

Caricom foreign minister to head OAS



Suriname's Foreign Minister Albert Ramdin, who was elected yesterday to a five-year term as the secretary general of the Organization of American States.

Suriname's Minister of Foreign Affairs Albert Ramdin was elected yesterday as the new secretary general of the Organization of American States (OAS) for a five-year term, urging multilateralism and calling on member states to be united in the fight against a changing global environment.

Ramdin was elected by acclamation following the withdrawal of Rubén Ramírez, the Foreign Minister of Paraguay. He succeeds Luis Almagro, who was first elected as OAS Secretary General in 2015 and re-elected in 2020.

Ramdin is the first Caribbean national to be elected to the top position at the OAS.

"In a world that is quickly evolving, the foundation of a strong democracy continues to be the cornerstone of freedom, justice and human dignity," Ramdin told the 56th special session of the OAS General Assembly.

"We realise we exist in challenging times, constantly and rapidly changing roads and as we face these challenges of the present and look towards the future, I believe it is imperative that we listen to each other, understand our different perspectives...while looking for common grounds."

He said that common ground could be found in multilateralism, security, governance based on the

rule of law and democratic principles, respect for human rights, adding “these exist in unison, they are not separate from each other, without one, the other cannot be fully attained.

Ramdin said he was counting on a “strong active relationship” with member states “as we identify and execute the way forward.

“As I stand here today, my commitment is absolutely to serve all member states of this organisation and I would like to reiterate our collective strength lies in our ability to work together ... as I said one cannot do it alone...unity requires collaboration, more specifically dialogue, consultation and collective resolve around the table...even when we have different view points,” Ramdin said. Ramdin, 67, who has served as Suriname’s top diplomat since 2020, and was previously the OAS’ assistant secretary general for two terms from 2005 through 2015, is pushing for greater efficiency in the organisation and highlighted the need for it to better support Haiti, which is facing a conflict against armed gangs with limited international aid.

“I believe every crisis must bring an opportunity which we must capitalise on. I am absolutely invigorated by the support receive from many all over the world and look forward to a very effective and productive time together,” he said.

T&T’s Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, Dr Amery Browne, said he is pleased to have contributed to Ramdin’s election.

“Minister Ramdin has been my close colleague as the Foreign Minister of Suriname and we have worked very well together on Caricom issues as fellow members of COFCOR (Council of Foreign and Community Relations).

He has also worked very well with Energy Minister Stuart Young on energy-related collaboration. He is a great friend of Trinidad and Tobago and we are confident that he will provide the principled leadership that is needed at this time from the office of OAS Secretary General,” said Browne.

Jamaica’s Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Minister, Kamina Johnson Smith said her country has all the confidence that Ramdin has the “necessary skills and expertise to build consensus among member states, to enhance synergies among the inter-American bodies and agencies to effectively engage the private sector and civil society to address issues such as poverty, food and energy security, climate change, irregular migration and violence against women and girls.” (CMC)