



**Statement by H.E. Kitty Sweeb, Permanent Representative of the
REPUBLIC OF SURINAME
at the 54th Session of the Commission on Population and Development
virtually, 21 April 2021**

Madam Chair,

Suriname, like many other countries, confirms the challenges to our population and development programs due to the impact of COVID-19, and the need to closely consider the impact that it will have on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the sustainable development goals and targets.

We had made important advance with respect to the national population policy. This document is to supplement the Recovery Plan and the upcoming Development Plan for 2022 - 2027. However, in the last preparatory stages, we were confronted with the COVID-19 pandemic and have not been spared the negative consequences of it.

Our country was already facing financial difficulties prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our sovereign debt is high and the diminished value of our currency has resulted in an increase of prices of imported goods, including food. The situation has worsened by the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the government is taking the necessary measures to overcome this financially adverse situation. Because of our vulnerable economy and limited national resources, however, we will not be able to address these challenges in the short term.

Necessary measures have been taken to curb the number of infections; and they have yielded overall good results.

On the other hand, the negative impact of the pandemic on the socio-economic stability of many in the country is major. Due to the, sometimes total, lockdowns, a large number of men and women have lost their income. The education process has also been severely affected and students are still in an uncertain period as to when their classes will fully resume. Entrepreneurs are faced with sharply declining income. The tourist sector has come to a complete standstill. There are signs of an increase in the number of domestic violence cases.

With respect to the security of our food systems, the agricultural and export sector in particular is experiencing the negative consequences of COVID-19. The objectives of our agricultural policy are to guarantee food safety, in accordance with international health and safety conditions, to increase the contribution to the economy and employment, to promote innovative production systems and to reduce imported products by growing them ourselves.

Now, however, the impact of the crisis threatens the food supply, both in terms of local production and imports. For both, we are dependent on products that need to be purchased abroad with foreign currency. But with a high sovereign debt and reduced income from the mining and agricultural sectors, we run the risk that in the not too distant future we will not be able to meet the demand for food for our population.

Madam Chair,

Apart from the need to eliminate the visible material consequences of Covid-19, the psycho-social consequences also require proper attention. The financial situation in which we find ourselves complicates the establishment of a social safety net.