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**PRESS STATEMENT  
SIXTY YEARS SINCE THE SIGNING OF THE GENEVA AGREEMENT**

The Government and people of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana today commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the signing of the Geneva Agreement of 17th February 1966, a treaty of immense legal and diplomatic significance in that it established the framework for the peaceful resolution of the controversy arising from Venezuela’s contention regarding the validity of the 1899 Arbitral Award, which fixed the boundary between British Guiana and Venezuela. Signed by the United Kingdom and Venezuela, and subsequently acceded to by the independent State of Guyana on 26 May 1966, the Geneva Agreement is a binding international instrument deposited with the United Nations and grounded firmly in the principles of the United Nations Charter and the rule of international law.

The Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899 definitively established the land boundary between what is now Guyana and Venezuela. The Award was accepted and implemented by both parties for more than six decades, including through the demarcation of the boundary in 1905. The Geneva Agreement was a response to Venezuela’s change of position in 1962 when, after 60 years of recognizing the validity of the 1899 Award and the international boundary it established, it suddenly adopted a contrary position claiming the Award was invalid. Great Britain and British Guiana rejected Venezuela’s abrupt turnabout, holding fast to their firm position on the legal validity and binding nature of the Award. Negotiations led to an agreement at Geneva on a peaceful procedure for resolving the controversy over the validity of the Award.

Pursuant to Articles I to IV of the Geneva Agreement, successive mechanisms put in place, until a final resolution was achieved. The included diplomatic negotiation by a Mixed Commission for four years, followed by recourse to the Secretary General of the United Nations to choose the next means of dispute settlement. The Secretary-General initially chose mediation under his “good offices”, which endured from 1990 to 2017 without progress toward a resolution. In January 2018, the Secretary-General concluded that the “good offices” approach had failed to resolve the controversy and, in accordance with Article IV (2) of the Geneva Agreement, he chose adjudication by the International Court of Justice and the next, and final, means of resolution. Both Guyana and Venezuela were bound by his decision.

Guyana accordingly instituted proceedings before the ICJ in March 2018, seeking a final and binding determination that the 1899 Arbitral Award is valid and that the land boundary established thereby remains legally binding on both Guyana and Venezuela. Venezuela immediately objected to the Court’s jurisdiction. In its Judgment of 18 December 2020, the Court rejected Venezuela’s objection and affirmed that it has jurisdiction to entertain the case, finding that by conferring on the Secretary General the authority to choose the means of settlement, the Parties had consented to judicial resolution by the Court. The Court subsequently reaffirmed its competence to resolve the controversy in its 2023 Judgment on preliminary objections raised by Venezuela and has continued to exercise its judicial function in accordance with international law and the requisite rules of the Court.

Guyana reiterates its unwavering commitment to the judicial process before the ICJ and to the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law. At Guyana's request, the Court has twice ordered provisional measures to preserve the status quo and ensure that neither party undertakes actions which might aggravate or extend the dispute pending its final judgment. Guyana has consistently complied with these orders and has called upon Venezuela to do likewise, in strict observance of its international obligations.

In this context, Guyana firmly rejects assertions and misrepresentations emanating from official Venezuelan pronouncements which seek to distort the purpose and legal effect of the Geneva Agreement, deny the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, or assert unfounded claims to Guyana's sovereign territory. The Geneva Agreement does not extinguish the 1899 Arbitral Award, nor does it confer upon Venezuela the right to unilaterally determine the status of Guyana's Essequibo region. Rather, it provides a clear and lawful pathway, before the International Court of Justice, for the definitive resolution of the controversy.

Equally untenable are Venezuela's claims that the judicial process before the ICJ is inconsistent with the Geneva Agreement. On the contrary, as the Court expressly determined in rejecting Venezuela's arguments, recourse to the Court flows directly from the express provisions of Article IV (2) of the said Agreement and from the decision of the United Nations Secretary General acting within the authority conferred upon him by both Parties pursuant to the provisions of that Agreement. The Court has thus found that it is the proper and lawful forum for the settlement of the controversy, and its eventual judgment will be final and binding upon both Parties under international law.

Guyana remains steadfast in its adherence to the principles of international law, the sanctity of treaties, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. For nearly six decades, Guyana has acted in good faith, respecting both the letter and spirit of the Geneva Agreement, while maintaining full compliance with its international obligations. Guyana will continue to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity through lawful and peaceful means and with full confidence in the impartial adjudication of the International Court of Justice.

As we mark this historic milestone, the Co-operative Republic of Guyana calls upon the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to recommit itself to the rule of international law, to respect the ongoing judicial process before the International Court of Justice, and to refrain from actions or statements which may undermine peace and stability in the region. The Government of Guyana reaffirms its enduring commitment to peaceful coexistence, mutual respect among nations, and the definitive judicial resolution of this controversy by the International Court of Justice in accordance with the 1966 Geneva Agreement and the Charter of the United Nations.

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation**  
**Georgetown, Guyana**  
**17th February 2026**

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