



**Statement by Ms. Sarah Browne at the Twentieth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on Agenda Item 4 “Discussion on the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum (economic and social development, culture, environment, education, health & human rights), with reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” Thursday April 29, 2021**

Madame Chair, Distinguished delegates

Good day, I am Sarah Browne, Parliamentary Secretary representing Guyana.

The Government of Guyana stands firm on the inclusion of our indigenous peoples in the national development agenda.

Among the many programmes being implemented, are the land titling of indigenous communities, the Community Service Officers programme and the Low Carbon Development Strategy.

We are working to ensure that indigenous peoples are included in the 20,000 online scholarships offered by Government as well as other training opportunities. This is complemented by efforts to improve ICT access.

His Excellency President Irfaan Ali is committed to the inclusion of our Indigenous people in nation building and leadership, and pledged to have greater participation by villages in government projects and increased representation on Government Boards. Government agencies are working with the elected community bodies to stimulate village economies with projects crafted and led by the residents. Access to health, education and training and other essential services are also a priority.

Madame Chair,

All of this is taking place in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Households in our indigenous communities have received Covid-19 relief cash grants and Government is working assiduously to ensure that all persons above 18 years are vaccinated. However, I reiterate the call for international assistance to countries like mine.

While our Indigenous peoples have the same fundamental rights and freedoms as all citizens of Guyana and enjoy equal protection of the law, the Amerindian Act creates a regime of additional or special rights. The protection of Indigenous rights, the preservation of their culture as well as their political, economic and social empowerment are central pillars of the policies of the Government of Guyana. I thank you.