Address by Hon. Moses Verasammy Nagamootoo, First Vice-President and Prime Minister of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana

(performing functions of the President)

to the

The Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) 2018 Biennial Conference

Theme: Transforming the Public Sector for Climate Governance

I am particularly pleased to welcome the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) and to commend the Association on its theme on this occasion.

Madam Ms. Katalaina Sapolu, Director of the Governance and Peace Directorate of the Commonwealth Secretariat;

Tan Sri Dr. Ali Hamsa, President of the CAPAM Board of Directors and former Chief Secretary to the Government of Malaysia;

Ms. Gay Hamilton, CAPAM Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer,

Guyana is pleased to receive you and as well as others in an accomplished group of experts.

I note that the distinguished CAPAM group has communicated its intention to discuss with us, over the next few days, what would be required for the mission to “Transform the Public Sector for Climate Governance,” which forms the theme of this 2018 Biennial Conference.
The Cooperative Republic of Guyana is keen to collaborate with and learn from all innovative ideas at this historic juncture when we ourselves are engaged in re-orienting and re-positioning our public sector to embark on the path of a green state agenda as well as management of our environment as we develop a new oil and gas industry.

The latter, oil and gas, is the new buzz in town, and brings with it new responsibilities for the public sector. While the focus would be to develop and implement strategies to secure the better life for our citizens, the public sector has to be prepared to grapple with environmental and climate governance challenges, as well as the green agenda as a whole.

The public sector is a critical stakeholder in and guardian of the national patrimony. The national patrimony cannot be divorced from climate considerations, any more than it can be separated from matters of economics relating to improving the lives of citizens. The integrated mandate of the public service - of the ministries, agencies and departments that constitute the public service - is to ensure improved human and social well-being within this framework.

We have seen the tropical storms, typhoons, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods and other natural disaster that are ravaging the world around us. Our sister Caricom state, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, is currently suffering from the effects of unpredictable weather changes, resulting in severe floods.

Climate change is real and all sustainable development will require partnerships and collaborations across borders. Our own Rupununi region experienced periodic severe flooding even when rains did not fall in this area, but our rivers swelled from waters flowing from across our borders as a result of deforestation in some areas in the vast Amazon region.
This reveals the reality of cross-border implications and the need for inter-state cooperation as climate change can affect countries that may not themselves be internally vulnerable.

Guyana’s Green State Development Strategy (GSDS), the framework for which is being refined, offers a 20 year national development plan and serves as a mechanism for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that have been adopted by all United Nations member states.

The GSDS is a customized plan specifically for Guyana, while the SDGs provide a global framework and context. The GSDS as a progressive policy document is underpinned with a focus on the following:

- Sound fiscal and monetary policy;
- Green jobs and inclusive economic diversification;
- Sustainable management of natural resources;
- Transition to renewable energy;
- Resilient infrastructure, green towns and urban public spaces;
- A healthy, educated and socially cohesive population;
- Good governance and strong institutions;
- Trade, investment and international cooperation.

All of the above would expand the mandate of the public sector, which should be characterised by “interdependency of strategic actions”. This in turn would require in the public sector available capacity, skills and technology to bring about strategic changes to current practices, to create a new mind-set for a ‘green state’ agenda.
As a signatory to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Guyana is a recipient of international funding for a number of green initiatives in the public sector. We have expanded beyond the initial one million hectares state lands for conservation and bio-diversity studies which makes it a compelling invitation for you to visit our Iwokrama Rainforests.

Besides, many other state documents demonstrate a commitment to strengthening climate governance and a green economy.

On the occasion of World Environment Day, 2018 and the Sixth Assembly of the Global Environmental Facility, President David Granger noted that:

“World Environment Day is the most important day in the UN’s calendar of events dealing with the environment. It is an opportunity for nations and peoples around the world to recommit to practical policies and sustained action to promote global environmental security.

“It is urgent and necessary to deliver transformational change, to confront the challenges to the earth’s environment. Incremental change, while necessary, will not be sufficient to avert environmental catastrophe. Change must be comprehensive... International environmental cooperation must continuously seek comprehensive and cohesive solutions...”

While CAPAM will invariably play its part in assisting with transformational change and international cooperation, a sustained, local multi-stakeholder approach to any green agenda is necessary for its effective and efficient implementation.
Seven (7) multi-stakeholder expert groups made up of public sector, private sector, and wider civil society members, have been working with the Green State Development Strategy since its beginning in 2017. Permit me to highlight some key findings of two of the seven expert groups.

The Expert Group on Sustainable Management of Natural Resources prioritized the expansion of environmental services and stewardship of the natural patrimony.

The group advocated the following:

- Land use planning and natural resource management systems;
- Sustainable agriculture;
- Sustainable forest management - logging and non-timber forest product practices;
- Fresh water management;
- Protection of traditional knowledge and practices;
- Protection, Restoration and Sustainable Use of Coastal and Marine Resources;
- Protection of coastal ecosystem services, and
- Fisheries management.

The expert group outlined a path to accomplishing the aforesaid, which involves remedying challenges associated with:

- institutional coordination among agencies responsible for Mining, Forestry, Water, Lands, Agriculture Tourism et al;
- codes of ethics and best practices for use by private operators of natural and forest-based resources to control activities and reduce impact;
• access to data to guide integrated land and natural resource decision-making and use;
• support for entrepreneurship in indigenous communities;
• policy and legislative interventions; and
• access to available technologies and scientific research.

The Expert Group on Human Development and Well-being looked to the objective of “ensuring that all people of Guyana are among the healthiest in the Caribbean and the Americas by the year 2020, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against children, ensuring safety and justice for girls, boys and adolescents in line with the national priority actions.” The framed priority areas introduced here are:

- Ensuring healthy and socially secured people;
- Empowering youth and indigenous people;
- Ensuring access to quality education, human development and green skills.

The Expert Group recommended a path to these ideals, notably:

• The promotion of better collaboration between the Ministry of Public Health and local government, to improve health care facilities at strategic locations and to decentralize health services;

• The creation of new posts, an increase in available jobs in the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Teaching Service Commission (TSC), the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, and the Regional Democratic Councils;

• The provision of training for 3000 youths; and

• Training and recruitment of a larger number of social workers, health care managers and technical professionals.
The other five expert groups interrogated issues under the following heads:

- Green and inclusive structural transformation;
- Energy transition;
- Resilient infrastructure and special development;
- Governance and institutional pillars;
- International cooperation, trade and investment.

The seven expert groups on these pertinent green agenda areas in their detailed analyses pointed to the strength in collaboration among all stakeholders, whether they are in the public service, private sector or the wider civil society.

The public sector, however, must lead the way in preparing itself to meet the challenges of climate governance. It must also build networks and partnerships within and beyond sovereign borders.

President David Granger, who is unfortunately out of the jurisdiction, our Government and people welcome the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) at this 2018 Biennial Conference. We welcome you to our green and beautiful Guyana, but more importantly look forward to your contribution to transforming the Public Sector for Climate Governance.

You have an important task to help our countries meet the challenges of climate change, to adapt to changing circumstances and conditions, and to align our public sectors with the efforts of the rest of humanity to implement appropriate climate governance.