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Suriname

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PARAMARIBO, Suriname: Suriname says it is ready to facilitate the establishment of stronger relations between the newly formed Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

The pledge came during the inaugural meeting of UNASUR when Suriname's president Ronald Venetiaan joined 11 other Heads of States of South American countries in Brasilia (Brazil) to establish the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR).

In his address to the special UNASUR summit, Venetiaan argued that since Suriname joined CARICOM in 1994 the country gained significant political, socio-economic and other experiences and therefore could contribute considerably to the integration process in South America and building a bridge between CARICOM and South America.

The Surinamese Head of State further noted that for an adequate integration process it is imperative that besides individual initiatives of the member states, the integrated regional space is being utilized to find resolutions for the serious issues and problems.

Since dialogue started in 2004 in Cuzco, Peru, to establish the UNASUR, Suriname has participated actively in the discussions in the conviction that common geographical, historical and geopolitical factors define a collective future for the peoples of South America, said Venetiaan.

While member states should promote democracy and the rule of law, fight against poverty and tackle escalating fuel costs, improvement of education systems should be high on the agenda, Venetiaan added.

Guyana, the second of only two CARICOM nations on the South American mainland also signed the treaty of the newly formed alliance which is designed to strengthen political cooperation and dialogue between member states and to advance continental integration. The founding members of UNASUR are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela.

The new alliance is also aiming at finding solutions to the current food crisis, along with boosting financial independence for the region, while UNASUR also advance integration on politics, economics, society, culture, energy, the environment and infrastructure.

While the Heads of States has signed the treaty their parliament still need to ratify the agreement. UNASUR will have a revolving presidency and bi-annual meetings of the foreign ministers while the organization is structured to have a general secretariat, headquartered in Quito, Ecuador, with a rotating presidency with Chile's president Michelle Bachelet as the first chairman.

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