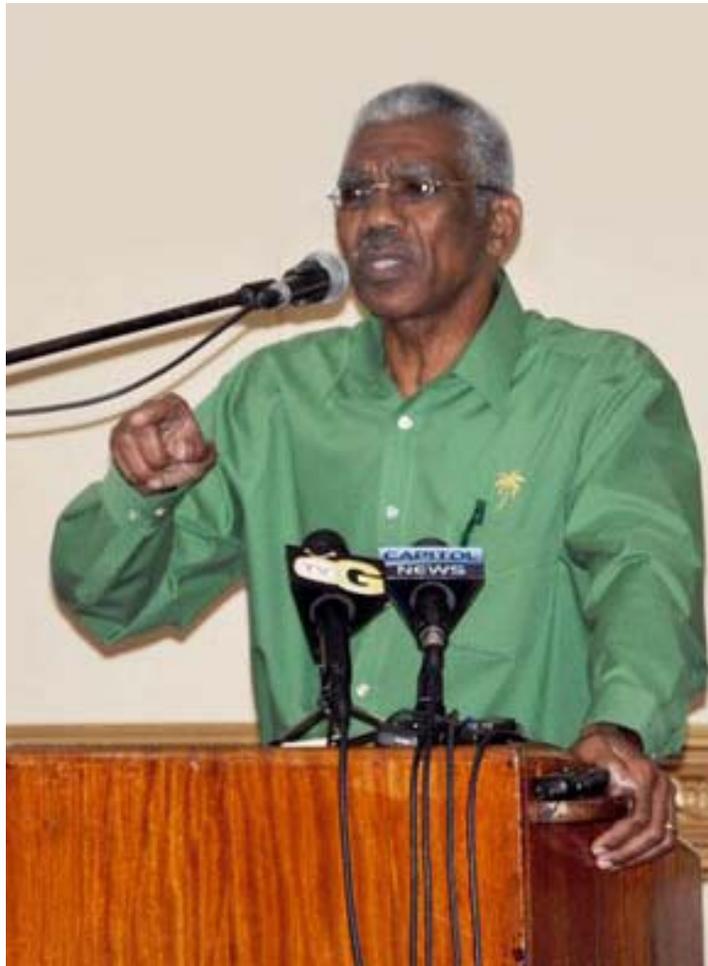


# Common Cause

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## **1. Citizen's covenant**

*Text of an address to announce the formation of A Partnership for National Unity on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2011.*

Guyana was born a broken nation four and a half decades ago. We gained Independence in a state of emergency - proclaimed during the strike by the Guyana Agricultural Workers Union, the trade union partner of the People's Progressive Party.

The PPP, in its disdain for national unity and its contempt for the public will, refused to participate in the talks to draft the Independence Constitution. It refused to participate in the Independence celebrations. It refused to occupy its seats in the National Assembly for several months.

The PPP is in office again and our nation is in a state of crisis again. Guyana is at breaking point after nearly nineteen years of PPP one-party rule. Our nation, today, is under siege. Arson and armed robberies, domestic violence, banditry in the hinterland, piracy on the coastland and murder in our communities have scarred our society. Poverty and unemployment have created an army of beggars, drug addicts, destitute people, wandering girls and street children. University graduates, talented teachers, nurses and thousands of ordinary citizens race to migrate in droves from their homeland.

A Partnership for National Unity makes a solemn covenant with the Guyanese people to work together to reunite our broken nation. We pledge to restore youths' faith in the future. We promise to promote real development that can be measured by:

- Youths who enjoy a good education and have jobs when they leave school;
- Workers who earn liveable wages;
- Women and vulnerable persons who are safe in their homes;
- Hinterland children who do not have to paddle corials to get to school every day;
- Fisherman and businessmen who are safe from attacks by bandits and pirates;
- Children who have hope for the future in the land of their birth.

A Partnership for National Unity takes this first step on the long and hard road to restart the unfinished work of the founders of this nation who fought for independence. We cannot build a unified nation, however, when the coastland succeeds but the hinterland suffers; when the lawless flourish while the righteous perish; or when an oligarchy prospers while the common people remain mired in poverty and despair.

Our partnership has decided to establish a Government of National Unity committed to concept of an "inclusionary democracy" and dedicated to the proposition that all Guyanese are entitled to a good life. We have much to do but, together, we shall succeed.

It is an honour for me to have been chosen to lead the team of men and women who are so committed. I thank the representatives of the Guyana Action Party, National Front Alliance, People's National Congress Reform and Working People's Alliance for their confidence in choosing me as their Presidential Candidate. I shall not disappoint the Guyanese people.

## 2. Inclusionary democracy

*Text of an address to launch A Partnership for National Unity on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2011.*

Our partners have a single mission ... a common cause. We are committed to give full meaning to our national *Constitution* by creating an "inclusionary democracy." Our *Constitution* has ordained:

*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 wellbeing.*

The time to seize those opportunities has come. Our task is to start to establish that "inclusionary democracy" for future generations to enjoy. Our task is to transform disunited parties into a government of national unity. As we look forward, however, we must recall how the self-government *Constitution* that was introduced almost exactly 50 years ago, on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1961 transformed political life in our nation. What should have been one step forward to political progress turned out to be two steps backwards on the road to social integration.

The political arithmetic of 1961 meant that a numerical minority was able to elect a governmental majority. The People's Progressive Party gained about 42 per cent of the votes and was awarded 57 per cent of the seats in the Legislative Assembly. The People's National Congress, on the other hand, with 41 per cent of the votes, won 31 per cent of the seats and the United Force, with about 16 per cent of the votes, won 12 per cent of the seats.

The social reality was that the major ethnic groups became mobilised, broadly, behind these three parties. Social dissimilarities aggravated political differences. 'Proportional Representation' - replaced the 'First-past-the-post' electoral system with the intention of cultivating coalitions. This, however, was inadequate to prevent ethnic polarisation as the years went by.

### **Tattered legacy**

Confrontation characterised the 'old politics.' Calculations of ethnic support determined election tactics. The 'winner-take-all' jackpot became the prize of every election. The political landscape became a battlefield, not always of ideas, but of racial rivalry. Communal conflict hampered human development. That system has now become dangerously dysfunctional. Our society, under the PPP's 19-year, one-party regime, has become more deeply divided than it has ever been at anytime for 100 years.

The tide of ideas in Guyanese politics has turned. Today - 15<sup>th</sup> July - marks the birthday of the 'new politics,' begotten by A Partnership for National Unity. We are more than a party; we are a movement. We are a movement to create a community with a common cause. We are a movement to reaffirm our common commitment to confront the challenges facing our nation. We are a movement to establish an equitable society, in a stable political environment with a prosperous economy. We are a movement, most of all, to secure the future for our youth and our children.

The People's Progressive Party is really desperate for the first time in two decades. The Council on Hemispheric Affairs' published an assessment in January - *Guyanese President Leaves a*

*Tattered Legacy*, accusing him of bequeathing "Stagnation, violence, corruption, arch-sectarianism, and unfettered crime" to posterity. What an abysmal but accurate farewell term report of President Bharrat Jagdeo's 12-year tenure.

- How does the PPP expect the people to be safe when Guyana's murder rate is three times that of the USA?
- How does the PPP expect the people to be hopeful when 7,500 children drop out of our primary and secondary schools every year?
- How does the PPP expect the people to be proud when two out of three children who wrote the National Grade Six Assessment Examination cannot pass English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies?
- How does the PPP expect the people to be happy when four out of ten children grow up in poverty?

The PPP must realise how it has failed the people. It has deprofessionalised our public services. It has demoralised civil society. It has debilitated the trade union movement. It has distorted the national economy. It has damaged the education system. The PPP has failed:

- Parents who want their children to be taught in schools with basic amenities;
- Students with qualifications who cannot find jobs in the economy;
- Workers who are crushed by an oppressive value-added tax;
- Fishermen and miners who dread attacks by pirates and bandits;
- Hinterland residents who yearn for water, light and roads;
- Coastland residents who yearn for protection from flooding.

The PPP has failed us because its entire set of political values is wrong. Its attitude to the trade unions is wrong. Its attitude to the private media is wrong. Its attitude to the University of Guyana is wrong. Its attitude to the Public Service is wrong. Its attitude to the Foreign Service is wrong. Its attitude to national insurance is wrong. Its attitude to public security is wrong. Its attitude to ethnic relations is wrong.

The PPP has offended against the basic principles of responsibility of any government to protect the lives of its own citizens. During the PPP regime, security forces have conducted torture. Death squads have carried out extra-judicial killings. The PPP's reckless mismanagement of public security has made us into a narco-state. It has sullied our nation's reputation in the Western Hemisphere. It has made us ashamed of the one thing we used to be most proud of our Guyanese-ness!

The PPP has failed because it cannot understand that a nation is not a plantation. It seems incapable of understanding that it cannot play politics with people's self-esteem, with their dignity and with their lives. The only way to stop the rot and save this nation from further decay is to bring an end to the PPP's experiment of playing with power. It is time for it to throw its Leninist style of governance into the dustbin of history where it belongs. It is time for the PPP to go.

### **Distorted economy**

The PPP's economic philosophy is not based on communism. It is not based on capitalism. It is based on cronyism. The PPP has spawned a new economic culture that is not a meritocracy. It is a kleptocracy. It springs from bribing, smuggling and trafficking. It is directed by people who place personal greed before the public need.

The PPP has been taxing, spending and squandering to cover its failure over the past 19 years. People do not mind paying taxes for a safer, healthier and a better-educated nation. They do not mind paying rates for running water and reliable electricity. People do mind paying taxes for under-employment, for under-education and for under-development. The PPP brags about big budgets. Its boasts, however, mask its dismal 19-year record of performance:

- Guyana remains poor. 43 per cent of the population is classified as poor, with 29 per cent considered to be living in extreme poverty.
- Guyana's productivity is low. According to the IMF, we are ranked 126<sup>th</sup> in terms of per capita GDP - even lower than some war-torn countries.
- Guyana is corrupt. According to the *Transparency International Corruption Perception Index*, we are ranked 116<sup>th</sup> out of 178 countries - 97 places behind Barbados.
- Guyana's quality of life is low. According to the *UNDP Human Development Report 2010*, we are ranked 104<sup>th</sup> out of 169 countries - 62 places behind Barbados.
- Guyana's crushing cost-of-living is holding our people back. The cost-of-living has increased three-fold during the PPP's regime.
- Guyana is an unequal society. A few people enjoy an extremely high income and many endure an extremely small income.
- Guyana's growth is hampered by extensive corruption and lack of economic and employment opportunities.

Our Partnership - A Partnership for National Unity - will erect an economy of opportunity. It will be built around strong investment, stable industries, robust agro-processing and manufacture. More young entrepreneurs will have a stake in such an economy. Mass under-employment, such as we see in Guyana today, has no place in a modern society. There must be full employment if ours is to become a society of which everyone feels a part. There must be full employment if the economy is not to fall apart.

We are in a battle for the workers versus the wreckers - the wreckers of stollings; the wreckers of sea defences; the wreckers of roadways. That is what this election battle election is about... construction versus destruction.

Thousands of young people pour out of our schools every year, most with inappropriate education or insufficient skills to find fulfilling employment. This is not just a waste of talent but the source of resentment and the cause of delinquency. The *Population and Housing Census 2002* puts the unemployment rate at 11.7 percent but anecdotal evidence suggests a rate that is substantially higher.

The main reason for this country's high rate of unemployment is the low rate of growth of the economy. This, itself, is the result of the absence of a strategic vision and a comprehensive economic development plan. The PPP cynically ignores the comprehensive *National Development Strategy* while it pursues capricious commercial hunches.

Economic transformation will come only from a dynamic economy based on a new social contract - a partnership between employer and employee, between capital and labour and between the public and private sector.

A Partnership for National Unity believes in a community working together for a common cause. Our watch-words will be "Consultation, Cooperation and Collaboration." Our approach is rooted in the belief that each citizen performs best in a strong and safe community of people who share common values.

### **Human Development**

Our approach is to encourage children to take pride in their home, their school, their village,

their neighbourhood, their region and their nation. Our approach is about teaching society to respect and protect the most vulnerable - the elderly, women and children, especially girl children. Our task is to apply those values to erase the contrived dividing lines between ethnic groups and between hinterland and coastland. Our objective is to:

- Break down the barriers of social prejudice;
- Break up the bastions of bigotry;
- Break out of past thinking, and;
- Break through with a new vision for Guyana's future.

Today's 'new society' is about the pursuit of a common cause in a changing country. Education, therefore, will be the preoccupation of the Partnership's administration. Guyana will become once again the education nation it used to be. In so doing, we shall not tolerate:

- A school system with ramshackle buildings and unkempt premises.
- A school system in which buildings are without running water and libraries.
- A school system with 1,200 unqualified and untrained teachers.
- A school system in which 10,000 children cannot pass English language at the National Grade Six Assessment Examination.

If the PPP Government cannot understand the importance of education it is time for Guyana to get a Government that does. It is time for the PPP to stop holding this nation back!

Our Partnership is committed to improving public security and human safety. Guyana's high rate of serious crime - armed robbery, arson, murder, banditry and piracy - is the result of 19 years of neglect. The PPP rejected the UK-financed *Security Sector Reform Action Plan*; ignored its own *National Drug Strategy Master Plan* and sidelined the *Report of the Disciplined Forces Commission*.

The Partnership will implement the long-outstanding plans to reform the security sector. It will bring a new approach that not only suppresses crime but also uproots the causes of crime, an approach that makes Guyana a safer place for our women and children.

The Partnership's politics differs from the People's Progressive Party's. We shall pursue the politics of consensus - working together for a common cause. Our people are tired of the 'know-all' politician who doesn't realise that he doesn't know everything about the economy, everything about the environment, everything about education. Our people have had enough of:

- Commitments for consultation at the height of a crisis which are abandoned' as soon as the crisis passes;
- Agreements to implement reforms which are abrogated as soon as they are signed;
- Assurances to correct abuses which are cynically disavowed as soon as they are uttered.

We have, at the core of our obligation to Guyana, a new covenant between the citizen and the government. We believe passionately that all Guyanese are entitled to the benefits of a 'good life' in the nation of their birth. The foundation for such a life rests on a sound education, satisfactory employment, economic opportunity, individual equality, political empowerment, a sustainable environment, good governance, national unity, public security and social protection for the vulnerable.

## **A Good Life**

Our Partnership will win because we are committed to the ideal of a "good life" for all Guyanese. Voters at the next elections will have had this PPP administration for 19 years. They have seen how the PPP has become a museum of an obsolete democratic centralism and discredited cronyism. They have seen how the PPP has become petrified - a mere monument. They have seen how the communism of its founders putrefied into the cronyism of its successors. A party that does not change, dies and the PPP is dying ideologically and intellectually. It has no ideas about how to change the nation. It has no interest in how to change the nation.

Our country cannot continue teetering interminably on the brink of catastrophe, staggering from crisis to crisis, sliding into the swamp of social decadence. The PPP, meanwhile, boasts not of change but of continuity. Continuity of what? Of corruption? Of crime? Of cronyism? Our Partnership is a living movement, not a historical monument. Our Partnership represents change - to a "good life", a bright future.

There are two kinds of people in Guyanese politics. On one hand are those who control the state television, the state radio and the state newspaper and prattle about democracy. On the other hand are those who support A Partnership for National Unity and practice "inclusionary democracy." The time has come for "inclusionary democracy" - ordained by our national Constitution - to move across the regions, across political boundaries, across ethnic barriers, across the generation gap.

We represent the national interest. We are on the side of the majority. We are the mainstream voice in politics today. We are the face of the future. Our common commitment is to give all Guyanese a "good life," We invite you to come with us as compatriots as we work together in our common cause to ensure that our children enjoy a great future.

God bless our children! God bless Guyana!

### 3. A Good Life for all Guyanese

All Guyanese are entitled to the benefits of a 'good life' in the country of their birth. The foundation for such a life rests securely on ten pillars - a sound education, satisfactory employment, economic opportunity, individual equality, political empowerment, a sustainable environment, good governance, national unity, public security and social protection.

**A sound education** is essential yet, every hour, one boy or girl drops out of a primary or secondary school somewhere in Guyana. Some of those who remain are unlikely to be functionally literate or numerate. The People's National Congress promises the nation that it will reverse this trend by ensuring that every single Guyanese child has a place in school and is given the opportunity to complete his or her primary education. To make this possible, our administration will restore the prestige and self-esteem of the teaching profession and repair the damaged educational infrastructure - especially our rural primary and secondary schools and the national university.

**Satisfactory employment** is the basis of a sound economy. Too many young adults still seek waged labour instead of pursuing private enterprise. When waged workers become unemployed, a vicious cycle - of impoverishment- miseducation-unemployment - can be triggered. The People's National Congress promises the nation that it will expand employment opportunities, especially for self-employment. It will also broaden the scope of business, technical and science education in our schools to enable young persons to embark on their own enterprises. It will extend micro-financing to small-scale entrepreneurs to enable them to be employed.

**Economic opportunity** will increase the wealth of the nation. The economy of every region in Guyana is based, to a greater or lesser degree, on agriculture yet there are few agricultural institutes and opportunities for training students in agricultural science and technology. The availability of appropriate equipment and machinery is also inadequate. This will change under a new administration. The People's National Congress promises the nation that it will exploit new avenues and will expand opportunities especially in the field of agro-processing and the production and exportation of non-traditional agricultural commodities.

**Individual equality** is based on mutual respect for other people's beliefs and culture. Each citizen is entitled to enjoy equal civil rights. A People's National Congress administration promises the nation that it will ensure that the police, magistrates and other officials treat all citizens - and particularly children, women and minorities - as equals. The education system will also pay more attention to the inculcation of values and standards that emphasise the principle of the equality before the law of persons of all ethnicities.

**Political empowerment** emphasises that political power comes from the people. Empowerment must not mean political contests that result only in victors and victims. The next administration will work towards restoring the bond of trust between the people and their government by making the latter accountable to the former. The People's National Congress promises the nation to ensure that empowerment - especially at the local, community and neighbourhood levels - becomes a process by which citizens deliberate on issues and make the decisions that affect their lives.

**The environment** - including the fragile coastal zone and the vulnerable hinterland - must be exploited for its mineral and agricultural wealth but must also be preserved for the good of future generations. A People's National Congress administration promises the nation that it will

pursue the economic exploitation of the country's natural resources in a balanced way. This will be based on renewable energy generation - in the form of wind, water and solar power - and low carbon development. It will maintain the sea-defence and drainage infrastructure and manage the water conservancies and the disposal of solid waste in a responsible manner.

**Good governance** must mean restoring the accountability of the executive branch and transparency of the legislature to enable the institutions of the State to respond to the needs of the people. The People's National Congress promises the nation that it will restore respect for the Offices of the Ombudsman and Auditor-General and other Constitutional Commissions. The PNCR administration will re-convene the Constitutional Reform Commission and implement constitutional reforms.

**National unity** is the basis of social cohesion. Distinctions based on age, class, ethnicity, gender and religion must be progressively eliminated from public life. The People's National Congress promises the nation that it will work to ensure that the cultures, rights and religions of all groups are respected, that anti-discrimination legislation is rigorously enforced.

**Public security** is the basis of human society. The crime situation is the most pressing and most depressing problem facing ordinary Guyanese today. The PPPC administration has ignored remedies to crime. It has assiduously promoted programmes which cannot solve the problem of banditry, piracy and criminal violence. The People's National Congress Reform is aware that armed robberies and other forms of criminal violence affect every sector of society. The PNCR administration will implement the recommendations of the Disciplined Force Commission and make this country safer.

**Social protection** must be extended to protect households and individuals - who can include less active poor persons such as the elderly, disabled and the unemployed - from the effects of multi-dimensional deprivation. The People's National Congress promises the nation that it will develop the capacity to reach the vast majority of the poor people and provide them with greater social protection. The PNCR will also reverse the approach of the PPPC administration which, after over 18 years in office, admitted that that its National Youth Policy is "outdated" but has resorted to irresponsible and time-wasting responses to the youth crisis.

