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CONTRIBUTION

from

Mrs Ruth DE WINDT
Secretary General of the National Assembly of Suriname

on

“Adapting to better cope with Covid-19”

Zoom Session
May 2021

Thank you, Mr President.

Good morning colleagues,

During the public meeting of Friday March 13th, 2020, the vice president of Suriname reported the first COVID-19 case in Suriname.

The necessary measures were immediately taken in the National Assembly. The months June and July 2020 were particularly challenging for us, because during that period the swearing-in of the members who were elected on the 25th of May and the inauguration of the President and the Vice President of Suriname took place. These extraordinary meetings are organized by the Parliament and are normally held in our building but because of the number of attendees the inauguration of the President was held in the open air on a square close to the Parliament building to decrease the chance of contamination.

After the first infections, our Parliament proceeded to hold most committee meetings virtually. Hand sanitizer devices have been placed in various places in the building and the wearing of mouth-nose mask have been made mandatory for Members, staff and visitors to Parliament. In addition, the temperature of everyone entering the building i.e. staff, PM's and visitors, is measured at the entrance. Receiving visitors is not prohibited but is not recommended.

We have also posted notices on our website that mail should be sent by email as much as possible and not in hard copy. There is also a visitor's mail box placed at the entrance of the building for those who cannot email.

With regard to the staff, we work from home as much as possible. Staff who must be present at the office work in shifts, which prevents a large number of staff from being in the office.

Our cleaning staff was trained by the Surinamese Public Health Office in cleaning equipment and areas to prevent contamination.

Committee meetings of the MPs are held via zoom as much as possible.

Finally, I would like to point out that the biggest adjustment that our Parliament has made is to change the settings in our large meeting room and this means that the members are now sitting at a safe distance from each other.

Mr President, I would like to thank you for this opportunity and express the hope that we will soon be able to say goodbye to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your attention

Ruth de Windt
Secretary General, Assembly of Suriname