as they accounted for 78.6 per cent of mortality in 2019. In 2022, the prevalence of overweight and obesity stood at 58.1 per cent for people aged 15 and older, and 44.4 per cent of the population was reported to partake in insufficient physical activity.¹⁶ Cardiovascular diseases are some of the most significant health concerns in Suriname, representing 33 per cent of all deaths. To tackle them, the Ministry of Health, together with PAHO and IBD, organized a technical meeting between experts to implement the HEARTS Initiative.¹⁷

21. Type 1 diabetes is a notable problem, which has gone from affecting 9.5 per cent of the population in 2000 to 12.3 per cent in 2014.¹⁸ The consequences (poor wound care and

⁹ PAHO, “Medical Mission Primary Health Care Suriname – access to health in remote areas”.

¹⁰ See <https://www.medischezending.sr>.

¹¹ PAHO, “Medical Mission Primary Health Care Suriname”.

¹² PAHO, “It takes a village to save a woman’s life from cervical cancer”, available at <https://www.paho.org/en/stories/it-takes-village-save-womans-life-cervical-cancer>.

¹³ PAHO, “It takes a village to save a woman’s life from cervical cancer”.

¹⁴ World Health Organization, “‘It’s important to reach out to people where they are’: an interview with Dr H el ene Hiwat and Dr Hedley Cairo”, 13 April 2023.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ PAHO, “Health in the Americas: Suriname – country profile”, 17 October 2024.

¹⁷ PAHO, “HEARTS initiative boosts healthcare in Suriname”, 9 September 2024.

¹⁸ PAHO, “Health in the Americas: Suriname – country profile”.

foot or leg amputation) are due to a lack of care for patients, thus requiring a greater response from the State.

22. The Government has launched numerous innovative and forward-looking joint initiatives with PAHO. For example, the telehealth project is aimed at expanding health services to the interior of the country. Medical Mission Primary Healthcare Suriname is currently developing and implementing a web-based health information system which is aimed at improving quality of care through digitalizing data in electronic patient files, used for policymaking, strategic planning, programme tracking and disease surveillance.¹⁹ This solidarity initiative is innovative and underscores the importance of providing health clinics throughout the country. Inhabitants of one village explained to the Independent Expert that their only nurse was unable to retire because the State had not provided a replacement. The guarantee of basic healthcare for every community should be attainable within the next three years. Support for hospitals in the capital is important, but should be complemented by permanent, localized health clinics in the interior of the country.

23. The Government of Suriname is conscious of the significant effects that climate change will have on the country. Indeed, the devastating impact of climate change is already noticeable in the country, with shifting rainfall patterns, movement of populations and the emergence of new infectious diseases. Since December 2024, the Government has been working, in collaboration with PAHO, on developing a national health adaptation plan centred around the health challenges posed by climate change. A unified approach and collaboration across different sectors is crucial to assure resilience against the health threats posed by climate change. Together with PAHO, Suriname will conduct vulnerability and adaptation assessments to climate change in health facilities in 2025, which will lead to the creation of the national health adaptation plan. Suriname is also starting work on climate-resilient water safety plans and early warning systems for heatwaves and vector-borne diseases, making it a leader in the region in climate adaptation.²⁰

24. PAHO and the World Health Organization have expressed their commitment to supporting the Ministry of Health in working on the country's healthcare system.²¹ Moreover, TotalEnergies financed the upgrade of the emergency room at the Academic Hospital and provided portable X-ray units and three incubators for the neonatal unit at the 's Lands hospital. The procurement of supplies for the main hospitals should be complemented by the State, which should ensure the provision of supplies for future decentralized permanent health centres.

D. Migration solidarity

25. Suriname receives migrants from Brazil, Cuba, Guyana, Haiti, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and elsewhere. The Government partners with the International Organization for Migration to pursue solidarity policies to provide them with improved protection. For example, there is a draft law to regularize migration and facilitate access to education for the children of migrants, as well as access to healthcare. The draft law should be adopted in order to show solidarity with migrants, who should be integrated in the workforce and civic life.

26. Moreover, there is draft law that would implement the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, thus guaranteeing the integration of refugees. The Independent Expert encourages the State to adopt that law as soon as possible. Article 3 (4) of the revised draft declaration on the right to international solidarity provides that one of the general objectives of international solidarity is "to create an enabling environment for supporting refugee and migrant-centred approaches to the contemporary challenges of forced and irregular

¹⁹ PAHO, "Suriname: Medical Mission seeks to secure data quality on local and national levels with a more efficient health information system".

²⁰ PAHO, "Suriname working toward the development of health national adaptation plan", 18 December 2024.

²¹ PAHO, 'HEARTS initiative boosts healthcare in Suriname'.

migration, including efforts to increase opportunities for safe, orderly and regular migration and legal protections for migrants, including access to justice”.²²

27. Given the small size of the national population and the future needs of the oil and gas economy, it is important to adopt an immigration strategy to address the categories of specialists and labourers that will need to be integrated into society, requiring further investment in infrastructure, housing, schools and health services.

E. Environmental solidarity

28. Suriname has a vast rainforest (93 per cent of the territory) and is considered to be a carbon-negative country, as it absorbs more carbon than it emits, thereby constituting a role model of international solidarity for the environment. It has rich biodiversity, with 744 species of birds. The majority of the population live in the coastal area and in the capital. Suriname cooperates with the Agence française de développement (French Development Agency) to pursue renewable energy and protect biodiversity and has a programme on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD-plus). However, these policies are countered by increased deforestation and illegal mining, which pollutes the rivers and surrounding areas.

29. The State, Indigenous and tribal community leaders and international companies have due diligence obligations to prevent environmental harm. It would therefore be beneficial for the Government to disseminate an environmental solidarity campaign in which all parties commit to guaranteeing the right of all Surinamese people to a clean and healthy environment.

30. Suriname and the CARICOM Development Fund have an agreement to support energy access in the interior, combining solar energy with diesel fuel, including the installation of micro grids.

31. TotalEnergies is drawing inspiration from the Green Development Strategy of Suriname to keep the country carbon negative through protection of the forest and biodiversity. It provides funding to study and protect mammals and amphibians in the Kabalebo forest, research mercury levels in fish, replant mangrove and install a wave breaker system. It also aims to promote agroforestry among the Saramaka tribal community. The State should match these corporate initiatives with public programmes to ensure continuity of the programmes over the long term.

F. Possible solidarity for societal inclusion

32. The announcement of the creation of the Sovereign Wealth Fund to ensure that the profits from newly discovered offshore oilfields are distributed among citizens through revenue dividends is a positive development. Nevertheless, it is also important to connect the implementation of the Public Financial Management Act with solidarity strategies by pursuing long-term policies for the improvement of education, healthcare and infrastructure for everyone. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing provides a good framework for developing social welfare programmes to support older persons, families, young people, persons with disabilities and other persons in situations of vulnerability. The level of support should correlate with the cost of living in order to maintain an adequate standard of living. The Ministries of Health and of Education should also submit long-term solidarity plans for the improvement of access to essential services. They should submit specific budgets stipulating the solidarity aims to be achieved within three years.

33. The International Monetary Fund has called for “continued strengthening of well-targeted social assistance” in its 2024 consultation and eighth review of Suriname.²³ This indicates the need for ministries to address education, healthcare, social welfare and

²² A/HRC/53/32, annex 1.

²³ IMF, “IMF Executive Board concludes 2024 Article IV consultation and eighth review under the Extended Fund Facility arrangement for Suriname”, press release No. 24/487, 18 December 2024.

infrastructure and to design policies to improve services. Such initiatives require the adoption of transparent budget management and reporting practices. Similarly, the World Bank is supporting a strategy to boost economic resilience and inclusive development in Suriname that seeks to improve quality education and training, as well as preparing the workforce for emerging sectors.²⁴ The State should utilize such World Bank programmes to create alternative employment opportunities for young people who are trapped in illegal economies and to eliminate multidimensional poverty in the interior within five years.

34. Suriname has a National Financial Inclusion and Education Strategy (2024–2027), which aims to provide bank accounts for people living in the interior, who have traditionally remained outside of the banking system, and to improve connectivity in that region. Suriname has ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption and created an Anti-Corruption Commission. However, the Commission is not yet operational and corruption remains a threat to the fulfilment of a society based on solidarity. The Independent Expert recommends that the State strengthen civil society mechanisms for reporting corruption, especially in the light of the regret expressed by the Human Rights Committee at the lack of legislation to protect whistle-blowers.²⁵

35. Suriname also plans to create a national human rights institution that is in conformity with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). The institution will aim to support inclusion and protection of human rights throughout the nation through reporting and monitoring functions. The Independent Expert reminds the State of the need to heed the concern of the Human Rights Committees at reports of delays in finalizing the establishment of the institution and calls for more information on the role of civil society organizations within the institution.²⁶

36. Suriname has development initiatives for solidarity with the European Union, with the Inter-American Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, and with Barbados, Brazil, China, France, Guyana, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United States of America, among others. These entities and countries offer technical, training and financial support to address infrastructure needs, improve agriculture, manage and prevent health emergencies and respond to environmental or climate-related damage, such as flooding and deforestation.

37. The Chamber of Commerce of Suriname advocates an international approach to regional integration based on solidarity as the key to promoting increased economic exchanges and peaceful resolution of border disputes. It is an important body in terms of solidarity that can help design policies to improve the link between international companies, the State and civil society.

G. Reparations for past slavery as a form of solidarity

38. The Kingdom of the Netherlands has set up a fund worth 200 million euros to benefit descendants of enslaved people and other groups in the region, in Suriname and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with the aim of countering the harmful effects of the past in the present. Money from the fund will be allocated to public initiatives aimed at raising awareness, fostering engagement and addressing the present-day effects of slavery, while the establishment of an independent commemoration committee has also been proposed. It will also be made easier for people to change their surname if the name is linked to slavery.²⁷ The programming of activities and allocation of funds will take place in consultation with descendants of enslaved people and other relevant parties. Following the apology given in 2022 by the Prime Minister, Mark Rutte, for the past actions of the State, dialogue has been

²⁴ World Bank Group, “New World Bank strategy to boost economic resilience and inclusive development in Suriname”, press release, 1 October 2024.

²⁵ CCPR/C/SUR/CO/4, para. 7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 6.

²⁷ Kingdom of the Netherlands, “Nederlands kabinet stuurt voortgangsbrief slavernijverleden naar Tweede Kamer”, 23 June 2023 (in Dutch).

ongoing between Suriname and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.²⁸ Within the discussions, particular attention has been paid to the perspectives of Indigenous and Maroon tribal communities.²⁹

1. Slavery Past Memorial Committee

39. In December 2022, the Kingdom of the Netherlands announced the establishment of a Slavery Past Memorial Committee to increase social awareness of the country's past involvement in slavery and the consequences thereof. It conducted consultations with Suriname about its participation in the Committee, which has a yearly budget of 8 million euros,³⁰ and which assumed its official functions on 6 January 2025.³¹

2. Response of Suriname

40. Suriname was already in discussions with the Kingdom of the Netherlands regarding possible reparations before the above-mentioned official apology was made, with the current President of Suriname, Chandrikapersad Santokhi, having continuously promoted cohesion in society.³² In response to the apology, the President of Suriname indicated that he would seek to work jointly with the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to establish a reparations programme for the descendants of slavery in the country, noting that everyone must be able to recognize themselves in that process.³³

H. Challenges

41. During her visit, the Independent Expert met with a wide variety of stakeholders who raised challenges that may hinder the full enjoyment of the right and duty of international solidarity within Suriname. In article 9 (1), the revised draft declaration on human rights and international solidarity provides that "States act in compliance with their duty ... to realize international solidarity ... relating to the promotion of environmental protection ... education, health and food and nutritional security."

42. In article 3 (3), it provides that the general objectives of international solidarity are to create an enabling environment for "preventing and reducing asymmetries and inequities between and within States in realizing sustainable development, with particular attention paid to structural obstacles, such as systemic discrimination, that generate and perpetuate poverty and inequality".

1. Weakness within political institutions

43. Political parties are often based on ethnicity and ministries organize themselves accordingly, resulting in high turnover rates. Formal participation in governance does not necessarily guarantee greater inclusion of communities within the scope of State services. Public sector management requires strengthening. The small population results in clientelist practices such as the *kruiwagen* (wheelbarrow), in which a person seeks assistance from a high-ranked personal acquaintance to get something done or receive access to services.³⁴

²⁸ See <https://www.government.nl/documents/speeches/2022/12/19/speech-by-prime-minister-mark-rutte-about-the-role-of-the-netherlands-in-the-history-of-slavery>.

²⁹ Kingdom of the Netherlands, Letter of the Minister for the Interior and Kingdom Relations, also on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, to the House of Representatives of the States General, 11 February 2025, on progress slavery past.

³⁰ Kingdom of the Netherlands, 'Oprichting Herdenkingscomité Slavernijverleden verserkt erkenning en bewustworden', 11 February 2025 (in Dutch).

³¹ Kingdom of the Netherlands, Letter of the Minister for the Interior and Kingdom Relations, also on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, to the House of Representatives of the States General, 11 February 2025, on progress slavery past.

³² Suriname, "President Santokhi firmly rejects ethnic sentiments", available at <https://gov.sr/president-santokhi-wijst-etnische-sentimenten-resoluut-af-2/>, accessed on 6 May 2025.

³³ See <https://gov.sr/president-santokhi-wijst-etnische-sentimenten-resoluut-af-2/> (in Dutch).

³⁴ Wouter Veenendaal, "Does smallness enhance power-sharing? Explaining Suriname's multiethnic democracy", *Ethnopolitics*, vol. 19, No. 1 (March 2019), pp. 10–12.

Traditions of public patronage promote civic passivity and limit the possibility to support an active society based on solidarity and the participation of all. Moreover, due to the lack of capacity, there is a phenomenon of “double hatting”, which results in a risk of conflict of interests and weakened independence within State institutions, the media and civil society. Legislation is often delayed or can be withdrawn before adoption due to external pressure placed on politicians. Improvement of the independence, capacity and accountability of government institutions is the key to adopting an approach to governance that encourages solidarity, guaranteeing the enjoyment of human rights and the attainment of sustainable development by all.

44. The creation of an inclusive public administration programme, recruiting from all sectors of society, would be beneficial to professionalize staff within the various government agencies and create a solid bureaucratic foundation for the State. The Government should seek to counter the perception of graft as an inescapable side effect of governance, instead adopting a “solidarity for anti-corruption” campaign, upholding the objectives of international solidarity contained in article 3 (7) of the revised draft declaration on international solidarity: “Combating corruption and illicit financial flows through investigation, asset recovery, tracing and freezing of the proceeds of corruption and the return and allocation of stolen funds to victims, where possible.”

45. The absence of regulation of government procurement is highly problematic and complicates implementation of projects intended to improve infrastructure supporting the integration of marginalized communities. There is a significant lack of clarity regarding the rules governing the withdrawals for governmental expenses and how that money should be allocated. It is important to note that the Savings and Stabilization Fund is not authorized for independent spending; instead, the Government controls both the expenses of the Fund and the allocation of its money.³⁵ The law requires the Minister of Finance and Planning to propose a yearly budget. Once it is accepted by the National Assembly, the Government is allowed to withdraw that maximum amount of money from the Fund for governmental expenses.³⁶ The Minister of Finance and Planning can still propose emergency withdrawals from the Fund, as stipulated in the Accountability Act, following the approval of the National Assembly.³⁷ There is thus no clear maximum on how much of the Fund’s assets the Government is able to spend each year. The Savings and Stabilization Fund Act lacks specific guidelines on how the Fund’s resources should be allocated.

46. The Sovereign Wealth Fund is central to paying back the refinanced \$650 million Eurobond creditor debt that is set for 10 years at a 7.95 per cent interest rate.³⁸ The prioritization of the debt repayment to the bondholders places a limit on the amount of funds that will be available to support social welfare and infrastructure projects. Therefore other sectors, such as revenue from gold-mining and taxation, will be expected to provide a foundation for measures taken to improve the social service sector, which requires transparent accounting.

47. The Central Bank of Suriname governs the Savings and Stabilization Fund independently and will work together with the Investment Committee and the Board of Directors to ensure positive control of the Fund.³⁹ The Investment Committee is set up to give guidance to the Board with regard to the investment strategy, daily governance and financial risks.

48. The Savings and Stabilization Fund Act also provides for the establishment of both an internal and an external auditing committee to ensure compliance and effective control of the Fund. Most notable is the external auditing committee, which will control the annual budget and give a statement regarding its findings. The statement will be published in the annual report of the Fund to promote transparency. The accountant has to abide by the International Standards on Auditing. It may prove problematic that the Act is not specific

³⁵ Savings and Stabilization Fund Act, adopted 30 December 2024.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, art. 5 (2).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, art. 6 (5).

³⁸ The agreement includes a value recovery instrument that will provide additional revenue to the bondholders based on oil revenue.

³⁹ Savings and Stabilization Fund Act.

about who the external auditing accountant will be and how he or she will be selected. The Act provides that every five years, an external auditing committee will be appointed, but it does not specify whether the same accountancy firm can be chosen more than once.⁴⁰ To counter corruption, an adequate external auditing committee is crucial. It is important that the Act contain strict rules regarding the term of the auditing committee. For example, external auditing committees should have temporal limits to enable rotation of members.

2. Solidarity against transnational crime

49. Situated at the intersection between North and South America, Suriname attracts transnational criminal organizations, which carry out smuggling operations into the region and to other continents through the country.⁴¹ Law enforcement bodies in Suriname face serious challenges with porous borders and dense jungle terrain.⁴² The Suriname Police Force (Korps Politie Suriname) is the national law enforcement body, serving under the Ministry of Justice and Police, with the specialized police units being in the capital, Paramaribo.⁴³ Suriname Police Force statistics show an alleged significant decrease in general criminality (theft, burglary and robbery) since 2018, except for the number of homicide cases, which rose from 38 in 2018 to 53 in 2020, and cases of suicide, of which there were 31 in 2018 and 54 in 2020.⁴⁴ In partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Suriname is taking steps towards improving public safety and security by combating illicit trafficking of firearms, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 16. Initiatives include a firearms training course, through the Global Firearms Programme, aimed at enhancing the skills of the staff of the Public Prosecutor's Office of Suriname, the Directorate of National Security, the Suriname Police Force, and the customs and coast guard authorities in the detection, investigation and prosecution of firearms trafficking.⁴⁵

3. Solidarity against hate speech

50. A primary concern of many stakeholders is the increased use of racialized and ethnic stereotypes and hate speech among politicians, including on social media during election campaigns. The Ministry of Justice and Police has increasingly conducted investigations into such activity.⁴⁶ Suriname is developing an anti-discrimination law and aims to train staff of governmental and non-governmental organizations in its implementation. The Human Rights Committee expressed concern about the lack of information on complaints relating to discrimination and hate crimes, suggesting that there was "a lack of public awareness of the legal remedies available, a lack of trust in the judicial system and fear of reprisals".⁴⁷ That Committee was also concerned that "national law does not explicitly include gender identity in the list of prohibited grounds relating to discrimination and hate speech [and] ... about the lack of legal recognition of same-sex couples, which results in same-sex couples facing discrimination, particularly with regard to access to social security and pension schemes".⁴⁸ In 2025, the District Court ordered the Central Civil Affairs Bureau to register same-sex couples who married abroad.

51. Article 3 (8) of the revised draft declaration on human rights and international solidarity provides that one of the general objectives of international solidarity is to create an enabling environment for countering misinformation, disinformation and hate speech with facts, science and knowledge. Political parties should be discouraged from pursuing polarizing, discriminatory narratives through social media that risk rupturing the solidarity

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, art. 18.

⁴¹ See <https://www.interpol.int/en/Who-we-are/Member-countries/Americas/SURINAME>.

⁴² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), "Training in Suriname on the detection, investigation and prosecution of illicit trafficking in firearms".

⁴³ See <https://www.interpol.int/en/Who-we-are/Member-countries/Americas/SURINAME>.

⁴⁴ See <https://politie.sr/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/persconferentie-22.10.2021.pdf>.

⁴⁵ UNODC, "Training in Suriname on the detection, investigation and prosecution of illicit trafficking in firearms".

⁴⁶ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/meeting-summaries/2022/08/experts-committee-elimination-racial-discrimination-commend-suriname>.

⁴⁷ CCPR/C/SUR/CO/4, para. 13.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 15.

that exists within this diverse society. The lack of public discussion about the relevance of ethnicity and the legacy of slavery affects young people, often making them insecure about their national identity and inciting them to move abroad in search of confirmation of their ethnic identity within the Caribbean or another area.

4. Exclusion of the Indigenous and tribal peoples of the interior

52. The situation of the Indigenous and tribal communities that are dispersed throughout the interior of the country is compelling as they live at subsistence level, often lacking potable water, electricity, healthcare and employment. It is estimated that over 25 per cent of the population in the interior lives below the poverty line. These communities have indicated that they are completely excluded, despite the delivery of emergency humanitarian aid, and feel abandoned by both the Government and the international community. They claim that political parties seek their support during elections, but never deliver on their promises. There is a lack of health clinics, legal aid services and banking services. Both the regional health system and the medical missions are fragmented and not consistently functional, in spite of international support.⁴⁹ One of the most significant challenges is the recruitment and retention of specialist healthcare workers, including nurses, in the interior.⁵⁰ The establishment of transparent accounting mechanisms is essential to modernize the healthcare system, along with incentives for the retention of nurses and health specialists.

53. The Independent Expert supports the recommendation made by the Human Rights Committee, that Suriname “implement and expand ongoing initiatives to decentralize the judicial system, including through the establishment of Legal Aid Bureau offices and the holding of judicial proceedings in remote areas of Suriname, with a particular emphasis on addressing practical challenges faced by Indigenous and tribal peoples in obtaining access to justice”.⁵¹ Similarly, patent enforcement is lacking, affecting Indigenous Peoples who seek to protect their cultural knowledge.

54. Another key challenge in Suriname is the urgent need to increase the number of and access to elementary schools, high schools and vocational training schools to ensure that future generations can participate in civic society and pursue a broad spectrum of careers. Communities in the interior have expressed the concern that the State was deliberately keeping them uneducated.⁵² Young people in these communities are deprived of the right to plan the future they want as there are very limited educational and employment opportunities.

55. At present, there are few primary schools in the interior. Those that do exist often start late in the calendar year. In addition, children are often prevented from attending school due to climate change, as rivers are subject to drought or flooding, preventing transportation to schools. Teachers are unwilling to accept postings to the interior due to the lack of potable water, electricity and housing. Indigenous and tribal young people who would like to attend high school have to migrate to the capital. Many of them cannot afford to live in the city or meet other costs. Within the city, qualified teachers also leave the country due to the low salaries and the lack of basic school infrastructure and teaching materials. This includes teachers within the areas of medicine and nursing.

56. In Suriname, the education rates are extremely low; only 15 per cent of women and 6 per cent of men complete tertiary education. Young men from the interior are placed in vulnerable situations due to the lack of higher education opportunities, vocational training and alternative career options. They take up hunting, fishing, logging and mining. Their exclusion from organized activities and vocational paths renders them susceptible to recruitment by people offering financial reward for participation in illegal economic activities that might be harmful to their health and well-being. International companies indicate the need to increase vocational and technical education programmes to meet the demands of the new economy. It may be possible to create programmes in which young men are sponsored

⁴⁹ See <http://www.rgd.sr/>, and PAHO, “Medical mission primary health care Suriname”.

⁵⁰ PAHO/World Health Organization (WHO), “PAHO/WHO Country Cooperation Strategy: Republic of Suriname 2023–2025”.

⁵¹ CCPR/C/SUR/CO/4, para. 38 (a). See also CERD/C/SUR/CO/16-18, para. 22, and CEDAW/C/SUR/CO/4-6, para. 12.

⁵² Hans Buddingh, *A History of Suriname* (Leiden, Sidestone Press, 2022), chap. 16.

to pursue careers that provide an alternative path to mining or working in the black-market economy. The Government would also benefit from designing new educational programmes for its young people in order to allow them to pursue careers within the oil and gas sectors, as well as mainstream sectors, including services and tourism.

57. Many young women become mothers at an early age, which presents an additional obstacle to their ability to pursue higher education. The Government should explore the possibility of creating special programmes to encourage young mothers to participate in education.

58. It is imperative that the international community support Suriname in designing an international solidarity education plan that would increase the construction of fully equipped schools, the provision of adequate teachers' salaries, the development of educational programmes and materials in local and traditional languages, and the establishment of scholarships and the infrastructure necessary to support teachers and students, in particular those from the interior. At present, dropout rates from primary, secondary and vocational schools remain high.⁵³

59. In 2024, the Inter-American Development Bank approved a \$40 million project to focus on English language skills, digital skills and skills for developing tourism, information and communications technology, agriculture and industrial maintenance.⁵⁴ This solidarity initiative seeks to support the sustainable development of Suriname and to reverse the backward trends in education. The Government should guarantee full transparency in the implementation of this project.

60. Suriname has transnational solidarity challenges as it suffers from the brain drain of its teachers, nurses and doctors to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Belgium, the United States of America and to countries in the Caribbean. The international community should cooperate to ensure that Suriname is able to retain its teachers, nurses and doctors by addressing the issue as an international solidarity concern for all. Kenya has provided nurses to Suriname in an act of international solidarity.

61. The ties of Suriname to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Caribbean and other regions present possibilities for international solidarity approaches to improve education, healthcare and environmental aims. The large diaspora living abroad (about 350,000 persons) is a possible resource that could be enlisted to cooperate with local entities to design international solidarity initiatives for Surinamese young people. Such initiatives could promote participation in sports clubs, music and arts programmes in the interior and in the city, civic service programmes to expand health and legal aid around the territory and environmental protection. There is a need to promote role models for young men to counter the influence of drug traffickers who provide a dangerous image of masculinity and wealth.

62. Telecommunications companies should also be enlisted to provide international solidarity education for communities in the interior, using artificial intelligence, connecting them to the educational institutions in the capital.

I. Need for solidarity for Indigenous and tribal people's land rights

63. Suriname is the only country in the region that has not recognized the collective rights of Indigenous and tribal peoples to their territories. Deforestation is a serious concern due to the expansion of logging within Indigenous and tribal territories. Recognition and implementation of Indigenous Peoples' territorial rights is considered to be intrinsic for their cultural survival.⁵⁵ The parliament is processing the adoption of draft legislation on the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples and tribal peoples. Indigenous and tribal peoples have

⁵³ UNICEF Guyana and Suriname, "Suriname Minister of Education endorses commitment to action in foundational learning", press release, 1 February 2024.

⁵⁴ IDB, "Suriname to improve students' English language, digital skills and skills for work with IDB support", news release, 27 June 2024.

⁵⁵ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, *Indigenous and tribal people's rights over their ancestral lands and natural resources: Norms and jurisprudence of the Inter-American human rights system* (OEA/Ser.L/V/II, Doc. 56/09), 2010.

indicated that they were not consulted on amendments to the draft legislation. The Government states that it will apply the free, prior and informed consent standard for future contracts, including the memorandum of understanding between the Aluminium Corporation of China (Chinalco) and the Government concerning the bauxite mining project worth \$426 million, after it received criticism from Indigenous Peoples for excluding them.

64. Moreover, it would be positive for the State to ratify the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) of the International Labour Organization as another commitment to international solidarity with Indigenous and tribal communities. The Government should respect the principle of free, prior and informed consent in all projects that affect those communities.⁵⁶ Indigenous and tribal peoples are in dire need of the establishment of a patent office to protect their property rights regarding traditional knowledge of biodiversity, medicine and cultural design ideas.

65. It is notable that Maroon and Indigenous Peoples engage in storytelling, participatory mapping and other cultural activities to claim their land rights from the State.⁵⁷

66. In a handwritten submission, one of the interlocutors with whom the Independent Expert met made the following requests: (a) clean and healthy drinking water; (b) better healthcare; (c) improvement of education and living facilities; (d) improved access to electricity; and (e) most importantly, recognition of land rights and protection of land against commercial exploitation.

67. An official map marking Indigenous and tribal communities in Suriname highlights areas where gold-mining is either being explored or exploited. It is also evident that logging and other practices are conducted in areas close to Indigenous and tribal villages. From the map, it is clear that some Indigenous communities live close to or in areas where land is currently exploited for commercial purposes.⁵⁸

68. The Government of Suriname entered discussions with representatives of Indigenous and tribal communities on land rights in 2017 and drafted legislation that gained approval from the traditional authorities in 2019. The approved draft legislation primarily concerned the collective rights of Indigenous and tribal people regarding their traditional land and residential areas. It also recognized the international principle of free, prior and informed consent, demarcation and their rights regarding cultural integrity, self-determination and benefit-sharing. The draft law was submitted to the parliament by the Government, yet was unilaterally amended in 2020. On 15 June 2021, an amended draft was presented to the parliament and put on the agenda of the parliament once again at the beginning of 2023, after having been amended once more. On 18 February 2025, a new draft was submitted to the parliament regarding land rights for Indigenous and tribal peoples. That draft was heavily criticized by the public because it had been drawn up without the prior consent of the Indigenous and tribal communities and contained amendments that weakened the previously agreed land rights.⁵⁹ The draft legislation was not adopted because the Committee of Rapporteurs referred to the public protests and established that the principle of free, prior and informed consent always needs to be upheld.⁶⁰

69. Pursuant to article 3 (2) of the draft law, Indigenous and tribal peoples would be able to gain land rights over their assigned “traditional living and residential areas” only if a representative of the community submitted a request to the Minister in charge of distributing land rights. That submission would need to be approved first by the Government before the Minister could award the land rights. Neither the draft law that was approved in 2019 nor the

⁵⁶ CERD/C/SUR/CO/16-18, para. 24.

⁵⁷ Giovanna Montenegro, “Saamaka: Protest mapping and ecology in Suriname”, *English Language Notes*, vol. 62, No. 1 (April 2024).

⁵⁸ See <https://www.gonini.org/>. The following Indigenous communities are recognized on the map by the REDD+ Assistants Collective: Trio, Wajana, Arowak, Caraib, Saramaccan, Aucan, Paramaccan, Aluku, Matuarian and Kwinti. See also <https://www.surinameredd.org/en/who-is-involved/reddplus-assistants-collective/>.

⁵⁹ M.P. Wong, “Standpunt ACT Guianas inzake Nota van Wijzigingen Concept-Raamwet Collectieve Rechten van Inheemse en Tribale Volken, terug naar af”, GFC, 24 February 2025 (in Dutch).

⁶⁰ See <https://www.dna.sr/nieuws/regering-vraagt-meer-ruimte-voor-wet-collectieve-rechten-inheemse-volken-en-tribale-volken/> (in Dutch).

amended draft from 2021 contained such a clause. This amendment would, in effect, mean that Indigenous and tribal peoples do not have collective land rights.

70. The definition of the term “traditional living and residential areas” has been changed. The new draft law contains a much narrower definition, as it leaves out the following important sentence, which was inserted in the 2019 version and was maintained in the version submitted in 2021: “Also recognized as traditional living and residential areas are traditional agricultural, hunting and finishing land, historical, spiritual and holy places and areas that provide other living necessities such as building materials, medicinal, cultural or spiritual plants, recreation and protection”.⁶¹

71. Hence, Indigenous and tribal peoples’ ability to claim land rights over those areas will be restricted if the new legislation is adopted. Moreover, the definition of Indigenous and tribal people differs in the new draft legislation, in which only “tribes living in Maroon communities” are considered to be tribal people and “tribes that are the descendants of the original inhabitants of Suriname” are recognized as Indigenous Peoples. Compared to the draft legislation of 2019, these definitions are very vague and therefore weakened. The 2019 draft legislation provided that all the Indigenous and tribal peoples were to be named and their living and residential areas were to be specifically identified and mapped out in recognition of their collective rights.

72. Notably, the right to self-determination is completely absent from the new draft legislation. In the previous draft, Indigenous and tribal peoples’ right to self-determination was recognized. The clause on benefit-sharing has also been amended, leaving much ambiguity with regard to the percentage of revenues Indigenous and tribal people will have.

73. As a member of the Organization of American States, it is hoped that the Government will strengthen regional solidarity by pursuing full implementation of the judgments of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights addressing Indigenous and tribal land rights and fulfilling accountability standards.⁶²

74. Tensions and security incidents between the Surinamese population and the police often arise out of recurrent and systematic violations of the human rights of Indigenous and tribal peoples. Indigenous persons being stripped of their land titles has caused outrage, leading to, for example, an armed raid of a State-owned company in 2023, which created a conflict with the police. This resulted in the death of two Indigenous protesters, which was never clarified by the police, with the Government simply portraying the protestors as “terrorists”, while Indigenous people described them as freedom fighters, defending them against human rights violations, abuse and oppression by the Government.⁶³ The Independent Expert was informed that Indigenous people in these villages feel unsafe and are intimidated by the police. This feeling is intensified by the police allegedly writing down people’s names, taking photos, searching cars and buses, and with logging companies being protected by the military and the police.

75. In July 2023, several special procedures of the Human Rights Council sent a joint communication to the Government, raising concern about the excessive and lethal force used by the police in Suriname and about the lack of legal recognition and protection of Indigenous Peoples’ rights.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Wet Collectieve Rechten Inheemse en Tribale Volken, 15 June 2021, art. 1 (in Dutch).

⁶² Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Liakat Ali Alibux v. Suriname*, monitoring compliance with judgment, 9 March 2020; *Moiwana Community v. Suriname*, monitoring compliance with judgment, 21 November 2018; *Saramaka People v. Suriname*, monitoring compliance with judgment, 26 September 2018.

⁶³ See <https://iwgia.org/en/suriname/5389-iw-2024-suriname.html#:~:text=The%20Indigenous%20people%20of%20Suriname,Tirio%2C%20Tareno>.

⁶⁴ See <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=28173>.

J. Impact of extractive industries on Indigenous and tribal peoples

76. It is estimated that 40 per cent of mining concessions fall within Indigenous and tribal communities in Suriname.⁶⁵ Suriname offers enhanced tax incentives to multinational mining companies, facilitated by a 2001 investment law. Mining areas are marked by societal problems, such as alcohol and drug abuse, requiring social programmes to help families and young people, such as those run by the Stichting Liefdevolle Handen organization.

77. Indigenous and tribal peoples are concerned that the corporations that are engaged in extractive industries within their territories do not provide transparent, accessible mechanisms for them to submit solidarity demands regarding land rights, labour rights and environmental rights. Cases involve the lack of potable water, exposure to toxic substances, such as the mercury and cyanide used in gold mines, which enter the basic water source and contaminate fish, injuries and deaths in mines, noise and environmental pollution, violations of land rights and lack of restitution or compensation for displacement or eviction from property. Indigenous and tribal peoples are often left without an independent forum for effective dispute resolution. Neither extractive companies nor State bodies respond in a timely manner, leaving Indigenous and tribal communities abandoned and unprotected. Environmental civil society groups often act in solidarity with Indigenous and tribal peoples' actions, calling for respect for land rights.⁶⁶ One community member expressed frustration about the continuous encroachment of a mine on tribal territory, asking "Where does the village begin and where does it end?"

78. Article 6 (3) of the revised draft declaration on human rights and international solidarity provides that: "Non-State actors also have the duty to respect the right to international solidarity. Non-State actors uphold this duty ... by providing transparent, accessible mechanisms for communication and response to solidarity demands presented to them by civil society, labour unions, Indigenous Peoples and other groups." Moreover, article 7 (3) provides that "States agree to take appropriate steps, individually and jointly, including within international organizations, to conduct assessments of the actual and potential risks to and impacts on human rights, including of their national laws, policies and practices, and of the conduct of non-State actors that they are in a position to regulate, to ensure full compliance with their human rights obligations, including towards future generations."

79. The State and extractive companies should consult Indigenous and tribal peoples before signing mineral or other agreements. These communities should be given the right to participate in decisions affecting their lives, including access to employment within the extractive industry, education and training, clean water and sanitation, adequate healthcare, safety, and restoration of environmental areas. Moreover, they should be given compensation for violation of their property rights.

80. International companies are increasing their stakeholder engagement programmes due to increased attention to their potential impact on human rights and the environment. There are programmes that have outreach meetings with communities to consult them on issues relating to the environment, health, employment issues, expectations and problems. These meetings are important because they give communities a voice and encourage them to suggest solutions to common problems.

81. Indigenous and tribal peoples state that, since they are not educated, they are unable to apply for anything other than menial or janitorial jobs within international extractive industries, and international companies import large numbers of foreign workers who are qualified for better jobs. Indigenous and tribal peoples feel that they are excluded from

⁶⁵ Bethany Haalboom, "The intersection of corporate social responsibility guidelines and indigenous rights: examining neoliberal governance of a proposed mining project in Suriname", *Geoforum*, vol. 43, No. 5 (September 2012).

⁶⁶ Catherine Coumans, "Realising solidarity: indigenous peoples and NGOs in the contested terrains of mining and corporate accountability", in *Earth Matters: Indigenous Peoples, the Extractive Industries and Corporate Social Responsibility*, Ciaran o'Faircheallaigh and Saleem Ali, eds. (Abingdon, Routledge, 2017).

pursuing careers and improving their lives because of prior structural exclusion from education.

82. An example of new stakeholder engagement approaches was provided by TotalEnergies, which conducted stakeholder engagement sessions with communities in 2023 in Paramaribo, Saramacca, Coronie and Nickerie Marowijne and Commewijne to discuss concerns and expectations regarding protection of biodiversity, employment, oil development, local content, emergency response and environment and social management. A factsheet with questions and answers was compiled and shared with stakeholders. The company encouraged brainstorming and offered grievance communication channels by telephone, email, letter or oral statements delivered at stakeholder meetings. TotalEnergies offers scholarships for 24 students from four districts: Paramaribo, Saramacca, Coronie and Nickerie. The students will have the opportunity to pursue a four-year Bachelor of Science degree (possibly Master of Science) in the field of their choice at one of the higher education institutes in Suriname (Paramaribo). Moreover, TotalEnergies supports project management training for local community members in the Saramacca, Coronie and Nickerie districts. It provides training for local community members engaged in, inter alia, fisheries, beekeeping and hunting. It also funds homework support and mentorship for young people in Coronie and seek to promote science, technology, engineering and mathematics education in the hinterlands.

83. The scope of these stakeholder initiatives could be expanded and adopted by other extractive industry companies, as well as State entities.

K. Solidarity with persons with disabilities

84. Suriname has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Persons with disabilities in Suriname face various constraints in their daily lives and are marginalized from the rest of society. The Independent Expert was informed that an increasing number of children are being born with disabilities as a result of the non-regulated use of mercury in the gold-mining industry. In terms of transportation and accessibility, there are no laws or State programmes on making buildings accessible to persons with disabilities. This poses a major constraint in terms of granting them access to work and education. In meetings with various individuals and organizations working in the field, concerns were raised about the cessation of care transport due to lack of resources. A lack of policies to improve employment combined with inadequate welfare provision means that most persons with disabilities live below the poverty line.

85. Various organizations in Suriname are dedicated to assisting persons with disabilities to be part of society. Stichting Wan Okasi is an advocacy organization established in 2011 aimed at defending the rights of persons with disabilities by giving them a voice. In an open letter to the Government and the Independent Electoral Council of Suriname, which was shared with the Independent Expert, Stichting Wan Okasi advocated for the right of persons with disabilities to vote in a confidential setting. The National Foundation for Blind Care Suriname is particularly dedicated to helping people with visual impairments to function independently in society, regardless of religion, through providing tools and training.⁶⁷ Despite protests in 2022 and a petition submitted to the National Assembly, the Independent Expert was informed that the living conditions of persons with disabilities have worsened. A monitoring team, which was created by the President, promising improvement in collaboration with Stichting Wan Okasi, is currently at a standstill.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

86. **The State should utilize the framework of the Public Financial Management Act (2024) to pursue a human rights- and solidarity-based sustainable development strategy centred on strengthened governance institutions, public accountability and a commitment to support universal education and healthcare for all people within**

⁶⁷ See <https://hescf.org/projects/braille-reader-blind-students-suriname>.

Suriname through increased investment in human capital and infrastructure. Within that framework, Suriname should:

(a) Strengthen the timely adoption and implementation of draft legislation based on solidarity, including declarations of assets for public officials to prevent corruption, the draft procurement act, the draft consumer protection legislation, the law recognizing Indigenous and tribal peoples' land rights, the law regularizing migration, the Convention on the Status of Refugees of 1951 and reintroduction of the proposed road tax law to require trucks carrying heavy timber to pay for damage to roads;

(b) Ensure timely delivery of annual budgets and quarterly review of expenditures by ministries to ensure fair redistribution of resources to support public spending and social assistance and reduce the misappropriation of funds;

(c) Activate the Anti-Corruption Commission so that it can fulfil its mandate in a timely manner to protect informants and notify the District Attorney for the prosecution of cases;

(d) Implement the Children's Ombudsperson complaints mechanism within the next three years;

(e) Expand the participation of young people from the interior in the Youth Ambassadors and Youth Parliament programmes;

(f) Adopt a policy to promote employment, education and an adequate standard of living for persons with disabilities;

(g) Cooperate with international organizations and civil society groups to provide independent, external assessments of the human rights, societal and environmental impacts of the extractive industry projects within territories belonging to Indigenous and tribal peoples;

(h) Implement the judgments of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights concerning Suriname within the next three years;

(i) Apply the standard of free, prior and informed consent to all projects involving Indigenous and tribal peoples through transparent consultations;

(j) Support civil society groups to place solidarity demands on the State and international corporations by creating transparent stakeholder outreach mechanisms for communication and dialogue. The Government, companies and Indigenous and tribal communities should hold regular stakeholder consultations to create decentralized sustainable development plans based on solidarity that address social, environmental and economic aims to be implemented at all levels. International organizations, donors and civil society groups should support these initiatives;

(k) Create a mining sustainable development fund to finance projects for communities, provide revenue dividends and compensate damage to the environment and infringement of land rights, as well as addressing societal problems;

(l) Create decentralized permanent community based primary healthcare clinics in the interior and the capital;

(m) Ensure that all children and young people in the interior and the capital have access to primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational schools with appropriate infrastructure, including potable water, electricity, sanitation and access to information technology;

(n) Create incentives to recruit and retain nurses, healthcare specialists and teachers in the interior and the capital;

(o) Pursue data-based research on the relationship between intersectoral discrimination, including on the basis of ethnicity, and access to education, employment, housing and healthcare, and pursue research into both indirect and direct discrimination within the State and society.

87. The Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the European Union, the Islamic Development Bank and other donors should ensure that their grants abide by transparency standards and they should undertake human rights and environmental impact assessments of their projects in Suriname.

88. These structural measures will provide a foundation to improve the scope of enjoyment of health, education and infrastructure by all members of society. An adequate standard of living, the right to plan one's future, sustainable development and protection of the environment are possible if the State takes action to improve the quality of government institutions within the next three years.

89. The solidarity challenges faced by Suriname are significant, but not insurmountable. They require a "skipper's haul", in which even the captain has to help to change the direction of the ship. This brings to mind the scuttled Goslar shipwreck in the Suriname river, which is partially blocking the entry of ships. Although there have been some initiatives to clear the wreck, it remains in the river and serves as a reminder that solidarity requires real engagement by everyone – the State, civil society, Indigenous and tribal communities, international partners, companies, faith institutions and other stakeholders – to address common impediments to sustainable development.

90. The Government has an exceptional opportunity to design and implement effective solidarity policies and legislation, allocate the necessary budgets and operationalize its international obligations. With the participation of all relevant stakeholders, it is hoped that Suriname will achieve a fully inclusive society and serve as a role model for the international community.
