

# The Declaration of Vreed en Hoop

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The way forward for the People's National Congress Reform



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## **One Nation, One Mission**

The mission of the People's National Congress Reform is to provide a good life for all Guyanese. The Party must review its policies continuously in order to enable it to respond to the changing social, political and economic environment in the nation.

The Party, for five and a half decades, has demonstrated its consistent commitment to defend the democratic rights of citizens. It has, within the past two years, participated in three democratic processes – internal primary elections to choose a presidential candidate on 26th February 2011; general and regional elections as a member of A Partnership for National Unity on 28th November 2011 and the election of a new party leader at its 17th biennial congress on 29th July 2012.

The examples of these three events, the experiences of our history, the lessons learnt from consultations among members and the decisions of the Central Executive Committee and the General Council have refined and revived our Party's ideology. The ideas which emerged have been called the "*Declaration of Vreed en Hoop*" because this new approach was outlined in that West Demerara community. The *Declaration* is now ready for further deliberation, modification and adoption.

First, Party members are reminded of the many accomplishments of the PNC in government. They should be proud and not allow the prejudicial views of others to make them ashamed to speak out. The PNC, while in government, for example, reconstructed sea defences and the coastal road network; constructed the Soesdyke-Linden highway, bridges on the Canje and Demerara Rivers, the international airport at Timehri and the Mahaica-Mahaicony-Abary agricultural project, the University of Guyana Turkeyen Campus, housing schemes and other educational and infrastructural projects.

Second, Party members are encouraged to embark on a massive membership drive to strengthen and broaden the organisation's base. The Party's arms – the National Congress of Women and the Guyana Youth and Student Movement – should conduct countrywide recruitment campaigns. Increasing Party membership is a pre-requisite to increasing popular support for local, regional and general elections.

Third, Party democracy must be strengthened by the revision of the Constitution. Institutional measures must be introduced to ensure that senior-level leaders are elected only after the presentation of their candidature to local members. The rights and interests of members at all levels must be protected.

Fourth, Party members' participation in regional, neighbourhood and municipal councils must be intensified. These councils have been damaged or are being dismantled by the People's Progressive Party Civic administration. The Party must be ready to fortify grass-roots democracy by playing a greater role in local government countrywide and by providing solutions to rural and agrarian problems.

Fifth, the Party must be totally committed to ensuring equality for all and to protecting citizens' fundamental rights. The brutish treatment of youths in some villages at the hands of the PPPC administration and the Police Force must be brought to an end. The Party should define itself as an advocate for social justice and the defender of fundamental rights in Guyana.

Sixth, the Party must continue its assault on inequality of opportunity and must remove impediments to equal access to public services. It is a citizen's birthright to have his or her basic needs met. Information, communication and education infrastructure in hinterland and coastal areas, which fosters the development of citizens, must be improved. The Party must work to ensure that central government is more responsive to the people's needs.

Seventh, the Party must wage war on poverty. Its policy must be geared to increasing wealth...not to perpetuating poverty. People must become more enterprising and the Party must help its members to improve their livelihood and to seek economic independence. A sound education is essential if people are to produce more and children must complete their education if they are to find gainful employment.

Eighth, the Party must embark on economic enterprises to expand economic production throughout the country. The rural economy in several regions has been damaged. Unsatisfactory drainage and irrigation, inadequate infrastructure, rampant youth unemployment, tenuous land tenure and shrinking economic opportunities – especially in crop farming and animal husbandry – still plague many rural regions.

Ninth, the Party's historic relationships with civil society, religious organisations and trade unions must be strengthened. The PPPC administration, over the past two decades, has undermined the bargaining power of the larger public sector unions. The Party now has the responsibility to restore the integrity and viability of working people's and non-governmental organisations.

Tenth, the Party must remain committed to achieving national unity and to improving relations with all communities and groups. The Party must work towards promoting the principle of inclusionary democracy within A Partnership for National Unity. The electorate, on 28th November 2011, indicated that it was fed up with the PPPC's style of 'winner-takes-all' politics. APNU had already brought about a 'sea-change' in the local political environment. The Partnership represents the future of politics.

These tasks are not all new. They have been the bases of the Party's ideology from its inception. They must continue to inspire members of the National Congress of Women, Guyana Youth and Students' Movement and People's National Congress Reform to fulfill their mission in the nation to provide a 'Good Life for all Guyanese.'

