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## Suriname's top diplomat calls on Islamic bloc to invest

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Suriname Foreign Minister, Niermala Badrising (L), in a bilateral meeting in Turkey

By Ray Chickrie  
Caribbean News Now contributor

ISTANBUL, Turkey -- At the just concluded 13th Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) heads of government summit in Istanbul, the foreign minister of Suriname, Niermala Badrising, used the occasion to showcase her country and urged member states to invest in Suriname.

In her speech to the body of 57 countries, Badrising said that Suriname is a small nation in South America that is "diverse ethnically, culturally, religiously, and enjoys an "exemplary religious and ethnic tolerance".

She told the summit that Suriname "has a conducive environment for foreign direct investments in sectors such as ICT, energy, tourism, housing and infrastructure. Suriname provides ample opportunities for trade and investment ventures in natural resources, such as gold, bauxite, oil and other minerals, and an abundance of arable farmland is available for the development of the agro-industry."

Suriname, she said, carries between 10 and 15% of the global freshwater supply, offering a vast amount of highly valued freshwater resources that – with investments – can be utilized as an export product meeting the needs of other countries.

Badrising conveyed to the gathering that Suriname is one of a few carbon-negative countries in the world, "and about 94% of our land surface is covered by rainforest. Nevertheless, we will be seriously impacted by climate change, as we have 239 miles of low-lying coast."

On the issue of climate change, Suriname, which is one of seven most vulnerable countries due to the effects of sea-level rise, sought the support of the OIC on the issue. She called for the strengthening of cooperation with the OIC.

Suriname and Guyana are the only two countries in the Americas with full membership of the OIC and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB). And Suriname wants to increase collaboration with the bank, and members of the OIC, Badrising said.

Badrising told the summit leaders that Suriname is the first country in South America with certified Islamic banking, which was realized with the assistance of the OIC and its various agencies.

She said, "Suriname can indeed become a financial, industrial, agricultural

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and trade hub for Islamic banking in our region, connecting the Caribbean and South America to other continents," and she invited members "to make use of this potential offered by Suriname."

The Surinamese diplomat stayed clear of heated Middle East conflicts such as Syria, Iran and the Sunni/Shia divide. She addressed South South cooperation, a more sustainable economic future, cooperation to combat terrorism and avoiding conflicts, without getting into specifics.

"South-South cooperation is an important policy tool to enhance the bond between countries and peoples. Hence, in our foreign policy we have made the deliberate choice to diversify our international cooperation, while reaching out to countries with similar cultural structures," Badrising said.

In a meeting with Turkish foreign minister, Mevlut Cavusogolu, tangible progress was achieved in bilateral ties. The two countries are in the final stages of an open air agreement which could see Turkish Airlines invest in Suriname's state owned airline, Surinam Airways (SLM); cooperation in the energy sector was reviewed and the state owned, Turkexim extended a credit line of US\$350 million to Suriname.

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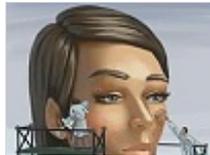
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