



LEADER REMARKS

7th Biannual Conference of the Alliance For Change

11 JUNE, 2022

REVEALED WORD CHRISTIAN CENTRE
GEORGETOWN, GUYANA

**ALLIANCE
FOR CHANGE**



REMARKS BY:
KHEMRAJ RAMJATTAN
Leader of the Alliance For Change (AFC)

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Colleagues all, members of our AFC family, I am extremely proud to be here standing to address you at this our 7th Biannual National Conference of the AFC.

Some 17 years ago the formation of the AFC was seen with skepticism, cynicism and lots of criticism. Some mocked and scoffed at the efforts Raphael Trotman, Sheila Holder and others like David, Cathy and so many others put in to get this party on its feet.

Today as we walk together under the banner of the AFC in this journey for greater democracy and development, we still get blows from a variety of quarters. Many want to announce our death. But let me say this... "News of the death of the AFC are greatly exaggerated. It's fake news. The AFC is alive and kicking."

Since the time of our formation, we have seen a number of our comrades pass on, seen some resign, and yet others retire from active participation. But amidst all of that we have seen enthusiastically at our sides a new generation arise within our ranks. Such is the territory of organizational politics everywhere, continuity accompanied with newness.

Indeed, we were entering uncharted waters in 2005. And it was in the walking of that journey that we created the path. We were pioneers as it were, as there was no planned path. That the AFC has managed to successfully reach a 7th Biannual National Conference since its launch in 2005, is evidence of a tremendous commitment and dedication to our cause. Congratulations to all our members and leaders.

During that time it is exceptional what we accomplished as a party. At a Parliamentary level we won five or more seats in every general election held since 2006. Five, seven, twelve, and nine respectively. We won seats in every RDC at every Regional Elections held. We caused the PPP to be a minority Government in 2011. We gained Government in a Coalition with APNU during the 2015 to 2020 period.

And it that period of Government, we ensured that two historic and significant decisions which had to be made for the future of this country were actually made. I speak here of the signing of the Petroleum Production Agreement of 2016 and the right-sizing of GuySuCo in 2018. Generations to come will realize that those two decisions are what made Guyana transition from 'potential to actual'. The 'actual' today is that we have become the envy of the entire Caribbean and the wealthiest (per capita) nation in the Americas.

Firstly, on the rightsizing of sugar, we halted the flushing down of billions of dollars of good money into that black hole called GuySuCo. Today in whispers, which are getting louder and clearer, even the PPP Government is supportive of that rightsizing. And in all their hypocrisy, may soon continue right-sizing by closing Uitvlugt Factory. We knew the rightness of this decision on the sugar sector and only we could have made it. We were ahead of our time. If it was wrong, then ask yourselves this question..."Why is it the PPP Government not reopening any of the close estates it promised after spending some \$13 billion on the company in the last two years?" Their excuses today about bad weather, strikes, shortage of labour for sugar's debacle, are all hollow excuses. These excuses were reasons why we rightsized.

The second great decision we made, the signing of that Petroleum Production Agreement 2016 with Exxon, has put our country on the map. Notwithstanding its imperfections, it has caused us to already be the beneficiary of around US\$1 billion right up to today's date. If you did not know, the PPP Government left us in 2015 with a bankrupt economy, and a corrupt governance structure. We left them with a humongous largesse, that huge revenue stream which they had condemned as a rotten deal and which they said they will renegotiate when they get back into office.





Have they renegotiated? Just like their somersaulted on sugar, they are adamant that they will do no such thing. On both deals they fooled their supporters and all Guyana.

Today, colleagues, that investment in the oil and gas sector, has mushroomed into so much other investments, investments which were unimaginable before 2016.

What is strange in this land is that such a narrative which ought to “big us up” for being bold and brave is not forthcoming. Instead the chatteratis and parrots-up-in-the-tree continue to denigrate and demean us for having made decisions which will see the complete transformation of Guyana.

We also governed in a far superior fashion. Though there was less revenue going around, there was more transparency and accountability in all spheres of activity. Wherever the comparisons are made as against what we did and what is happening now, the result is certainly that the PPP has proven to be most punitive and unprincipled and discriminatory. Look how they are making our city of Georgetown into once again a garbage city, and humiliating the Coalition Municipal Council, as so pointedly articulated in yesterday’s Stabroek Editorial.

It is this regression in our national governance since 2020, which the AFC has to prevent and counter at the political level.

To do this we have to make the right turns. One such turn is getting back to the reasons for our successful emergence. As I recall, it was to bridge the racial/ethnic divide created by then existing PPP and PNC. That apart, it is to become the voice against corruption and discrimination.

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Colleagues, as you know my conception of bridging the divide must not mean we have to stop talking to either of the bigger parties nor to be antagonistic with them. Disagreements there will be but we must be sane enough to join hands together when that is required with either one to get the national interest secured and the common good enjoyed by all. It sometimes becomes an activity similar to dancing between the raindrops. We must realize that such is the hazardous occupation of a third-party in an ethnic-based political community as Guyana. In this regard, I am happy that this National Conference is going to deal with the issue of the Way Forward as regards to our association with our Coalition partner, APNU. The assessment and introspection has been called for and must be dealt with. The document which states the options have been circulated. I hope wise counsel will prevail and a decision in the best interest of AFC is collectively made.

But the right turns must include also more organizational work by our members within their communities to expand the Party's ground base; more fundraising activities to bring in the revenues to run the operations of the Party; more public speakers at the various social media sites and bottom house meetings to inform the public of our position on national and local issues; a sustained effort to get especially younger members and women included in party activities.

Indeed, Covid has reduced interactions face-to-face. But the effort has to be made notwithstanding. And just like we doing this conference partially by zoom, so can we do that kind groundwork via zoom, similarly.

Two often I have seen our members and some leaders being distracted and running with the fictions and fake news and myths created by our opponents. We must not be brainwashed. We must strive hard to distinguish reality from fiction. I want to caution that no news source whether newspaper or online news is free of biases and mistakes, but some news sources make an honest effort to find out the truths whereas others are a brainwashing machine. We must all put a special effort in neutralizing these biases and verify sources of our information. If we pretend that all news is news I have to remind us here be cautious. And as an intellectual giant of our time, Yuval Harari, says: "If you get your news for free, you might well be the product." What we read then is important. And good readers make better leaders.

Apart from getting accurate reports, we too must express ourselves with clarity so that our audience better understand and appreciate us and our Party. It is this clarity which will distinguish us from the other parties. Before it used to be that information is power; today it is clarity.



We are muddled by all kinds of information, we are given various propositions as to directions and courses to take on issues. We sometimes cannot discern the best choices. Our members and leaders have pressing chores in this hard guava season because as yet the oil monies have not reached us and the soaring cost of living is an existential threat. So in being occupied in surviving we may fail to properly investigate issues and to get our decisions right. The future of the AFC must not be decided then in the absence of such analysis because of this fight for survival. I want to ask for that special effort in each individual member here that we participate in the decision making processes which this liberal democratic party allows. We will not be exempted from blame and the bad consequences of our non-participation and bad decision making.

Finally, I urge that this party remains united with all players accepting the results of this National Conference elections. It has gotten very competitive to say the least. This is a wagon we must all circle. Being liberal democratic, and not a mass-based regimented organization, there is a certain fragility in membership and structure; and, results of an elections are bound to disappoint some. But we must quickly put our disappointments aside and ride the next wave together. In this regard all of our members' efforts are required.

Long live the AFC!
Long live Guyana!
God bless us all!

