Opening Remarks by
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to the post-2015 development agenda
Panel II
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At the outset please allow me to thank the President of the 68th Session of the General Assembly, Ambassador John Ashe, for extending an invitation to me to Chair this panel discussion.

Suriname has the lead responsibility in the quasi-cabinet of CARICOM Heads of State and Government for: Community Development and Cultural Cooperation, which includes issues such as Culture, Gender, Youth and Sport.

In referring to a quote from John Stuart Mills, I quote "It is important that every one of the governed has a voice in the government" end quote, I stress the importance to enable and ensure meaningful participation of women, youth and civil society to the development efforts of countries.

Governments have the responsibility that their constituents lead healthy and productive lives and are empowered to participate at all levels of decision making.

That participation, not only as beneficiary but also as partners and agents of change, is often hampered by serious challenges.

Youth unemployment, increased rates of HIV infection, gender-based violence, unhealthy lifestyles leading the increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases, no incentives to stimulate youth entrepreneurship and issues related to equal access to education and targeted skills training, are just a few challenges I wish to particularly note.

One of the strategies in the Caribbean region to increase youth participation for instance is by creating a platform for youth in the region for strengthening policy formulation and empowerment.

The CARICOM Youth Ambassadors (CYA) programme is one of the outcomes that the region has for leadership development and youth participation.

The CYA’s are the region’s focal points for deepening the regional integration and development process through advocacy and peer education initiatives.
Since its inception (1994), the Youth Ambassador Programme has contributed to increased youth knowledge and awareness of CARICOM issues and priorities; has raised the profile of young people at the national and regional levels; and has assisted in integrating the views and perspectives of young people from across the Region into national, regional and international policy and programmes.

The Surinamese Government, cognizant of the importance of preparing youth to take responsibilities in decision-making, has instituted a Youth Parliament.

The youth Parliament is elected by the youth of Suriname every 3 years. Through the annual youth congress the NYP organizes, they provide the youth of Suriname the opportunity to speak-out and address the issues that are effecting the youth in their respective communities. Their priority issues and possible solutions are presented to policy makers. The Youth Parliament thereafter can monitor at what level their priority issues have been reflected in different plan of actions.

Our national youth policy is aimed at creating conditions for the full development of youth, which consists of a number of relevant issues, namely education and training, development and participation, protection and opportunities.

The policy promotes social participation as well as participation in the development process. Young people in disadvantaged and deprived areas with problems in the field of education, information, drugs, crime, will receive special attention as well as programs to curb adolescent pregnancy.

The development of human capital in addition to other factors of production is of paramount importance for the development of a nation.

But if we are to really tap the vast potential of youth we would have to reach youth modern information and communication technologies, including social media, while recognizing the dangers that exist with misuse of these technologies.

Youth participation is not genuine and becomes unproductive, when today’s realities are not taken into account; realities to reach youth at places that they frequent or use the language that they best understand.

Distinguished participants,

Women, including girls account for half of the world’s population and yet continue to face unspeakable challenges, many of which go unpunished.
Although women in many parts of the world have made considerable strides with regard to completion of education, especially at the tertiary level, many have not been shielded from the horrors of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, child and forced marriage as well as safe environments for girls to and from school.

These issues that seriously hamper gender equality and the empowerment of women should not be overlooked in the discussions for achieving sustainable development of our societies.

Any future development framework, which is inclusive and recognizes the value of civic engagement, has the potential of not only addressing the issues the world is faced with but also creates an understanding that all stakeholders are important to the successful achievement of the goals set forth.

Distinguished participants,

In closing these remarks I call on you to actively engage and to share your best practices, tools and mechanisms for the effective, inclusive and participatory roles for women, the young and civil society in the post-2-15 development agenda.