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NATIONAL REPORT: S U R I N A M E

(Item 3.b on the Agenda)

**NATIONAL REPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME AT THE
THIRTY-SECOND ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES OF THE INTER-
AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN**

GENERAL ASPECTS

The Government Policy Statement 2000-2005 on gender policy states that the participation of women will be optimally integrated in the development policy and planning. The national legislation will be amended and focused on compliance with the Convention on Women's Rights. Within the communities gender balance will be promoted.

Currently, the third CEDAW status report covering the period 1999–2002 is being prepared. It is a combined report of Government agencies and NGO's. The report will be presented this year to the U.N. CEDAW Commission.

From 2004-2008, the Republic of Suriname is a member of the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women. For Suriname, this means that efforts related to women and gender policy will be intensified and that the results of these efforts will be disclosed beyond the borders as well. Also, Suriname has the responsibility to contribute to the further execution of the tasks of this Commission.

The Commission on Gender Regulation that is charged with making recommendations and proposals to amend discriminatory regulations presented a 1st draft with proposed amendments in January 2003 and is currently preparing a 2nd draft with amendments and regulations to be adopted.

**FOLLOW-UP ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN PROGRAM
ON THE PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER
EQUITY AND EQUALITY AND THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION OF THE
CIM**

a. LEGAL, POLITICAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

Legal situation:

The Constitution provides for the principle of equality between man and woman (Article 8 paragraph 2). There is no specific statutory protection against cases of discrimination on account of sex and no statutory regulation that provides for a special institute where women can find protection against discrimination on account of her being a woman.

The only recourse for a woman being discriminated against on account of her sex is the regular court of justice. At present, a draft bill is being prepared that provides for sanctions in cases of discrimination on account of sex and includes the establishment of a complaints department. Furthermore, the Constitution stipulates in Article 35 paragraph 2 that man and woman are equal before the law.

Political situation:

The Republic of Suriname is a democracy based on the sovereignty of the people and the respect for fundamental rights and liberties (Article 1 paragraph 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Suriname).

The President is the highest authority of the Republic of Suriname, Head of Government, Chairman of the Council of State, Chairman of the Security Council and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. In his absence the Vice-President, who is Chairman of the Council of Ministers, acts as President.

The legislative power is exercised by the National Assembly and the Government. The National Assembly consists of 51 members and is elected for a period of 5 years through general elections. The National Assembly approves the socio-economic and political policies of the Government. On a regional level there are 2 representative bodies, the district councils and the administrative area councils. The composition of the District Council and the Administrative Area Council takes place after the general elections that are held every five years in the relevant district and administrative area respectively. The District Council is the highest political and administrative body of the district and the Administrative Area Council is the highest political and administrative body of the administrative area.

The executive power rests with the President. The President, the Vice-President, and the Council of Ministers constitute the Government.

The judicial power consists of the President and Vice-President of the Court of Justice, the substitute members of the Court of Justice, the Attorney-General at the Court of Justice, other members of the Public Prosecutor's Office and the judicial functionaries appointed by law.

Socio-economic situation:

Suriname is a multi-ethnic society of ± 450,000 people composed of the indigenous people, Maroons, Creoles, Hindustanis, Javanese, Chinese, Lebanese, Brazilians, and descendants of Europeans.

The official language is Dutch.

Suriname has the following natural resources: timber, hydropower potential, fish, shrimp, bauxite, iron ore, small quantities of nickel, copper, platinum, and gold.

The primary export products are: bauxite, alumina, crude oil, rice, vegetables, shrimp, fish and fish products, wood and wood products.

In 1998, by Government Decree, more than 1.6 million hectares of tropical rainforest in the west of Central Suriname was established as the Central Suriname Nature Reserve. This reserve consists of 3 important areas that were formerly protected, namely: the Raleighvallen Nature Reserve, the Tafelberg Nature Reserve, and the Eilerts de Hann Gebergte Nature Reserve. On November 29, 2000 the Central Suriname Nature Reserve was placed on the world heritage list by the UNESCO World Heritage Commission.

Suriname has a number of social services, namely:

- the Old Age Pension;
- child benefit;
- health insurance (via the National Health Service (SZF), or private health insurance companies, the medical aid card of the Ministry of Social Affairs).

The financially weak are eligible for a medical aid card and financial aid. Financial aid is issued to persons or households where the amount is dependent on the number of persons in the household.

b. OUTLINE OF PUBLIC POLICIES AND PROGRESS MADE WITH RESPECT TO LEGISLATION

In June 2001, the Suriname Government presented the Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan in which the different points of action (23) are included by Ministry. The coordination of the implementation hereof is in the hands of the Ministry of Home Affairs. A number of points of action have already been implemented or initiated, such as:

Point of action 1: Supplementing and amending the Criminal Code so that violence against women and domestic violence are recognized as separate statutory injustices.

Status: The Commission on Gender Regulation has submitted for approval amendments to the Criminal Code with regard to penalization of domestic violence and amendments of several articles on violence against women.

Point of action 2: Lifting the major gender inequality in the judiciary by positive discrimination of women in the selection of judicial functionaries in training.

Status: In 2003, 9 women and 1 man were selected for the above training, which has already started.

Point of action 3: Establishing and equipping 3 victim rooms by the Suriname Police Corps.

Status: 2 victim rooms have been established in Paramaribo and 1 in the Nickerie District.

Point of action 4: Designing structures and starting work on the amendment of the national legislation to conform this to - and focus on the compliance with - the Convention on Women's Rights.

Status: In this regard, the Commission on Gender Regulation proposed several amendments for the compliance with the conventions on women's rights, in particular the Belem do Para and the CEDAW conventions.

Point of action 5: Eliminating discriminatory provisions in the Personnel Act.

Status: See above point of action 4.

Point of action 6: Gaining insight into the gender inequality relating to the participation of boys and girls in education.

Status: Started in 2004. STASCARIBE in cooperation with the Anton de Kom University.

Point of action 7: Initiating gender awareness in kindergarten pupils.

Status: Already in progress.

Point of action 8: Pushing back mother and child mortality rates (perinatal mortality) as a result of complications in the pregnancy and childbirth.

Status: already in progress.

Point of action 9: Including sexual harassment in the workplace as a statutory injustice and establishing an independent institute that deals with sexual harassment complaints.

Status: The Commission on Gender Regulation also submitted a proposal for penalization of sexual harassment in the workplace.

In August 2001, the Ministry of Home Affairs established the Commission on Gender Regulation that is charged, among other things, with making proposals to amend the national legislation with due regard for the conventions on women's rights and the Constitution.

The Commission has submitted proposals for amendment or adoption of regulations, such as:

1. The Personnel Act (Article 69 paragraph 3, Article 15 paragraph 1a, Article 47 paragraph 9a and Article 45 paragraph 4) that deal with discriminatory provisions on the reproductive function of the female civil servant.
2. Furthermore, amendment of the Resolution on Traveling and Secondment (Article 4), the Criminal Code, and adoption of the Act on Penalization of Stalking.
3. In addition, the following is being prepared:
 - Adoption of the Act on Equal Treatment of Men and Women and the adoption of the Complaints Department Act.
 - Amendment of the Nationality and Residency Act, the Identity Ordinance, the Elections Act, the Decree on Voting, whereby discriminatory provisions in aforementioned legislation will be eliminated.

Furthermore, in December 2003, the training "gender analysis in policy and planning" was held for the gender focal points of the various Ministries. The objective was to make the senior civil servants sensitive to the incorporation of a gender perspective in their policy and planning.

IMPLEMENTATION CIM STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION ON A NATIONAL LEVEL

The priority of the Surinamese Government is to execute the Integral Gender Action Plan (period 2000-2005). The plan consists of the Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan of the Surinamese Government and initiatives from the NGO's. The Integral Gender Action plan is based on the Beijing Action Plan.

Eradication of poverty of women

The Government has social services intended for the financially weak, including:

1. the Old Age Pension (AOV): intended for every citizen who has reached the age of 60.
2. Financial aid: intended for that part of the population under the poverty line (families, households and individuals on request). The total number of persons entitled to a benefit in 2001 and 2002 was 5,926 and 5,836 respectively. The majority is of the female sex.
3. Medical aid: about 60% of those who need assistance are women. The number of persons eligible for medical aid was 36,150 in 2001 and 37,032 in 2002.
4. Child benefit: provided on request to parents and guardians up to a maximum of 4 children per family. The total number of persons enjoying child benefit was 30,335 in 2001 and 27,863 in 2002.

The Government and NGO's are in the process of implementing several projects relating to agricultural production, economic strengthening, electricity and drinking water supply, telecommunications, etc. In cooperation with donor organizations, the Government has established funds to facilitate NGO's and Government agencies that are implementing these projects.

In the Multipurpose Development Plan 2000–2005, the special role of the women of the interior is recognized. In this regard, measures have been included to change the position of these women, such as adult education support, health care, agriculture, industry and marketing.

Financing

The number of members of the 2 largest credit cooperatives, GODO and DE SCHAKEL, consists mainly of women. GODO has a revolving fund for women in micro-enterprises to finance small-scale economic projects. DE SCHAKEL, in cooperation with the National Women's Movement (NGO) and the Women's Business Group Foundation (NGO), established a credit fund for women entrepreneurs of which the credit limit goes up to a maximum of a \$ 1,000.

Information Programs on Agriculture

In the period 2001–2003, the Government organized a series of informative programs on agriculture in rural areas, such as cultivation techniques, soil cultivation, plant enrichment, composting, pesticide usage, and poultry breeding. The number of women students was \pm 20%.

Land

In March 2002, the NGO Platform for Women and Development started the campaign "Land for Women" aimed at increasing the number of women that apply for and receive land.

Elimination of Violence

It is worth mentioning that one of the priorities of the Government is to include a module into the police training curriculum relating to intervention in situations of domestic violence.

The Commission on Gender Regulation, established by the Ministry of Home Affairs, also submitted proposals for amendment of the Criminal Code penalizing domestic violence, sexual harassment of girls as well as boys, rape within the marriage, trafficking in women, men and children. A draft bill on stalking is in preparation as well.

Furthermore, the cooperation between Government and NGO's (among others, Stop Violence against Women, Women's Right Center) is being strengthened by facilitating these NGO's in their fight against violence against women.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has initiated procedures towards the signing and ratification of the "U.N. Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplemental Protocols on Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons."

In 2003, the Ministry of Justice and Police established the Commission on Trafficking in Persons to combat the trafficking in persons with special emphasis on women and children.

EDUCATION

Gender training

Included for implementation in the Integral Gender Action Plan 2000–2005 is gender training for teachers, counselors, inspectors and headmasters to make them gender-aware in order to better guide the gender socialization process in schools.

Study information

The Bureau for educational information and study facilities of the Ministry of Education and Community Development (MINOV) provides information on possibilities to study in Suriname and abroad. The information pertains to formal education and is available to everyone.

Careers counseling is also provided by the Youth Welfare Foundation (they focus on information on formal education and various types of informal education) and the National Women's Movement (provides information on formal and informal education and career opportunities for girls and women in the field of engineering) with support from the Ministry of Education and Community Development (MINOV) via the Department of Information and the program *School Radio*.

Information Technology

Various knowledge centers have been opened by Educons providing students and teachers with the opportunity to attend training courses.

Teenage mothers

Regulations relating to the re-entry of teenage mothers and teenagers will be prepared. There is a pilot project called "Social Counseling" for student mothers with the objective to initiate and promote social counseling to student mothers so that they can function optimally in the educational process.

Literacy

Literacy programs for greater Paramaribo are provided by the Government and for the interior by NGO's.

(Reproductive) health education

In primary schools and schools for secondary education on junior and senior level, education on health in general and reproductive health in particular is provided through biology/nature education and the project Basic Life Skills. The LOBI Foundation is often consulted to provide educational programs on family planning and sex education in various educational institutes.

Careers in engineering

The Labor Mobilization Foundation (SAO) of the Ministry of Labor, Technological Development and Environment (ATM) organizes vocational training courses for dropouts and persons seeking employment. They are aimed at engineering skills, private enterprise, and specific business training courses for men and women.

The Foundation for Productive Work Units (SPWE) under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of ATM focuses on the promotion of the micro and small-scale private enterprise of men and women.

The National Women's Movement, in cooperation with the Labor Mobilization Foundation (SAO), is carrying out the project "Women in non-traditional professions" with the

objective to increase the role of women in engineering professions. The Women's Business Group provides training courses on the subject of self-employment and the development of entrepreneurial skills.

Access to education

The Ministry of Education and Community Development (MINOV) has initiated the renovation of the schools in the Brokopondo, Marowijne and Sipaliwini Districts.

Participation of women in power and decision-making as well as the situation of women with respect to work

As a point of action to be implemented, the Surinamese Government has committed itself to examining the possibilities on how to increase women's participation in political and administrative bodies, High Councils of State and management positions within the Government.

The Women's Parliament Forum (NGO), established in 1994 as a platform for women in politics, develops activities to increase women's participation in politics and to promote participation and contribution of women in the decision-making process.

In order to promote gender awareness of men as well as of women, the Women's Parliament Forum, in the period April/May 2004, organized the gender training course "Gender and Democracy" for political parties (about 30 participants) so that they can train their own senior staff to provide gender training courses within their respective parties. The organization also started a 50/50 campaign geared towards a proportional representation of women in policy and decision-making positions.

The decree on political organizations requires that the statutes of political parties mention that they are available for public inspection.

The requirements for electing representatives in the National Assembly, the Administrative Area Councils and the District Councils are not based on sex (Article 57 of the Constitution), whereby women are not excluded.

- the proportion between enfranchised men and women is \pm equal, namely 50%.
- in the period 1999-2002, the women's participation in the general council of active political parties increased from 15% to 20% compared to the period 1993-1998. None of the political parties has a specific women's section.
- for 3 consecutive administrations, the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly has been a woman;
- the number of female members of Parliament increased to 10 out of 51 members or 20% compared to 16% in the period 1996-2000;
- two of the 16 ministers are women. An increase of 13% compared to the previous administration, namely 6%;
- the Minister charged with the gender policy, since 2000, is a woman;
- the participation of women in the High Councils of State has decreased:
 - in the Council of State from 15% to 5% in the period 1999–2002;
 - in the National Auditor's Office and in the Labor Advisory Board the participation remained unchanged, namely 40% and 33% in the period 1999-2002;
 - in the Central Chief Polling Station an increase is visible from 22% to 44% in the period 1999-2002;

- the number of female lawyers and civil law notaries increased in the period 1999-2002 from 25% to 33% and from 10% to 22 % respectively;
- four of the departmental directors are women;
- as of 2002, the proportion of men and women holding a senior position in the Suriname Police Corps was 93 and 11 (10.6%) respectively;
- the proportion of women in civil service was 50% in 2002 compared to 35% in 1994;
- the percentages for the lower, middle, higher, and top management are 47%, 38%, 67%, and 41% respectively;
- in the period 1999-2002 there is an increase visible in the number of women diplomats, namely 28% compared to 1998 (18%).

Situation of women with respect to work and health

Statutory measures:

- the Labor Act and the Civil Code make no distinction between the sexes and are applicable to all employees;
- Article 26 paragraph 1 of the Constitution stipulates that every citizen has the right to a job in accordance with his/her abilities.

The Ministry of ATM uses the following instruments to control women's unemployment: vocational education, employment-finding, and counseling for small-scale private enterprise.

The Constitution prohibits dismissal of men and women without legitimate reasons or on political or ideological grounds. Dismissal without a permit for dismissal issued by the Minister for ATM is null and void. The Commission on Gender Regulation, with regard to the reproductive function of the female civil servant, prepared proposals for amendments of discriminatory provisions in the Personnel Act with regard to marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth. In practice, these discriminatory provisions are not applied considering that pregnancy, childbirth and marriage are not considered valid grounds for dismissal of employees in the private sector.

Suriname knows no unemployment benefit. Unemployed citizens, via the Ministry of Social Affairs, may be eligible for financial and medical aid based on the established criteria. In Suriname, there are various accommodations for children of working parents, such as: day-care centers, shelters, nursery schools, and a combination of day-care center, shelter, and nursery school.

By means of labor tips (through radio and daily newspapers) and via the informative program *Wroko Afersie* on TV, the Ministry of ATM provides the community with information about the Labor Act and labor issues in Suriname.

Health

The Integral Gender Action Plan, for top priority implementation, includes pushing back mortality rates as a result of cervical cancer and, as priority two, pushing back mother and child mortality rates (prenatal mortality) as a result of complications in pregnancy and childbirth. The latter point of action is already being implemented.

Fifty-five percent of health care expenditure goes to secondary health care (public and private hospitals, medical specialists, laboratories, hospital drugs), 34% goes to prevention and primary health care (Bureau for Public Health (BOG), Regional Health Department

(RGD), Primary Health Care Suriname (MZ), general practitioners) and the remaining 11% is allocated to other aspects, such as training and administrative costs.

Health insurance:

- 24% of the population is insured through the Ministry of Social Affairs (financially weak);
- 28% (primarily civil servants) is covered by the National Health Service (SZF);
- 15% is covered via company insurance;
- 2% of the population has private insurance;
- 32%, ²/3 of the population has no health insurance.

55% of the persons insured via the National Health Service (SZF) consist of women.

Contraceptives are available throughout the nation. Usage is highest in the urban areas, namely 51.2%, in the rural areas 45.1% and in the interior 3.7%. Research shows that the highest contraceptives usage is in the category 20-29 years of age (50%).

Educational programs are provided by the Government as well as by NGO's and are accessible to and available for men and women alike.

HIV/AIDS

HIV-testing is done on a voluntary basis in Suriname. In the period 1998-2000, the number of HIV-positive women increased from 4.1% to 6.35% of the total number of Surinamese women. In the number of men there was an increase visible from 3.29% to 4.79%. Special attention is focused on pregnant women during the implementation of the national program. Pregnant women are tested as much as possible for HIV.

The Government and a number of NGO's are working on the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS through scientific research, workshops, informative meetings, radio and TV programs, shelter, counseling and care for HIV/AIDS patients and family members.

Cervical cancer

By order of the Ministry of Health, the LOBI Foundation started the national papsmear research project in 1997. In the period May 1998-2001, 59,000 women in the categories 30-40 years of age (34%), 40-50 years of age (22%) and 50-60 years of age (23%) were tested for cervical cancer.

Mother and child care

- The Bureau for Public Health (BOG) is preparing the policy on prenatal care and health centers. Pregnant women as well can get help at the RGD clinics and prenatal clinics of the hospitals. After childbirth they can turn to the health centers for the care of their baby.
- The Bureau for Mother and Child Care of the 's *Lands Hospitaal* is responsible for postnatal care.

National institutions responsible for the advancement of women

The National Bureau Gender Policy was established in 1998. This bureau, a department of the Ministry of Home Affairs, implements the policy initiated and coordinated by the Ministry. It also sees to the information flow to and from the gender units and NGO's. It continuously updates the Guide "Gender-oriented Actors", which gives an overview of the women's organizations and donors that are registered with the bureau and which is aimed

at realizing further cooperation between the NGO's and the Government. Furthermore, the bureau coordinates the implementation of the Integral Gender Action Plan 2000-2005.

c. MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION ON THE PREVENTION PUNISHMENT AND ERADICATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (CONVENTION BELEM DO PARA)

In 2003, the Women's Rights Center (NGO), in cooperation with the IDB, held a seminar and congress on the approach to and control of domestic violence. In this regard, in March 2003, a training course on domestic violence was provided for lawyers, public prosecutors, assistant public prosecutors and police inspectors with the cooperation of external and internal experts. In addition, the Emergency Room of the Academic Hospital was trained in how to identify cases of domestic violence.

In 2001, at the initiative of the Women's Right Center, a committee consisting of representatives of NGO's, the University and the Ministry of Justice and Police began formulating a special Act on domestic violence. In anticipation of the completion of the special Act on domestic violence, the Commission on Gender Regulation, established by the Ministry of Home Affairs, already presented proposals for amendments.

The Government has taken several measures, including:

- Equipping and putting into use 3 victim rooms.
- Introducing a data monitoring system for the Suriname Police Corps so that now the domestic violence cases can be registered.
- Introducing a special unit on domestic violence and sexual offences in the Public Prosecutor's Office.
- Facilitating and participating in the national network for control of domestic violence.
- Establishing the Commission on Gender Regulation that is charged with making proposals to bring the national legislation in line with international conventions ratified by Suriname.
- Establishing the Commission on Trafficking in Persons in 2003 by the Ministry of Justice and Police that is charged with preparing policy measures, legislative measures, guidelines and procedures for the police corps and agencies.
- In 2003, the Ministry of Home Affairs provided the Foundation Stop Violence against Women with facilities in the Nickerie District to enable them to carry out their activities.

The Foundation Stop Violence against Women is the only foundation in Suriname that deals professionally with the individual care, guidance, counseling of female victims of violence.

- In November 2002, this foundation organized a 3-day conference with the theme "From women – towards systematic assistance";
- in October 2003, it organized a workshop in the Nickerie District aimed at initiating the process to define a plan of action for the control of domestic violence in Nickerie and to strengthen the network and the cooperation of the Foundation with others;
- it has its own database system.

Other NGO's that take steps with regard to the control of violence against women:

- STICRIS: shelter for women in crisis situations;
- The NVB: established the Ilse Henar Hewitt Institute to provide legal aid to women.

Future actions to implement the Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality and the Strategic plan of Action of the CIM

The implementation of the Integral Gender Action Plan 2000-2005 that is based on the Beijing Plan of Action and on the recommendations from the CIM Strategic Plan of Action. After the implementation of the abovementioned plan, a new plan will be drafted aimed at priorities of the Government, NGO's and the various commitments of international organizations.