Communiqué

Article 13 of Guyana’s Constitution declares:

The principal objective of the political system of the State is to establish an inclusionary democracy by providing increasing opportunities for the participation of citizens, and their organisations, in the management and decision-making processes of the State, with particular emphasis on those areas of decision-making that directly affect their well-being.

The operationalization of this fundamental national principle must be an outcome of the resolution of Guyana’s current political crisis. Since the submission of the report of the Constitution Reform Commission to the National Assembly on July 17, 1999, successive governments have failed to take the decisive action needed to implement the spirit of Article 13. As a result, the state of Guyana has lurched from crisis to crisis during its election cycles. In the process, its citizens are assaulted and traumatized by the stress and tensions caused by this flawed constitution. Today, Guyanese at home and abroad are asking many questions and expressing concerns about the present political situation and the economic consequences. There are deep concerns and fears about the ethnic polarization and unseemly racism that haunts the land. Guyanese citizens at home and abroad want homegrown solutions. They recognize that now is the time for dialogue.

The Guyana Renewal Project

Over the past few days, a group of concerned non-partisan Guyanese patriots developed a short document, “Proposal for Inclusive Governance Approach in Guyana,” that suggests a way forward. The proposal, which is anchored in the spirit of Article 13 and expresses a commitment to effecting the constitutional reforms required to ensure that Guyana becomes a just and caring society: a proud, independent, and respected member of the regional and international community.

We now share with you the core ideas of the proposal. We hope that you will lend your voice to this effort and, in so doing, play a role in the construction of the inclusionary democracy envisioned in Article 13.

The Key Idea

The proposal calls for an immediate period of inclusionary governance to provide a reasonable period for constitutional reform. It will also allow for the re-engineering of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) so that it can be modernized and be less vulnerable to interference.

How Will This Work?

The proposal has the following elements:

Format for Presidency, Prime Minister and Cabinet

- Presidency to be rotated (e.g., Israel and Afghanistan).
- Prime Minister position also to be rotated.
- Cabinet to include representatives from the two major political parties and the joinder party.

Practical Inclusive Governance at the Ministerial Level
• It is suggested that a structure be developed for sharing responsibilities in the ministries (e.g., a senior minister could be from one party and the junior minister from the other party).
• It is also suggested that technical committees that include stakeholders from the two major parties and the joinder party be established in each ministry.

Budget

• It is suggested that the national budget be passed by a two-thirds majority instead of the simple majority as is currently required.

Functional High-Level Committees

The establishment of two high-level committees is proposed as follows:

Executive Committee—Inclusive Governance

• To ensure the effective functioning of the inclusive arrangement.
• To select other representatives and parties for various levels of inclusive governance, e.g., boards and committees.
• To monitor, review, and revise the processes as required.
• Other duties to be further developed.

Executive Committee—Policy and Economic and Development Planning

The following is suggested:

Internal Cohesion and Decision-Making for Individual Parties

• To facilitate and ensure internal cohesion in the government, it is recommended that Internal Central Governance Committees be established:
  o to facilitate a collective approach to decision-making at the cabinet and individual party levels and
  o to ensure that the parties not lose their individuality as they contribute to the government.
• Internal central governance committees can comprise ministers and core members of the individual parties to facilitate high-level interactions and decision-making.

These are times that call for consequential and transformative decisions. Let us call upon our political leaders to show their stature and rise to the moment. This is the time for them to recall “our heroes of yore / Both bondsmen and free, [who] laid their bones on [our] shore.” By their decisions, our political leaders can take a bold step towards creating that glory that our ancestors “did not see.” They will provide a model for the youth. Call, text, and/or send a message to His Excellency, President David Granger and the Honourable Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, Leader of the Opposition. Tell them that we believe that this is the right step forward.

The Guyana Renewal Project

July 19, 2020