Press Release

Guyana’s Permanent Representative delivers strong Statement at OAS Permanent Council Meeting

On Wednesday, January 27, 2021, Ambassador Riyad Insanally, Permanent Representative of Guyana to the Organization of American States (OAS), delivered a strong Statement on Developments relating to the Guyana-Venezuela Controversy, to the Permanent Council.

Ambassador Insanally apprised the Permanent Council of the importance and continuing validity of the Arbitral Award of 1899, which settled the frontier between then British Guiana and Venezuela, in spite of Venezuela’s contention, arising in 1962, in the context of Guyana’s impending Independence, that the Award is null and void.

Ambassador Insanally explained that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is now being used as the means of settlement of the controversy, having been chosen by the United Nations Secretary General, under the provisions of the 1966 Geneva Agreement. Against this background, Guyana had instituted proceedings against Venezuela at the ICJ, on March 29, 2018 with the Court ruling on December 18, 2020, that it had jurisdiction to hear the case relative to the validity of the Arbitral Award.

Ambassador Insanally informed the meeting, however, that the Government of Guyana was deeply disturbed that, on January 7, 2021, the President of Venezuela had issued a decree purporting to establish a new maritime territory of Venezuela termed the “Territory for the development of the Atlantic Façade”, which claimed for Venezuela “sovereignty and exclusive rights in the waters and seabed adjacent to Guyana’s coast, west of the Essequibo River.”

Ambassador Insanally emphasised that no State can unilaterally determine its international boundaries and rejected the Venezuelan decree as “patently absurd and a decidedly unneighbourly and hostile act”.

What was worse, according to the Ambassador, was the fact that, on January 21, 2021, two Guyanese registered fishing vessels – the Lady Nayera and the Sea Wolf – operating within Guyana’s Exclusive Economic Zone, were intercepted by a Venezuelan naval vessel and forced to sail to Port Güiria, in Venezuela, where the boats and crews were detained and to date have not been released.

Ambassador Insanally advised that the Government of Guyana had registered its strongest possible protest at this unilateral resort to military force, calling for the release of the vessels and crews. He further stressed that Guyana remains a peace-loving country, respectful of the rule of international law, calling on Venezuela to participate fully in the ICJ proceedings and to accept its final Judgment, as it is obligated to do under the United Nations Charter and international law.

In responding to a bizarre intervention made by Mr. Gustavo Tarre, the representative of Venezuela’s National Assembly, in opposition, at the OAS, who offered a stark distortion of the historical facts relative to the Border Controversy and a rejection of the role of the ICJ, Ambassador Insanally expressed astonishment that he seemed to be taking the side of the bellicose Maduro regime and implying the same threats to Guyana’s territory and maritime area. This moved Ambassador Insanally to state, “This attitude is more than just ironic; it is absolutely misplaced and downright offensive.” The Ambassador went on to reiterate Guyana’s respect for the rule of international law and lamented the fact that both the Maduro regime and Juan Guaidó’s opposition...
were on the same page with regard to their lack of respect for the rule of international law in the matter of the Border Controversy.

Ambassador Insanally thanked Delegations and the OAS General Secretariat who made statements in support of Guyana’s position and also expressed gratitude to the Permanent Council for taking note of the recent disturbing developments.

*Permanent Mission of Guyana to the OAS*
*January 27, 2021*