



*The Journey
to the Good Life
Continues*

BUDGET

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OF THE
COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA**

UNDER THE

**CONSTITUTION
OF THE
COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA**

FIRST SESSION 2017

BUDGET SPEECH

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Minister of Finance

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGD	Accountant General’s Department
ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data
B4R	Budgeting for Results
BOG	Bank of Guyana
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEIT	Centre of Excellence in Information Technology
CFATF	Caribbean Financial Action Taskforce
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CSME	Caribbean Single Market Economy
EITI	Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative
EU-FLEGT	European Union Forest Law Enforcement, Governance, and Trade
FIU	Financial Intelligence Unit
FSAP	Financial Sector Assessment Programme
GECOM	Guyana Elections Commission
GGMC	Guyana Geology and Mines Commission
GHIS	Geographic Health Information System
GMSA	Guyana Manufacturing and Services Association
GNBS	Guyana National Bureau of Standards
GPL	Guyana Power and Light Inc.
GRA	Guyana Revenue Authority
GSDS	Green State Development Strategy
GuySuCo	Guyana Sugar Corporation
HEYS	Hinterland Employment and Youth Scheme
ICT	Information Communication Technology

IFMAS	Integrated Financial Management and Accounting System
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank
LFS	Labour Force Survey
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MARDI	Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute
NDC	Neighbourhood Democratic Council
NIS	National Insurance Scheme
NPL	Non-performing Loan
NPS	National Payment System
NRDCC	National Regional Development Consultative Committee
PARD	Plan of Action for Regional Development
PSA	Production Sharing Agreement
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Programme
PYARG	President's Youth Award of the Republic of Guyana
RAI	Remote Area Incentive
SBB	Small Business Bureau
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SLED	Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Development
SPU	Special Purpose Unit
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
SWF	Sovereign Wealth Fund
TSA	Treasury Single Accounting
VAT	Value-added Tax
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement
WEO	World Economic Outlook
YEST	Youth Entrepreneurial Skills Training
YIPOG	Youth Innovation Project of Guyana

1.

Introduction

1.1 Mr. Speaker, I rise to move the motion for the approval of the Estimates of the Public Sector and the Budget for the Financial Year 2018 and, in doing so, I wish to indicate that Cabinet has recommended that the National Assembly proceed upon this motion, pursuant to Article 171, Paragraph 2, of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana.

1.2 Mr. Speaker, it pleases me greatly to be able to deliver Budget 2018, the fourth of six budgets that this Government is expected to present, in this House, during its first term. This fourth budget is being presented at the middle of this Government's first term in Office. Indeed, it was approximately two and one-half years ago, when the people of this great country of ours gave a mandate to a coalition of two parties – A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) and Alliance for Change (AFC) – to harness the energies and resources of our citizens to generate a popular platform for change in government and governance. Importantly, the two parties expressed an abiding wish to become "a change agent for healing and reconciliation", in recognition of the role that conflict and strife have played in destabilizing race relations. This has had devastating consequences on the psyche of our people, which has left us being "distrustful, disrespectful and disdainful of each other," according to the Joint Manifesto of the Coalition.

1.3 Mr. Speaker, we were never in doubt about the enormity of the task which lay ahead. We were in a hurry to rebuild a country that was marred and scarred by poor and corrupted governance under the PPP/C. We had to restore hope, inspire confidence and shape a new destiny for our country and our people. The Government was challenged to provide strong leadership to bring about development that was inclusive and environmentally-sustainable. In a situation where the economy's growth trajectory depended on the primary stage production of the agriculture and mining sectors, we were challenged to change the narrative and to develop an economy that was more broad-based and diversified. In our previous three budgets, we set the stage for our

economy to produce higher national incomes, which, in turn, would help to lift families out of absolute poverty and closer to enjoying the Good Life.

1.4 Alas, Mr. Speaker, there have been many setbacks and roadblocks that have impeded greater progress. From being confronted with a bankrupt Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) and the sudden termination of the premium market for rice, to difficulties with our Western neighbour over the border and the non-cooperative stance of the main opposition party, the Government has had to deal with more than its fair share of problems. Rather than being daunted by, and becoming frustrated with these obstacles, we have stayed the course, keeping our goal to build a better, more inclusive and unified society in sight.

1.5 Mr. Speaker, our mid-year report card shows that we are making steady progress on the promises we made in our Manifesto. The successes and accomplishments have been many – too numerous to enumerate here. However, I would like to share some of them with you:

- We have kept the economy growing at an average of 3 percent, between 2015-2017. This was achieved at a time when most of our neighbours have been facing economic and financial crises, with low, no or negative growth rates and reduced standards of living. In the words of the Caribbean Development Bank's (CDB) Director of Economics, "the future of Guyana is quite bright".
- Within the short period of 18 months, between July 1, 2015-January 1, 2017, we increased the minimum wage by over 50 percent. At the same time, we increased the income tax threshold by a minimum 20 percent, reduced the marginal income tax rate to 28 percent and removed the tax from employees' contribution to the National Insurance Scheme (NIS).
- During the same period, we increased old age pensions by 45 percent and public assistance by 27 percent.
- We reduced the marginal rate of the Value Added Tax (VAT) to 14 percent, increased the VAT threshold to \$15 million from \$10 million and increased the number and range of items that are exempted from VAT.

- Further, we reduced the marginal rate of income tax for non-commercial companies to 27.5 percent from 30 percent.
- We have maintained a manageable debt-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratio, well within the internationally-accepted limit for countries at our level of development. At 45.2 percent of GDP, Guyana has one of the lowest debt ratios in the Caribbean, a fact recognised by the CDB, which has commended the Government for fiscal consolidation and prudent debt management.
- Contrary to what is being pedalled by our detractors, the net foreign assets position has increased from US\$611 million in May 2015 to a projected US\$613 million at the end-2017, while inflation has been kept in check.
- We established the Public Procurement Commission and the State Assets Recovery Agency, and re-constituted the Public Service Appellate Tribunal, after a hiatus of many years.
- Importantly, democracy at the local level has been restored with the holding of Local Government Elections, after an absence of 22 years, and the establishment of the Local Government Commission.

1.6 Mr. Speaker, these are just some of the impressive achievements and successes that we have recorded since coming to Office. To quote the Carpenters, "We've only just begun ..." We've only just begun to experience and feel the excitement of a Government working for the people, delivering on its promises and making significant progress. But, Mr. Speaker, even as we enjoy our successes and celebrate our achievements, let me recall a few potent lines from one of Robert Frost's poems, "But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep." These poignant words are a reminder of the work still to be done. Reflecting on this, the theme of Budget 2018 is, *The Journey to the Good Life Continues*. It signifies an awareness of the road travelled so far and our accomplishments. Equally, it symbolises a work in progress, a road still to be travelled, a journey unfinished.

1.7 Mr. Speaker, Budget 2018 is about the Government continuing to rise to the challenges, and fostering the conditions and creating the opportunities for renewal and expansion in the economy, in order to secure the Good Life in the future. As a result,

Budget 2018 focuses on a number of strategic actions, including: consolidating the macroeconomic fundamentals; fostering higher growth for more and better jobs; improving the quality of life of our people; investing in skills development; investing massively in infrastructure; doing more to facilitate business; stimulating growth and employment in the productive sectors; and supporting micro, small and medium enterprises; among others.

1.8 Mr. Speaker, our citizens want to own green jungles bursting with life and biodiversity, as well as modern urban structures; they want to be able to see the stars in the sky at night not filtered by smog; they wish to travel to work, school, home, and play without being stuck for hours in traffic jams or having to take days to get there; our citizens want good education, quality health care, fresh foods, their own homes, safe communities and towns, fair and efficient systems, and value for money on their tax dollars. Budget 2018 aims to deliver all of these improvements as we invite every Guyanese to create an inclusive path as the Journey to the Good Life Continues.

1.9 Mr. Speaker, in addition to the traditional organisations, which are usually invited, as has become customary, the pre-budget consultation exercise was expanded, this year, to include a group of young, dynamic entrepreneurs, among others. My interaction with these groups re-assured me that our country's future is secure. I also want to thank the GMSA for ensuring frank and productive discussions in the on-going Inter-ministerial – GMSA engagement. This has resulted in several government interventions and has fostered a healthy working relationship between the government and the private sector. We anticipate that this will continue, and will ultimately lead to, and drive growth in the manufacturing and services sector.

2. Economic Developments in the World Economy

2.1 Mr. Speaker, global economic growth is expected to improve through 2017 as markets benefit from increased investment, trade and industrial production, as well as reinvigorated business and consumer confidence. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its most recent World Economic Outlook (WEO), has projected global growth to reach 3.6 percent in 2017, 0.4 percentage points higher than the level recorded in 2016, and 0.1 percentage points above its previous forecast. In 2018, global growth is projected to rise marginally to 3.7 percent.

2.2 Mr. Speaker, advanced economies are projected to grow by 2.2 percent in 2017 as a result of various factors, including an increase in global demand, stronger exports, and supportive fiscal and monetary policy. In 2018, growth in this area is anticipated to decline to 2 percent on account of lower expected growth in all major economies, apart from the United States and France. The United Kingdom expects to see declining growth as the effects of Brexit continue to take a toll on the economy, with a dampening of consumption growth due to a weakening of the pound. Additionally, economic expansion in emerging markets and developing economies is anticipated to improve from earlier projections, with 4.6 percent growth expected for 2017, 0.3 percentage points above the growth recorded in 2016. The Chinese economy was sustained by buoyant external demand, which is anticipated to support further expansion in growth, in 2018, to 4.9 percent.

2.3 Mr. Speaker, the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean are expected to finally recover, in 2017. Following significant declines over the past few years, growth of 1.2 percent and 1.9 percent is expected in 2017 and 2018, respectively. The anticipated recovery in the region will be supported by improved demand from external trading partners and accommodative financial conditions on account of a less volatile international financial market and resilient capital inflows. In the Caribbean, overall growth projections for 2018 show an improvement to 1.9 percent from 0.3 percent the previous year. However, Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname are projected to contract by 3.2 percent and 1.2 percent, respectively, as the downturn in the previous years extend

into 2017. In 2018, however, these economies are expected to recover and, as a group, both tourism-dependent and commodity exporters are projected to record over 2 percent respectively, with Trinidad and Tobago projected to expand by 1.9 percent, and Suriname by 1.2 percent as prices are anticipated to rebound. Despite the improved outlook, the region still faces a number of risks, including climate-related catastrophes, which are expected to increase in frequency; capital flow reversals; tightening financial conditions; and volatile commodity prices.

2.4 Mr. Speaker, as a commodity-dependent economy, we must remain vigilant of the impact of fluctuations in international commodity prices. Agricultural commodity prices remained broadly stable for most of 2017, growing at 1 percent, and are expected to increase marginally in 2018. Within this category, international rice prices are expected to increase by 0.75 percent and timber by 1 percent. The international price of gold rose by 2 percent in the third quarter of 2017, to approximately US\$1,350 per ounce, driven by strong investment and a weakening US dollar. Notwithstanding, gold prices are expected to decline by the end of 2017, and into 2018, due to an anticipated rise in US interest rates and a strengthening of the US dollar. In contrast, the price of aluminium has risen by 5 percent in 2017 thus far, and is expected to continue to rise in 2018, due to a surge in global demand. While the price of Brent crude oil, one of Guyana's key imports, remained relatively low during the course of 2017, prices are expected to rebound. At the end of 2017, oil prices are expected to average US\$53 per barrel, and US\$56 per barrel in 2018, a reflection of strong oil demand, falling stocks, and production restraint among OPEC and non-OPEC producers.

2.5 Mr. Speaker, while Guyana is undoubtedly on the path to the good life, unpredictable commodity prices, climate change, and financial stability risks, have the ability, over time, to stymie our economic performance. We must continue to build a more resilient and diversified economy that is capable of withstanding external shocks.

2.6 In light of these considerations, I will now address the main developments in our domestic economy during 2017.

3. Developments in the Domestic Economy in 2017

A. Real Gross Domestic Product

3.1 Mr. Speaker, the overall real growth rate for 2017 was projected at 3.8 percent. By mid-year, an economic growth rate of 2.2 percent was achieved, up from 2 percent for the same period the previous year. In the Mid-Year Report, laid in the National Assembly, on August 4, the projection for 2017 was revised downwards to 3.1 percent, on account of expected weak performance in the mining and quarrying sector, and the sugar and forestry industries. The projected outturn for real growth of the economy, in 2017, is 2.9 percent.

B. Sectoral Performance

a. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

3.2 Mr. Speaker, the agriculture, fishing, and forestry sector is expected to recover this year, with an estimated growth of 0.2 percent, up from the 10.3 percent decline recorded for 2016. This reversal will be due to the anticipated positive growth performance in the rice, fishing, livestock, and other crops subsectors, which will more than compensate for the continued decline in the sugar and forestry industries.

3.3 The rice industry is expected to record an output of 602,087 tonnes for 2017, an increase of 12.7 percent over 2016. This is due mainly to an additional 14,000 hectares planted for the 2017 spring crop and a further 74,481 hectares planted in the autumn crop. Also, there was an improvement in the yield. These developments stem from farmers' renewed confidence in their ability to access new markets. The recent attendance by the private sector at the Havana International Fair, in Cuba, helped to stimulate further investment in the industry.

3.4 Mr. Speaker, sugar production is projected to decline to 152,000 tonnes in 2017, a 17.2 percent reduction compared to 2016's output. Opposition to the ongoing

restructuring of the sugar industry led to the loss of almost 22,000 man days due to industrial action.

3.5 Mr. Speaker, preliminary estimates indicate that the livestock industry is projected to grow by 4.4 per cent at the end of 2017, compared to a decline of 5.8 percent in 2016. Improved consumer demand and producer confidence precipitated this turnaround in this subsector, during the second half of 2017. The fishing industry is anticipated to record a 1 percent growth for 2017, down from 18.1 percent in 2016. The industry has reported lower catches of fish, partly as a result of stronger enforcement of cross-border fishing regulations.

3.6 The forestry sub-sector is expected to show some improvement with a projected slowing of the contraction to 7.2 percent in 2017, from 27.3 percent in 2016. Total production for 2017 is projected at 297,070 cubic metres, 10 percent lower than 2016. The subsector continues to face several problems, especially competition from imported wood products. Government is actively working with the industry to support growth, going forward.

b. Extractive Industries

3.7 Mr. Speaker, the mining and quarrying sector is anticipated to contract by 1.9 percent, compared to the 46.1 percent expansion in 2016. While gold declarations are expected to remain stable, bauxite production and other mining will decline by 2.3 percent and 12.6 percent, respectively. Gold declaration is expected to amount to approximately 712,706 ounces while bauxite production is projected to decline to 1,417,557 tonnes for 2017 as a result of inclement weather and mechanical problems that resulted in significant down time.

c. Manufacturing

3.8 Mr. Speaker, manufacturing is projected to grow by 3.6 percent, as a result of the improved performance of the rice industry and light manufacturing. In addition, there

was increased production of certain beverages such as malta, distilled water, and aerated beverages; as well as certain building materials, including paint and putty.

d. Construction

3.9 Mr. Speaker, growth in construction is expected to accelerate, in 2017, to 13.5 percent, 7.2 percentage points higher than in 2016. This positive development is attributed to increased activity in private sector construction as well as measures taken by Government to improve the implementation of the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP).

e. Services

3.10 Mr. Speaker, as our economy has advanced over the years, the services sector has grown in importance and now represents over half of Guyana's GDP. This sector is expected to grow by 3.1 percent in 2017. Wholesale and retail will expand by 3.1 percent; transport and storage will improve to 3.9 percent; and growth in the financial and insurance activities will double to 5.8 percent.

C. Balance of Payments

3.11 Mr. Speaker, the overall balance of payments is expected to improve slightly to a deficit of US\$53.1 million in 2017. This outcome will be primarily driven by an improvement in the capital account, from a deficit of US\$13.2 million, in 2016, to an anticipated surplus of US\$181.8 million, in 2017. This is in spite of the deterioration of the current account from a surplus of US\$13 million, in 2016, to a projected deficit of US\$235 million, in 2017.

3.12 The anticipated decline in the current account is expected to be as a result of increased deficits in both the merchandise trade (by US\$140 million), and services (by US\$74.1 million) accounts, and reduced net current transfers by US\$33.9 million. Despite increased exports of rice and gold by 8.7 percent and 1.5 percent, respectively,

exports are anticipated to decline marginally by 0.1 percent, primarily as a result of a projected decline in sugar exports of 36.6 percent. Merchandise imports are estimated to grow by 9.6 percent, primarily driven by increased imports of mining machinery, chemicals, fuel and lubricants and other non-durable goods, by 81.6 percent, 43.2 percent, 8 percent, and 25.1 percent, respectively.

3.13 The increased deficit in the factor services account is anticipated to result from increased repatriation of employee compensation by foreigners, by 20.0 percent; declining investment income, by 18.1 percent; and greater interest payment on public debt, by 35.8 percent. The worsening of the non-factor services account is projected to be due to an 82.7 percent increase in outflows for transportation services.

3.14 Mr. Speaker, although the current account is expected to weaken, the capital account is anticipated to improve, due to strengthened net medium and long term capital flows, both private and public sector. Projected foreign direct investment, particularly in the oil and gas sector, is expected to drive the US\$145.2 million increase in private sector medium and long term capital. Additionally, net capital to the non-financial public sector is anticipated to strengthen to a surplus of US\$67.2 million, reflecting higher disbursements of loans.

3.15 Debt relief of US\$17.7 million and debt forgiveness of US\$55.5 million are expected to finance the balance of payments deficit for 2017 and permit an increase in the Bank of Guyana's (BOG) net foreign assets by US\$20.1 million. Gross reserves of the Bank of Guyana are expected to be equivalent to approximately 3.4 months of import cover at the end of 2017, well above the 3.0 months minimum benchmark for reserve adequacy.

D. Monetary Developments

3.16 Mr. Speaker, an expansion of monetary aggregates of broad money of 3.6 percent is projected for 2017. This is as a result of an expected 5.8 percent increase in narrow

money (M1), on account of expansions in demand deposits and currency in circulation by 10.9 percent and 6.6 percent, respectively. This performance is expected to stem from an anticipated 8.1 percent increase in net domestic credit. Within quasi money, which is estimated to expand by 2 percent, time and savings deposits are expected to grow by 3.1 percent and 1.9 percent, respectively.

3.17 Mr. Speaker, net domestic credit is projected to expand by 8.1 percent, to \$214.9 billion, with private sector credit growing by 2.1 percent and public sector credit increasing by 233.6 percent. Private sector credit growth is expected to result from an increase in credit card transactions, by 16.0 percent; real estate mortgage loans, by 8.3 percent; loans to the mining sector, by 1.9 percent; and credit to households, by 0.5 percent.

3.18 Mr. Speaker, capitalisation of commercial banks remains satisfactory, despite a decline in total liquid assets to \$115.5 billion. Treasury Bills account for 54.2 percent of that amount. The excess reserves of commercial banks at the end of September, 2017, were \$22.6 billion, 50 percent above the minimum requirement.

E. Prices and Income

a. Inflation

3.19 Mr. Speaker, the average price level across the economy as measured by the consumer price index (CPI), was projected at 2.5 percent in Budget 2017. With a slower growth in demand and consumer spending, the inflation rate was moderate at the half year and continued through to the end of the third quarter with inflation recorded at 1.5 percent. Even allowing for the seasonal increase in spending in the fourth quarter, the end-of-year projection has been revised to a moderate 2 percent.

b. Interest Rates

3.20 Mr. Speaker, the weighted average lending rate fell slightly by 17 basis points, since December 2016, or from 10.43 percent to 10.26 percent. Concurrently, the small savings rate also contracted by 15 basis points, to 1.11 percent, for the same period. Notwithstanding the narrowing of the interest rate spread, it still remains one of the widest in the Caribbean.

3.21 Treasury Bill rates also declined, with the 91-day bills contracting by 14 basis points to 1.54 percent, between December, 2016 and September, 2017. Interest rates for the 182-day Treasury Bills also declined by 53 basis points to 1.15 percent, for the same period. The rates for the 364-day Treasury Bills saw an even larger decline, by 90 basis points, to 1.23 percent for the same period.

c. Exchange Rate

3.22 The Bank of Guyana exchange rate of the Guyana Dollar to the US Dollar is expected to remain stable at \$206.5. The exchange rate for the Euro at the commercial banks appreciated against the Guyana Dollar by 7.7 percent, between January and September of 2017. The Pound Sterling also appreciated against the Guyana Dollar by 6.6 percent for the same period. Additionally, the US Dollar appreciated by 1.6 percent against the Guyana Dollar. Earlier in the year, the Bank of Guyana moved to implement countervailing measures to prevent manipulation of the foreign exchange rate and to ensure a greater and smoother flow of receipts to the foreign currency market.

d. Income

3.23 Mr. Speaker, although negotiations for improved wages were started with the Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU), they remained incomplete. Given the timing for presentation of Budget 2018, Government moved forward to implement increases to public servants' wages and salaries for 2017. After careful consideration and reflection on the circumstances facing our economy, Government granted the following increases:

- (i) 8 percent increase to public servants earning less than \$100,000 per month;
- (ii) 6 percent to those earning between \$100,000 to below \$300,000;
- (iii) 5 percent to those earning between \$300,000 to below \$500,000;
- (iv) 4 percent to those earning between \$500,000 to below \$700,000;
- (v) 2 percent to those earning between \$700,000 to below \$800,000; and
- (vi) ½ percent to those earning between \$800,000 to below \$1,000,000.

3.24 These increases which were made retroactive to January 1, 2017, are also intended, Mr. Speaker, to bring the wage level in the public sector to a more competitive one, incrementally, in an attempt to ensure that Government can attract the requisite skills necessary to facilitate a better functioning public service. In this vein, Government has also raised the minimum basic salary for each public servant to \$60,000 per month.

F. Fiscal Position

a. Non-Financial Public Sector

3.25 Mr. Speaker, the non-financial public sector is anticipated to record a deficit of \$38.1 billion, or 5.0 percent of GDP, for 2017, a significant improvement on the budgeted deficit of \$54.5 billion or 7.1 percent of GDP. The improved deficit position results from higher-than-budgeted public sector revenue and grants, by \$8.2 billion and \$1.1 billion, respectively. Capital expenditure for the public sector is expected to rise to \$69.1 billion, \$3.7 billion above the budgeted amount for 2017, largely due to higher spending from public enterprises and a surge in public spending in the last half of the year.

b. Central Government

3.26 Total revenue for this year is expected to amount to \$192.7 billion, 3.6 percent above the budgeted \$186 billion and 8.7 percent more than collected in 2016.

3.27 Mr. Speaker, improved economic activity in some areas, as well as compliance-related initiatives, is expected to result in increased collections of \$169.1 billion, 11.4 percent over 2016. Higher collections of VAT, excise taxes, withholding tax and company income taxes, by 11.3 percent, 13.2 percent, 40.8 percent and 16.4 percent, are projected to contribute to this improved tax revenue performance. Tax receipts from oil and gas support activities are expected to increase by \$3.2 billion while international trade transactions are projected to rise to \$19.4 billion, an increase of 11.2 percent.

3.28 Total non-tax revenues are expected to amount to \$23.6 billion, driven by transfers from statutory agencies of \$10.1 billion, as the Government continues the phased transfer of the excess cash balances of statutory agencies to the Consolidated Fund. Dividends of \$1.2 billion are expected from public enterprise and \$3.8 billion from rent and royalties. In addition, \$300 million from the Lotto account will be transferred to the Consolidated Fund.

3.29 The Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) is projected to remit \$47 billion for 2017, up from \$42.3 billion in 2016, on account of increased remissions to companies and business, by \$4.7 billion or 15.4 percent; ministries and government departments, by \$0.9 billion or 21.2 percent; and foreign funded projects, by \$0.6 billion or 39.4 percent.

3.30 Mr. Speaker, total expenditure of the Central Government is expected to amount to \$242.3 billion, 11.8 percent above the 2016 level. Current expenditure is projected to reach \$184.1 billion, of which \$176.1 billion will be spent on employment cost, other goods and services and transfers. Interest payments are projected to rise to \$8.1 billion. Capital expenditure is expected to amount to \$58.1 billion or 24.7 percent more than 2016.

c. Public Enterprises

3.31 In 2017, the performance of the Public Enterprises deteriorated from a budgeted cash deficit of \$12.1 billion to a latest forecast deficit of \$12.8 billion. Guyana National Newspapers, Guyana Rice Development Board, MARDS, Guyana Post Office

Corporation, GuyOil, Guyana National Shipping Corporation and Guyana National Printers Limited had a combined surplus of \$2.5 billion. However, GuySuCo's production shortfall and Guyana Power and Light's (GPL) aggressive capital programme helped to erode this surplus.

G. Public Debt Management

3.32 Mr. Speaker, the total stock of public debt is projected to increase marginally, from US\$1.60 billion, in 2016, to US\$1.66 billion in 2017. This corresponds to a further declining total public debt-to-GDP ratio of 45.2 percent, in 2017, relative to 45.7 percent, at the end of 2016.

3.33 The external debt-to-GDP ratio is expected to marginally increase from 33.2 percent, in 2016, to 33.6 percent in 2017, as a result of faster growth in the external debt stock, from US\$1.16 billion, in 2016, to US\$1.23 billion in 2017, when compared with growth in the GDP. Total external debt service is projected to increase by 16.6 percent, from US\$53.7 million, in 2016, to US\$62.7 million, in 2017. This increase is attributed to higher principal and interest payments to several multilateral creditors, one bilateral creditor and one private creditor. In spite of this, the cost of servicing our external debt obligations remains manageable, consuming a mere 5.7 percent of the projected central government revenue for 2017. This represents a significant reduction from the 23.7 percent and 12.6 percent recorded for 2014 and 2015, respectively.

3.34 Mr. Speaker, the stock of domestic debt is projected to decline from US\$438.6 million, in 2016, to US\$427.8 million, in 2017, representing a decrease of 2.5 percent. However, domestic debt service is expected to increase by 16.8 percent, from US\$9.3 million, in 2016, to US\$10.9 million, in 2017, primarily due to the payment of the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) debentures issued in 2016 to assist in recovering the impaired investment in the Colonial Life Insurance Company (Guyana) Limited (CLICO).

4. Agenda 2018: The Journey to the Good Life Continues

A. Introduction

4.1 Mr. Speaker we are at a critical juncture in the history of our development as a nation. Guyanese are about to embark on formulating the national development plan that will be a living example of our country's commitment to the planet, while ensuring sustainable growth with equity that redounds to the economic well-being of every citizen.

4.2 Thus, Mr. Speaker, the principles of inclusive growth will be articulated in our Green State Development Strategy (GSDS). Building on previous strategies, such as the National Development Strategy and the Low Carbon Development Strategy, as well as our commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals, the GSDS will be fashioned in a collaborative and consultative process, and will be costed to inform future financing streams for the country.

4.3 Mr. Speaker, every citizen of our beautiful land must own this strategy; every woman, man, youth and child must recognise their role in moving Guyana from potential to prosperity. Our dear land of Guyana has been blessed by so much that it is incumbent upon our leaders, be they at the national, community, organisational or institutional level, to demonstrate true partnership and patriotism. Mr. Speaker, Guyana belongs to every single citizen of this land. When we stroll down Main St. or along the seawall, stand in Rupununi or Corentyne, enjoy the vistas of Kwakwani or Kurukubaru; when we sail down the Essequibo or river taxi down the Pomeroun or paddle along the Baramani, the Moruca, or the Waramuri or kayak in Kurupukari, we are confident that we are home.

4.4 For this reason, it is imperative that we stand firm and stand together, not only in defending our sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also in shaping our collective destiny. We, all Guyanese, must have an opportunity to shape the scope and scale of our development priorities, given our existing resources, which are soon to be supplemented

by oil revenues. The literature is replete with examples of natural resource dependent economies being prone to greater income inequality. We must, as a Government, as a Parliament, and as a nation, guard against falling victim to the pitfalls that this new stream of oil resources might bring. Indeed, Government will ensure that resources are prioritised for immediate catalytic development needs, stabilisation and intergenerational savings. Budget 2018 and going forward will see resources being allocated to strengthen systems and institutions to ensure greater accountability and transparency.

4.5 Oil is non-renewable and finite. The world is looking for renewables and, one day, in the future, oil will not be the preferred source of energy. When that happens, we must be able to look back and know that the choices we make today, and the immediate years ahead, positioned our sectors and industries to be stronger, more diversified and resilient. We must diversify our production and income generating base to ensure sustainability. This must be our collective goal to which this budget is directed. Indeed, Budget 2018 contains allocations to strengthen and grow our private sector as well as to improve the efficiency and robustness of our public sector. It is only by matching the opportunity of additional resources with strong human and institutional capacity that we will be able to create sustainable sources of economic and social development across the length and breadth of this land, and avoid mismanagement that is so often associated with natural resource extraction.

4.6 As we begin the transition to an oil producing nation, Government must and will implement prudent structural reforms and fiscal safeguards, strengthen our institutions, prioritise the development of our human capacity, and diversify our growth portfolio. The Agenda for 2018 is a product of our reflections on our mid-term as a Government and repositioning and reprogramming, based on lessons learned, in our inexorable march to achieving the Good Life

4.7 Mr. Speaker, having completed three budget cycles, Budget 2018 represents the mid-point of this administration's first term in office. The occasion offers an opportunity for us to reflect, refashion and move forward to shape the future along Guyana's

continuing journey to achieving the Good Life. Much has been achieved; yet, much more is still to be accomplished.

B. Macroeconomic Stability

4.8 Mr. Speaker, to date, we have managed to maintain stable macroeconomic fundamentals. However, our efforts continue to be constrained by the lack of economic diversification, which leaves key sectors and industries vulnerable to external shocks and internal meltdowns, as in the case of GuySuCo. Going forward, Government will continue to assess the economic situation and employ timely policy measures to correct imbalances and mitigate negative effects that could stymie growth. In this regard, in 2018, we will aim to strengthen our analytical capability to determine the macroeconomic effects of various policies and interventions. With these capacities, Government will be better able to guide the development of the Green State Development Strategy (GSDS), as well as the sectors and regional strategies, going forward.

4.9 Mr. Speaker, in the area of public debt management, progress has been made to consolidate the various pieces of legislation that govern debt, into a draft Public Debt Management Bill. It is anticipated that under this consolidated umbrella, institutional and legal frameworks will be solidified to allow for more effective public debt management. The intent is to promote transparency, accountability and debt sustainability while striving to meet our financing needs at minimal borrowing costs and an acceptable level of risk. The Bill is expected to be laid in the National Assembly, in 2018.

C. Green State Development

4.10 Mr. Speaker, the first Multi-Stakeholder Expert Group Session on the GSDS was held last week. In an inspiring address by His Excellency, he noted, “the multi-stakeholder experts group will help us to move from imagination to implementation, from reverie to reality...into the process of developing an inclusive and comprehensive

strategy which will enjoy national ownership.” Participation by all is required for this to be a success; anything less will result in a meaningless document.

4.11 To facilitate this process, a national coordination desk has been established and a coordinator has been employed to manage the development of the GSDS. An inter-ministerial, multi-stakeholder advisory committee, consisting of private sector, non-governmental organisations, Government officials, academia, and other civil society members, has been set up to guide the elaboration of the Strategy. This committee is supported by seven multi-stakeholder expert groups – one for each pillar of the GSDS. Across the groups, there will also be a sectoral coordination mechanism, so that all sectors of the economy are afforded a level of input into the work of each of the expert groups.

4.12 Mr. Speaker, the information being fed into the expert groups will come from an extensive and country-wide consultative process, which will include open days, town-hall meetings and stakeholder meetings. A plan is being drafted to guide these consultations across all administrative regions. Supported by a communication strategy, as well, the elaboration of the GSDS, as is evident by the aforementioned, will indeed reflect a true grass-roots, bottom-up approach to articulating our next national development strategy – a people’s development strategy that will put us on the path to green and transformative growth and prosperity. The GSDS, once completed, will be a working and organic strategy that will be enacted through an implementation plan, which will be costed and supported by a monitoring and evaluation framework. Clear indicators and targets by which we will hold ourselves accountable, will be established.

4.13 Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the ongoing process for the realisation of the GSDS, Government has already taken conscious steps to prioritise our efforts and resources to harmonise the Budget with the seven central themes of the GSDS: (i) Green and inclusive structural transformation; involving diversifying the economic base, accessing new markets and creating decent jobs for all; (ii) Sustainable management of natural resources and expansion of environmental services; (iii) Energy – transition to renewable energy and greater energy independence; (iv) Resilient infrastructure and

spatial development; (v) Human development and well-being; (vi) Governance and institutional pillars; and (vii) International cooperation, trade, and investment. In short, the GSDS will represent one coherent blueprint document that captures our development objectives.

D. Better Governance

a. Constitutional Reform

4.14 Mr. Speaker, the clamour for constitutional reform has intensified. This Government is pleased to remind this honourable House that constitutional reform has been, and remains, a key agenda item. This year, we held several consultations on the constitutional reform process; fostered partnerships to promote transparency and impartiality; and laid the Constitutional Reform Consultative Commission Bill in Parliament. This legislation is currently engaging the attention of a special select committee. Upon completion of the deliberations and passage of the Bill, a Constitutional Reform Consultative Commission will be formed.

4.15 The Commission will be mandated to do extensive work with the people of Guyana in every administrative region, to ensure an inclusive and transparent process. It will gather information for the reform process, and put its reports and recommendations to the Parliamentary Standing Committee for Constitutional Reform. The substantive process of constitutional reform can only commence when the aforesaid legislation has been passed and assented to. This is expected to occur in 2018. Further, the Government, with support from our development partners, will be providing for capacity building to the Commission, and civic education across the country.

b. Local Government Systems

4.16 Mr. Speaker, year 2018 will see the hosting of the second Local Government Elections in two years, and will represent the first time that we would have had back-to-back elections since Independence. This testifies to our administration's unwavering

commitment to inclusive democracy and our belief in the power of local democratic organs to manage their own affairs. All Guyanese will have a chance to reflect on the successes and shortcomings of their local government representatives, and again be able to decide on the most suitable candidates who will best represent their interests for the following two years. In 2018, we have allocated over \$2.9 billion to support the work of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM).

4.17 Mr. Speaker, though local government elections are most welcome again, simply having elections does not guarantee an effective local government system. As such, Government has been working with Neighborhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) and municipalities across the country, to improve capacities for administration and fiscal management.

4.18 Mr. Speaker, the issue of out-dated land values must be addressed. Government recognises that NDCs and municipalities must be financially self-sufficient, if they are to deliver and maintain quality public goods and services to their constituents and facilitate socio-economic development across their respective areas. A major impediment to this, for decades, has been the lack of up-to-date valuations of properties all the across the country. Next year, Government will be exploring the possibility of conducting a country-wide valuation exercise to bring all property values up to date, so that NDCs and municipalities are equipped with appropriate revenue streams to deliver their mandate.

4.19 To further improve local government administration, the second National Regional Development Consultative Committee (NRDCC) will be held in January 2018. The NRDCC of 2017 served as a forum for collaboration and cooperation across the different levels of local government and across the regions. It facilitated information sharing, support and strategic planning between the various authorities. In 2018, the NRDCC will be tasked with the development of a Regional Development Report, which will provide an account of the operations and development trajectory of the local authorities. This report will be laid in Parliament.

4.20 Mr. Speaker, this Government has made significant progress in strengthening our local government systems. To consolidate all of these efforts, Government will continue to assist the Regional Administrations with the development of the Plans of Action for Regional Development (PARD). The PARD for Region 9 is in its final stage of consultations, and the input of the final 2 of 56 communities in the Region will be incorporated by the end of 2017, after a year of extensive consultative work. The completion of the PARD for Region 9 is scheduled for early 2018 and a costed implementation plan will be developed to support the execution. In addition, consultations have commenced in Region 6, while regional profiles are being developed by other regions as they prepare to develop PARDs.

4.21 Mr. Speaker, to provide oversight, the Local Government Commission, which was constituted recently, is tasked with addressing matters related to regulation, staffing and disputes of local government bodies. The work of the Commission, in 2018, will be geared towards supporting and improving the capacities of local government organs and promoting transparency and accountability. The Local Government Commission has been allocated \$110 million in the 2018 Budget. In addition, the sum of \$1 billion has been budgeted to be transferred to NDCs and the 9 Mayoralties. A further sum of \$200 million is targeted to improve the City of Georgetown.

c. Justice Reform

4.22 Mr. Speaker, we continue to reform and modernise the justice system, in order to reduce the backlog and delays, increase efficiency, and make sure that justice is available to all.

4.23 I am happy to report to this honourable House that Guyana is the first in the Caribbean to have established a specialised court for sexual offences that is sensitive to the needs and circumstances of victims. This court will hear all indictable sexual offence cases, and will offer a rights-based approach, in recognition that victims tended to be 're-victimised' under the previous format. As such, the court has been outfitted with protective screens and dedicated rooms, among other features. To support the

operations of the court, model guidelines for sexual offence cases were developed, taking into account international best practices for the management of such cases.

4.24 Mr. Speaker, the laying and passage of the Juvenile Justice Bill, which addresses diversionary options and access to legal aid for our children and youth, is anxiously awaited. In the meanwhile, the Bill is being costed so that its potential for additional financial responsibility, or for savings to the taxpayer, can be identified.

4.25 Mr. Speaker, in the new year, we will be piloting a legal aid programme, which will work on the defence of minor, non-violent offenders, who are on pre-trial detention. This is part of Government's efforts to streamline a Budget that is more child-focused and youth-friendly. It is not the wish of this administration to have children and youth incarcerated for petty offences, such as wandering. To continue to do so would be to deprive this nation of the true potential of its rich human capital. By the end of 2018, the programme will commence work on the over 500 cases of the aforementioned type, on assessing the sustainability of this pilot legal aid programme, and on providing capacity building to non-governmental organisations that share a similar objective.

4.26 Mr. Speaker, our work on the new legal aid programme, is part of a broader vision, which seeks to reduce the burden on our prisons, allowing for a more people-focused, efficient justice system. It also allows for more effective use of our limited financial and human resources. Alongside the legal aid programme, we will be establishing a Law Reform Commission, in the new year, which will work on amending and modernising our legislation to cater for non-custodial sanctions for various types of offence.

4.27 Further, the current system that incarcerates a person for the usage of harmful substances will be re-examined. Our people need our compassion and our help so that they can be rehabilitated and given the support they need to live healthy and productive lives. In 2018, we will be conducting a study on appropriate treatments for substance abuse as a health issue within the criminal justice system. This will inform our interaction with the Judiciary, as we assist in developing policies to reduce over-reliance

on imprisonment. Probation services will also be strengthened to support this paradigm shift.

d. Meeting our International and Domestic Legal Obligations

4.28 Mr. Speaker, as the *Journey to the Good Life Continues*, Government will ensure that our responsibility to our people with respect to good governance, enforcement of basic rights, and international consensual commitments is discharged. We have ensured that our constitutional commissions, including the Rights Commissions, Public Service Commission and Teaching Service Commission, have been given adequate resources, so that they can discharge their functions in accordance with their mandates. These agencies account for 3.3 percent of the 2018 National Budget, up from 3 percent in 2017.

4.29 In addition, we have begun the process of localising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These are a set of 17 internationally agreed-upon goals which seek to transform lives and economies, focusing on people, prosperity, planet, peace, and partnership. The Ministry of Finance has mandated that all Budget Agencies commence the process of internalising the SDGs into their medium-term budget proposals and plans, going forward. In 2018, we will focus on ensuring that the SDGs are aligned to our national development strategy, the GSDS.

e. Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financial Terrorism

4.30 Mr. Speaker, Guyana hosted the 46th Plenary Meeting of the Caribbean Financial Action Taskforce (CFATF), this year. We were reminded that Guyana had begun regulatory and legislative strengthening to protect its financial system from money-laundering and financing of terrorism, over 17 years ago, which included the Money-Laundering (Prevention) Act 2000 that was replaced by the Anti-Money Laundering and the Countering of the Financing of Terrorism Act 2009. The latter was, subsequently, strengthened multiple times, over the years, by way of amendments, and allowed for improved compliance with the CFATF standards.

4.31 This year, Guyana has been tasked with leading the CFATF for the next term, with the responsibility to oversee all 25 members of this Task Force and their compliance with international financial regulations. In order to ensure that members are compliant, as well as effective in their implementation of the recommendations, several supervisory agencies, including the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), Bank of Guyana (BOG), Guyana Revenue Authority, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the Securities and Stock Exchange Council will also benefit from capacity building and institutional strengthening.

4.32 In particular, in 2018, we will continue to bolster the capacity of the FIU to better monitor for suspicious transactions. It should be noted that the cooperation of these entities, both private and public, is paramount, and we anticipate full cooperation of new entities as they are engaged by the FIU in continuing to safeguard our nation's financial integrity.

f. Social Cohesion

4.33 Mr. Speaker, this Government is resolute in its commitment to create a harmonious society, based on the principles of mutual respect and tolerance for one another, regardless of age, gender, race, religion or sexuality. Admittedly, this is a mammoth task, given the distrust that has been sown among brothers and sisters of our Nation or the lack of tolerance for persons who are seen as being different.

4.34 Mr. Speaker, we will not let such divisions and intolerance continue to hinder our development. The Government will continue to work to rebuild trust and cohesiveness in our society. In 2018, we will continue to engage civil society groups and local and central government agencies, through our sensitisation and information sharing initiative, to ensure that they are aware of their roles in achieving social cohesion.

E. Better Government

a. Public Administration and Public Financial Management

4.35 Mr. Speaker, the Government has continued to implement our Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) Action Plan and the Budget Transparency Action Plan, in addition to improving capacity improvements in these areas. During 2018, work will continue to improve the efficiency and quality of our public sector investment programme, manage oil and gas resources, improve tax administration, conduct public expenditure reviews and strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems, given their collective contribution to the goal of realizing effective results based management.

i. Public Sector Investment Programme and Public Procurement

4.36 Mr. Speaker our national performance on the public sector investment programme (PSIP) is still far below our expectations and economic needs. At the half year, significant concern was expressed about the lack of progress of the PSIP, and our Mid-Year Report for 2017 echoed those same sentiments. Since then, we have worked to accelerate implementation.

4.37 Mr. Speaker, we have approached the preparation of Budget 2018 with a significantly sterner disposition, since continuing with the status quo was untenable and unthinkable. During the preparation process, Budget Agencies were mandated to ensure that procurement plans were prepared in support of their 2018 work programmes; bills of quantities and terms of references were prepared in 2017 for 2018; and procurement processes commenced prior to the New Year. In short, Budget Agencies should be in a state of readiness to implement the PSIP, come January 01, 2018. The make-up of the PSIP, in Budget 2018, is one that should allow for a more structured and timely execution within the parameters of scope, time and cost. We have conducted a Public Investment Management Assessment (PIMA) and, based on the findings, will be taking further actions to improve the quality of expenditure outlays.

4.38 In support of improved capacity of the Central Government, I am pleased to announce that we will be piloting a procurement planning training programme in 2018. It is anticipated that key sectors, such as health, education, public infrastructure, public security and agriculture, will be targeted for this capacity building exercise. Officers will be trained on the development of procurement plans, and SPEND analysis, and will benefit from clinical sessions where a specialist will facilitate the development of actual procurement plans. These procurement plans are intended to serve as a benchmark against which performance will be measured and, also, as an early warning mechanism to signal the need for remedial interventions.

4.39 Mr. Speaker, in 2018, we will continue to strengthen our procurement systems through several new initiatives. We will be establishing a process for debarment, where the past performance of bidders will be appraised as part of the selection process. We will establish a contractor's register to support this particular initiative. Also, a register of all procurement evaluators will be established to ensure that turnaround times and procedures are monitored and enforced. Further, we will be updating our procurement legislation, and will begin the groundwork leading to the eventual implementation of an eProcurement platform. This platform will allow for a more efficient and effective procurement system that has a greater capacity.

ii. Budgeting for Results

4.40 Mr. Speaker, in addition to our efforts on the procurement side of public financial management, we have also piloted a 'Budgeting for Results' (B4R) system with the Ministry of Public Health. The B4R platform is data driven; it forces the user to adopt a programmatic, results-focused approach to budgeting and planning. The pilot will continue during 2018, when it is anticipated to utilise the platform to assess performance of public health, and to assist in the preparation and delivery of the Ministries' Budget 2019 proposal. Once the platform proves successful, we anticipate a roll out to other key ministries. Another platform that we have rolled out this year, is the upgraded version of the Government accounting software. Going forward, we will be examining the effectiveness and user-friendliness of the existing and alternative

platforms so that we continue to improve on processing times within IFMAS across Government. We will also be moving to design the Integrated Financial Management and Information Systems to replace the IFMAS.

iii. Government Accounting and Treasury Management

4.41 Mr. Speaker, in the area of treasury management, Government has decided to transition to a Treasury Single Account (TSA). Based on international experience, best practices and expertise, structural changes to the Accountant General's Department (AGD) were recommended. These would best facilitate the move towards the TSA and enable smoother implementation of reforms in the future. These changes to the AGD are being considered by Government for implementation in 2018. Support will be provided to plan for the implementation of the TSA, as well as the adoption of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and the re-conceptualisation of government's chart of accounts. In addition, the upgrading of the National Payment System (NPS) to a digital one will facilitate more effective monitoring of Budget Agencies and public funds flows, cash management, and financial reporting. All of this is designed to protect the integrity of the treasury and improve accountability and transparency.

4.42 Mr. Speaker, all of the aforementioned have largely focused on improving our planning, budgeting, and financial processes. However, we must also improve the capacity of our human resources to ensure that there is sufficient analytical rigour to drive these processes. This year, the draft report assessing child-focused public expenditure was completed, and preliminary findings show that Government, between 2015 and 2017, has placed significant emphasis on interventions that benefit children, with child-focused expenditure rising from \$35.5 billion to \$50.8 billion. The final report will also include analyses of the effectiveness and efficiency of select government programmes for children, and, when completed in early 2018, will serve to guide our interventions and policies, going forward. We will be undertaking further public expenditure reviews, in different sectors, commencing in 2018, and will continue capacity building in this area, along with economic forecasting and modelling.

4.43 The child-focused public expenditure assessment also incorporated a capacity building exercise which sought to train officials of several key ministries, such as the Ministries of Public Health and Education, in the methodologies behind the exercise. Approximately 30 public servants were sensitised on measures of efficiency and effectiveness when assessing public programmes. The intention is to develop the analytic capacity to undertake such assessments, in-house, so as to programme development and evaluation.

c. Data for Decision Making

4.44 Mr. Speaker, our experiences, this year, make it plainly evident that we still have a long way to go in strengthening our data systems. To be able to have effective monitoring and evaluation systems, make the most of planning and budgeting platforms, such as B4R; and produce quality analytic reports, as we are doing for the child-focused public expenditure assessment; we must do more to improve data collection, management, quality and analyses. As such, capacity building, under the umbrella of our National Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Strategy, will continue in 2018, with at least five sessions of training planned in key concepts of M&E and indicator building. As we continue to implement performance budgeting and results-based management, the need for effective M&E systems, underpinned by strong data development, remains critical.

4.45 Mr. Speaker, with regards to national statistics, the Labour Force Survey (LFS) took the field in the 3rd quarter of this year and will continue into 2018. The LFS – the first for Guyana – is now in its second round and the first profiles of analysis are expected to be delivered in the first quarter of 2018. In addition, the all-Urban Consumer Price Index is expected to be implemented in the first quarter of 2018. Further, we will be launching the Household Budget Survey and the Living Conditions Survey in the last quarter of 2018 - the latter survey being the first major output of the newly established Poverty Measurement and Analysis Unit.

d. Tax Administration and Reform

4.46 Mr. Speaker, in anticipation of the economic developments expected in the next few years, our capacity for effective tax administration must be brought up to par, if we are to continue to be fiscally responsible. With the aim of strategically bolstering the capacity of the GRA, a five-year strategic plan will be developed, in 2018, which will prioritise actions to be taken by the Authority to maximise Government revenue and improve the overall administration of taxes.

4.47 In 2017, Government requested the conduct of a Tax Administration Diagnostic Assessment Tool to assess the effectiveness of the tax administration system. The findings of the report indicate that there is much work to be done. One recommendation from this report has led to the establishment of a Large Taxpayers Unit, in light of the fact that the majority of revenues are collected from a small group of taxpayers. The operationalisation of the Unit is expected to improve service delivery, thereby increasing compliance and revenue collection. It is anticipated that, in 2018, the Unit will improve its operational capacity to service all 243 large taxpayers on its roll.

4.48 Mr. Speaker, we are not only working to improve the service delivery to our large taxpayers, but, also, to all others. In 2017, the GRA established an outpost in Morawhanna, which reduced revenue leakage that was due to fuel smuggling. Additionally, offices have been established in Charity and Parika, that offer a level of service similar to that of the Head Office. In the coming year, the Authority will seek to establish additional offices in Mabaruma and Eteringbang.

4.49 Another initiative, which we anticipate will result in improved tax compliance, is the implementation of a stamp system for the sale of alcohol and tobacco. Through the use of seals to signal customs compliance, this measure will help, also, to reduce the incidence of smuggling of these particular goods.

4.50 Mr. Speaker, efforts will continue to focus on improving the internal capacities of the GRA to better serve the taxpayer. The GRA e-services are currently being tested for tax returns processing, and taxpayer registration. We anticipate that these e-services will be launched in time for at least the average taxpayer to file his or her tax return online by April 30th, 2018. In addition, in the new year, we will begin testing the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA), an integrated customs management system. We will launch the testing of the manifest module of ASYCUDA with a private sector company, which will allow for advance filing of cargo declarations. This is intended to improve customs processing times and accelerate the clearance and release of shipments to taxpayers. By the end of 2018, it is expected that this module of ASYCUDA should go live.

4.51 From 2018, emphasis will be placed on refocusing and strengthening risk management, the re-establishment of a business information technology steering group, implementing a data warehouse, rapid cleansing of the taxpayer register, and developing and implementing a risk-based debt management strategy. All of these reforms are intended to stabilise the tax base, allowing for more predictability with regards to revenue streams, and more evidenced-based planning and forecasting.

e. Financial Sector Reform

i. Addressing Derisking

4.52 Mr. Speaker, the derisking phenomenon, which resulted in foreign-owned banks terminating correspondent banking relationships with locally-owned banks, continues to affect our economy. At the end of October, 2017, more than two-thirds of the locally owned banks were unable to facilitate third-party foreign currency cheques, and only one bank has been executing wire transfers. This has led to increased cost of financial transactions which has the potential to reduce trade and investments, as well as remittances from abroad. We continue to work with our Caribbean neighbours and international institutions to develop a methodology to facilitate analysis of the impacts

of these lost relationships, as well as to inform measures that can be put in place to mitigate against future losses.

ii. Promoting Financial Sector Stability

4.53 Mr. Speaker, throughout the year, the Bank of Guyana continued to develop systems to improve our ability to monitor and maintain the stability of the financial sector. Central to this has been the drafting of amendments to the Financial Institutions Act (1995), which address the findings of the 2016 IMF and World Bank Financial Sector Assessment Programme (FSAP) of Guyana. These amendments aim to address risks by enhancing the supervisory capacity of the BOG and enforcing monitoring, prevention, and correction measures. This exercise benefited from technical assistance, which also enabled the drafting of Financial Consumer Protection legislation, for which consultations are expected to be held during 2018. When enacted, it will provide for a grievance mechanism to be established to receive and investigate civil complaints against financial institutions.

4.54 Mr. Speaker, also critical to financial sector stability, is the continued enhancement of the risk-based supervisory (RBS) framework of the BOG, to adapt to changing supervisory methodology and best practices. The current framework has been in existence for over a decade. In 2017, we begun revising this framework to give a more structured, but flexible, approach to supervision, risk assessment and mitigation, in order to ensure that an adequate level of protection is afforded to all stakeholders. The revised framework is expected to be implemented in 2018.

4.55 Mr. Speaker, in 2017, BOG completed a draft of the stress testing guidelines to be used by the banking system. In 2018, consultations will be held with commercial banks to finalise these guidelines, which are intended to outline procedures to be followed when conducting stress tests. These tests are currently conducted by the Bank of Guyana using a top-down approach, which allows for an assessment of the resilience of the banking sector as a whole. However, by following a bottom up approach, commercial banks will be able to evaluate their individual solvency and resilience. Such tests will

allow our banks to better assess and make adjustments to guard against adverse losses. In 2018, we will work towards developing a macro-stress test model for the economy, to better guard against risks.

4.56 Mr. Speaker, while great strides have been made towards maintaining the integrity of the financial sector and attaining Basel II standards, more work still remains to be done. In 2018, we will continue to implement the recommendations of the FSAP and draft the requisite regulations and legislation to implement Deposit Insurance, to add yet another form of protection to our financial sector.

iii. Expanding and Deepening Access to Financial Services

4.57 Mr. Speaker, Government is cognisant that financial sector development is pivotal for sustained economic growth and development. Some of the core policy initiatives that were implemented within the financial sector over the past year were: measures to promote capital market development, and measures to enhance financial market infrastructure. The overarching goal of these initiatives is to create a more competitive financial environment, enhance financial stability, and fulfill the government's financial inclusion imperative.

4.58 Mr. Speaker, the design of a country's payment system has financial risk implications for the development, safety and soundness of the domestic financial system and the performance of the macro economy. These risks need to be managed and mitigated through the establishment of a modern payments infrastructure that is supported by a sound institutional and regulatory framework. This evolution of our NPS, from paper-based to electronic, is underway. The Bank of Guyana has commenced work on the National Strategy for the Payments System Reform, which will serve to guide the development of the NPS. Specifically, in 2018, the Strategy is expected to be completed and compilation of the technical specifications of the required infrastructural upgrades will be underway. Once operationalised, the NPS is expected to handle a turnover of approximately 120 percent of Guyana's GDP.

4.59 Mr. Speaker, Guyana's capital market is still small and underdeveloped, being plagued by limited instruments and participants, and insufficient financial literacy. A more mature capital market could provide for better risk management, enhance financial stability, and promote more efficient administration of fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies. At the same time, we want to ensure that there is a good balance between debt and equity financing, to broaden, deepen and diversify the investment base while enhancing risk sharing. In light of this, the development of a bond market is still being considered, actively, following the submission of a report by the IMF.

4.60 Mr. Speaker, the legal and regulatory framework governing the operation of the securities sector has not kept pace with developments in our country and global best practices. This has created an impediment to the development and expansion of the securities market. A modern and comprehensive legislative framework will enable the diversification of the capital market in Guyana, facilitate the mobilisation of financial resources, and broaden market participation. It will also enhance investor protection and strengthen cross-border supervision and cooperation among financial regulators, in order to reduce systemic risk. To correct this deficiency, the Guyana Securities Council has begun re-writing the Securities Industry Act. Key elements of the new legislation are:

- Improved licensing regimes for self-regulatory organisations, securities exchanges and securities intermediaries;
- Extension of regulatory authority over the entire securities marketplace, including quotation and trade reporting systems and alternative trading schemes;
- Institution of a licensing regime for collective investment schemes;
- Establishment of a Central Securities Depository to record and maintain securities and register the transfer of ownership of securities; and
- Conferral on the regulator (to be renamed the Securities Commission) of such powers and duties as would enable it to promote the orderly development of the securities market and to protect the integrity of the market from abuse.

f. Business and Investment

4.61 Mr. Speaker, this Administration recognises the important role that entrepreneurship and, in turn, the private sector, plays in generating employment and income. It is imperative, therefore, that we continue to strengthen the fabric of micro and small businesses, especially those owned by vulnerable groups, through the alleviation of prohibitive constraints.

4.62 Mr. Speaker, established enterprises have a crucial part to play in nurturing micro and small businesses, just as Government has done, and continues to do, for both domestic and international enterprises, through the facilitation of an enabling environment. The Small Business Bureau (SBB) has directly supported over 1100 budding entrepreneurs, in 2017. More than 168 young persons benefited from business grants, as part of the YouthBiz 592 project, as well as a pilot, in-school, entrepreneurship project. A further 160 micro and small businesses directly benefited from improved access to finance through the disbursement of business grants and loans by the Micro and Small Enterprise Development Project. A total of 392 jobs were created and 831 persons from the hinterland and coastland received training in areas related to business development. A new initiative to support small businesses, in 2018, is the establishment of a \$100 million revolving fund, to finance businesses whose goods and services are sustainable and environmentally friendly.

4.63 Mr. Speaker, additional support to micro and small businesses will be delivered, in 2018, through the creation of business incubators and accelerators, in Regions 5 and 9, at a cost of \$36 million. These structures will foster the growth of businesses by facilitating the provision of support services, such as business registration, documentation, and capacity building. Further, through the establishment of business registration hubs, like the one opened in Lethem (Region 9) this year, and the upcoming one in Mahdia (Region 8), we will continue to improve the ease of doing business. In 2018, four other business registration hubs will be established in Regions 1, 5, 6 and 10.

4.64 Mr. Speaker, despite our best efforts to alleviate the financial constraints facing businesses, access to credit still prohibits investment and growth of enterprises. We will continue to devise strategies to address this problem such as the implementation of a Secure Transaction Regime, in 2018. This will allow for easier access to financing using moveable collateral.

4.65 Mr. Speaker, while the focus is on nurturing micro and small businesses, works on the Lethem Industrial Estate and the Belvedere Industrial Estate will continue into the New Year. An allocation of \$350 million has been made for the completion of works, in 2018. These estates are expected to have a combined capacity of about 250 to facilitate value-added production, while benefiting from economies of scale.

4.66 The Guyana Office for Investment (GO-Invest) facilitated almost \$23 billion in investments, which, over time, will create over 970 jobs across various sectors, including services, agriculture and energy. In 2018, GO-Invest anticipates investments of \$154 billion, that will create about 5,725 jobs. In addition, GO-Invest will be hosting the first ever Guyana Trade and Investment Exposition, aimed at promoting collaboration between private sector actors towards knowledge sharing and creating business partnerships. The Office anticipates up to 75 businesses participating in the Exposition, in April, 2018. Finally, work on updating the National Export and Investment Strategy will commence in the New Year.

4.67 To support our export competitiveness strategy, the sum of \$200 million has been allocated for 2018, to improve our national quality infrastructure. Enforcement of quality standards will guarantee that all exports leaving Guyana meet the international standards to be sold on the world market. To this end, work will commence on pursuing accreditation of the existing laboratory facilities and to strengthen the capacity of the Guyana National Bureau of Standards (GNBS).

F. Emerging and Transformative Sectors

a. Knowledge-Driven Government and Industries

4.68 Mr. Speaker, the information and communications technology (ICT) sector is a continually advancing and evolving one. It has been transforming traditional sectors such as transport, security, health and education. There are newer and more intelligent smartphones being released almost every month, some of which can monitor your health to a high degree of accuracy; homes are being designed with smart technology that will learn and adapt to owners preferences and comfort while providing security measures; and classrooms that are fully digital provide a more immersive learning experience.

4.69 Notwithstanding, Government is fully committed to accelerating our assimilation of new technologies into the way we do business and into our way of life. To this end, our focus is placed on completing the process of liberalisation of the telecommunications sector. Government is keen on having the benefits of a competitive ICT industry being passed on to the consumer in the form of improved services, added coverage, and reduced cost. Additionally, we will be working to further develop the requisite infrastructure to support such a transformation. Our interventions, going forward, will be guided by our National ICT Strategy, which will be finalised in 2018.

4.70 Mr. Speaker, Government is in the process of securing funding of US\$37.6 million, to implement the first phase of the Smart Guyana programme, a national broadband initiative to expand our e-Government network. To do this, we will upgrade the existing LTE network, upgrade and construct data centres, provide capacity building, outfit smart classrooms and eLibraries, launch eHealth solutions for remote health care services, and increase our closed circuit television capacities towards a Safe City solution. To this end, we have allocated \$2.3 billion to commence work on this initiative, in 2018. In addition, a further US\$17 million has been earmarked to ensure that vulnerable groups and far-flung hinterland communities, which might otherwise be excluded, are provided with the necessary infrastructure, hardware and software that

will enable access to high quality ICT, training and e-services. Implementation of this project is anticipated to commence in 2018 and, on completion, will see over 89,000 residents, in approximately 170 communities, having access to over 200 eGovernment ICT hubs.

4.71 Mr. Speaker, in 2017, the foundation was laid for the full operationalisation of the Centre of Excellence in Information Technology (CEIT), an ICT finishing school geared to bridge the gap between academia and industry. The building that will house the Centre was fully refurbished and furnished and, in 2018, over 100 students are expected to graduate from the Centre with advanced tutelage in network security, JAVA and Android, among others. Over \$140 million has been allocated to support the CEIT in the new year.

4.72 While capacity building remains a priority for Government, the need for innovation is critical to supporting transformative growth. In 2016, we started nurturing the talent of our local community by hosting events such as Hackathons and CodeSprints. These have been a success, with the eventual winners of the latter developing a practical Agricultural Commodities Trade Exchange that will be employed by the Ministry of Agriculture. The recently concluded Hackathon required participants to create a software or mobile application that caters for the management of Rates and Taxes and reporting for Municipalities and NDCs. While still in the early stages, we anticipate the application developed by the winners will be put to good use.

b. Managing the Extractive Sector

4.73 Mr. Speaker, we have achieved a significant milestone, this year, by becoming a candidate member of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). Next year, we will support the EITI Secretariat in implementation of its work plan, as we embark on the 18 month journey to full membership. At that time, we would have met a global standard for the good governance of oil, gas and mineral resources. This standard requires information along the extractive industry value chain, from the point of

extraction to how the revenue makes its way through the government and its contribution to the economy. These efforts serve to demonstrate our commitment to responsible and effective governance in the pursuit of sustainable development.

i. Gold

4.74 Mr. Speaker, the admirable performance of the gold sector in 2016 will be replicated in 2017, and is expected to be surpassed in 2018. However, production levels are thought to be much higher than declared, with thousands of ounces reportedly smuggled out of the country each month. Not only is this hampering our nation's development, it also casts a shadow over other law-abiding miners. To help address this problem, 41 trained wardens/compliance officers will be deployed to mining areas, in 2018. These officers have been vested with the powers of various categories of law enforcement and are tasked with enforcing mining regulations and other relevant laws. The work of these wardens will supplement the efforts of Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) to reduce the incidence of illegal mining and to improve compliance. Also, a set of incentives to encourage higher declarations will be announced shortly.

4.75 Mr. Speaker, although we have seen fewer fatal accidents in this sector, priority will be placed on promoting occupational health and safety standards and industry best practices. In the new year, Government will continue to support the Guyana Mining School and Training Centre which has been training miners and staffers of the sector in areas such as occupational health and safety, environmental management, exploration and geological techniques, and improved recovery practices. Additionally, to reduce the risk associated with the use of mercury in mining to human and environmental health, the importation and use of mercury will be regulated, in 2018, with a view to reducing its use.

ii. Oil and Gas

4.76 Mr. Speaker, in 2017, three additional oil discoveries in the Stabroek bloc were announced: Payara, Snoek, and Turbot. While the quantity and quality of the latter two discoveries are still being assessed, the gross recoverable resources for the Stabroek bloc is now estimated to be between 2.25 - 2.75 billion oil-equivalent barrels, making it one of the most significant global finds in recent years. These discoveries have derisked the basin, which is estimated to contain at least 7 billion oil-equivalent barrels, and has resulted in the significant ramping up of exploration activities in other already-allocated off-shore blocs.

4.77 Mr. Speaker, in light of these discoveries, we also anticipate significant interest in exploring the unallocated blocs of our derisked, off-shore basins. As such, it is imperative that we safeguard the rights of our nation to a fair share of resource wealth. To do so, we must revise the existing template of the Production Sharing Agreement (PSA) to be more accommodating to changing commodity prices while maintaining a level of progressivity that is responsive to profitability. While we strengthen our ability to negotiate more equitable PSAs, key Government agencies within the recently established Inter-Ministerial Technical Committee on petroleum to continue to coordinate capacity building and interactions with the industry.

4.78 The committee's agenda in the immediate future will focus on coordinating capacity building, information sharing, as well as providing input into the development of a legal and institutional framework to support the sovereign wealth fund (SWF). The development of a rules-based SWF is critical to ensuring that our resource revenues are responsibly managed within a transparent framework that promotes the highest levels of accountability. It must be noted that the SWF will not just serve for investment, but also to save for future generations and to stabilise the economy in times of global economic instability. During 2018, we will publish a green paper to apprise this honorable House on the proposal for the SWF and to seek feedback for further refinement, and to stimulate a national discussion to ensure that all citizens understand

the benefits to be had and the perils we must guard against in the collection and management of our oil resources.

4.79 Mr. Speaker, in addition to the establishment of the SWF, in 2018, the Petroleum Commission will be operationalised after the anticipated passage of the Petroleum Commission Bill. The Commission will be tasked with monitoring and regulation of this new and emerging sector, with a mandate to ensure that the exploration, development and production of petroleum are done in an efficient, safe, effective and environmentally responsible manner.

4.80 Mr. Speaker, while we continue to build capacity for effectively managing and regulating the oil and gas sector, we will ensure that systems and regulations are in place to properly and transparently account for, and manage oil revenues. Specifically, an oil and gas unit will also be established within the GRA, and will benefit from extensive training in revenue administration within the context of PSAs. The prudent management of these revenues, in addition to a well-thought out development plan, will help to guard against the resource curse.

4.81 To also prepare our private sector for rapid growth in this sector, we will be hosting an Oil and Gas Exposition and Business Summit in the first quarter of 2018, to bring together various segments of the private sector towards creating partnerships and facilitating information sharing for business opportunities.

4.82 Mr. Speaker, although oil remains the main focus of this emerging sector we are carefully exploring the feasibility of utilising natural gas as a temporary alternative for power generation. In the coming year, further steps will be taken to identify the preferred option for transporting gas onshore, including the most suitable location.

iii. Bauxite

4.83 Mr. Speaker, the bauxite industry is anticipated to benefit from added productive capacity as a new mine is slated for construction at Bonasika, in 2018. Approximately

US\$50 million is expected to be sunk into this project, which is expected to employ more than 150 workers. The mine is envisaged to commence production in 2019.

iv. Manganese and Other Mineral Offerings

4.84 Mr. Speaker, in 2018, manganese is expected to be in production, thus contributing to our economic growth for the first time in over 40 years. Preparatory works, including the rehabilitation of roads, has already begun, and about 1,200 persons will be employed during the construction phase. When the mine becomes operational, between 300 and 400 individuals will be gainfully employed, thus benefitting Matthews Ridge and surrounding communities.

v. Timber and Wood Products

4.85 Mr. Speaker, to strengthen the capacity on our forestry sub-sector to adapt to sustainable production practices, which, ultimately, will improve international competitiveness and our access to foreign markets, we have committed to become a part of the European Union Forest Law Enforcement, Governance, and Trade (EU-FLEGT) programme. We are on our way to initialising the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) of the Programme by the end of this year. Once the VPA is ratified, we can then commence the implementation phase, at the end of which, the aforementioned benefits would be realised.

4.86 Mr. Speaker, in addition, the Government spearheaded the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Roundtable, tasked with working collaboratively with the private sector, through the Guyana Manufacturers and Services Association, to meaningfully develop methods and initiatives to stimulate growth amongst the various industries of the manufacturing and services sectors. The forestry subsector was identified by the GMSA as the priority industry for the attention of the Roundtable, given the struggle of its players in progressing to value-added production, which would allow for the sector's true potential for growth and employment to be realised.

4.87 Mr. Speaker, while the challenges facing the forestry sector are multifaceted and complex, the Roundtable was able to identify several key issues that were hampering the sector's transformation. A package of measures has been designed and will be announced shortly. The Roundtable will continue to meet in 2018 to resolve outstanding issues with regards to forestry and commence discussions on the next priority industry.

c. Destination Guyana

4.88 Mr. Speaker, the tourism potential of our great, green nation is vast. Just recently, over 30 new species of flora and fauna have been discovered in Kaieteur National Park and the Upper Potaro Region. Much like our forests, the ecotourism potential of our country remains largely untapped. In spite of this, the growth in tourism continues at a steady pace, with visitor arrivals totalling 170,322 between January to September of 2017, a 5.7 percent increase over the same period in 2016.

4.89 Mr. Speaker, if tourism is to become a significant economic driver, as we hope that it will as part of our efforts towards diversification, then our approach to developing this sector must be multi-faceted. To this end, the Guyana Tourism Authority, in the coming year, will focus on areas including: (i) promoting the Guianas Shield as a tourism product; (ii) deepening links with industry operatives and investors; (iii) supporting the execution of cultural, heritage, and sports events; (iv) strengthening our diaspora relations to develop and exploit tourism opportunities; and (v) preparing and implementing a Tourism Development and Destination Marketing Plan.

4.90 It is expected, as well, Mr. Speaker, that as our economy undergoes rapid development in the coming years, additional visits stemming from the hosting of international exhibitions, conferences, and shows, some of which I have already alluded to in this speech, will also stimulate growth in the hospitality subsector and the wider tourism sector.

d. Infrastructure for Integration

4.91 Mr. Speaker, our economic fortune is premised, in part, on the speed with which we are able to improve, modernise and expand the country's infrastructure. The need to invest in infrastructure for job creation, the expansion of industries and the growth of the private sector is paramount in a growing economy. As such, eliminating the infrastructure deficit, including linking our heavily populated coastland to our rich, arable and pristine hinterland communities, continues to guide investments in the sector. It will be recalled that a number of transformative initiatives were outlined in Budget 2017. These require tremendous planning, coordination, cooperation, and leadership. As such, we have commissioned several studies and begun due diligence to commence major infrastructure interventions. Our development partners have already approved the terms of reference for the design and feasibility of the Linden-Mabura Road Upgrade, the River Crossing at Kurupukari, and the Coastal River and Infrastructure Project. We are in receipt of eleven expressions of interests for the design, build, own, operate and transfer option for the New Demerara River Bridge.

i. Roads

4.92 Mr. Speaker, we have allocated \$35 billion, in 2018, to support infrastructural development across the country. Of that amount, the sum of \$14.3 billion will be devoted to the construction, rehabilitation, upgrading, and maintenance of our road network. Specifically, in the new year, works will commence on the Sheriff Street-Mandela Road, for which we have budgeted \$2 billion. The existing carriageway will be upgraded and resurfaced from the northern end of Sheriff Street through to Homestretch Avenue. From that point to the Mandela Avenue-Hunter Street junction, we will be widening the road to accommodate four lanes of traffic. Sidewalks, bicycle lanes, pedestrian overpasses, and a roundabout at the Sheriff Street-David Street junction will all form parts of this project, in an effort to improve road safety. Alongside this will be expended another \$2.7 billion to widen the East Coast Demerara Highway to four lanes, stretching from Better Hope to Annandale; while the two lane road between Annandale and Belfield, will be upgraded. A further \$1.2 billion has been budgeted to

the complete the West Coast Demerara Highway. Additionally, the four pedestrian overpasses will be equipped with elevators to facilitate the aged and differently able pedestrians.

4.93 Mr. Speaker, the development of the Georgetown-Lethem gateway requires careful assessment and due diligence, In the coming year, we will be launching the feasibility studies and detailed designs for the first phase of the Linden-Lethem road, covering the section from Linden to Mabura Hill, thereby improving access to hinterland communities and Northern Brazil; while opening new economic opportunities along the corridor. I am pleased to indicate that external funding is available to scope out and develop key social and economic opportunities for residents along this corridor. The use of these funds is specifically targeted to establishing the groundwork to map out and implement complementary social and economic development initiatives around the project, and to assist in financing the implementation of selected strategic, small-scaled economic activities. Similar studies will be conducted on the Soesdyke-Linden Highway and the Linden-Ituni-Kwakwani Corridor. These will provide significant entre to the Intermediate Savannahs and create access to the upper reaches of the Berbice River, thereby enhancing the agricultural potential of Kwakwani, Ebini and Kimbia.

4.94 Several key roadways in the Hinterland, aimed at providing easy travel and transportation access between and among hinterland communities, as well facilitating our gold miners and loggers, will be upgraded, in 2018. These include the Port Kaituma-Matthew's Ridge-Baramita Corridor, internal roads in Mahdia, and the Bartica-Potaro stretch of road. A total of \$1.5 billion has been allocated for these works.

ii. Bridges

4.95 Mr. Speaker, the need for a new, higher-capacity, fixed bridge across the Demerara River is evident, given the aging out of the existing bridge. We have completed the feasibility study for a new bridge; have, successfully, called for expressions of interest; and will work assiduously to ensure its earliest construction.

With regards to the Georgetown-Lethem gateway, we are undertaking a feasibility and design of a bridge across the Kurupukari. To execute these activities and other bridge-improvement initiatives, in 2018, we have allocated \$840.4 million in the budget.

iii. Sea Defence

4.96 Mr. Speaker, Government is cognisant of the need to protect our low-lying coastland. In 2018, the sum of \$2.4 billion has been budgeted to improve our sea defence countrywide. Specifically, construction and rehabilitation of sea defence structures will be undertaken at Ruimzeigt/Waller's Delight, DeWillem, Grove/Look Out, Pomeroon, Cottage (Mahaicony), and Uitvlugt.

iv. River

4.97 Mr. Speaker, in ensuring that balanced growth occurs across Guyana, Government will continue to place emphasis on servicing riverain areas and utilising under-exploited riverways, to facilitate economic activity. In this regard, \$250 million has been allocated, in 2018, for the upgrade of stellings at Bartica and Leguan. A further \$160 million has been allocated to support the reconstruction of the Vreed-en-Hoop and Stabroek stellings, into modern water taxi terminals. Additionally, the sum of \$1.1 billion has been budgeted to commence the construction of an ocean going passenger and cargo ferry, which will ply the Parika-Mabaruma route. A sum of \$500 million has been budgeted for the rehabilitation of our existing fleet of river and ocean going vessels.

v. Air

4.98 Mr. Speaker, in 2018, we will enter into a new phase in our aviation history, as we anticipate to complete the US\$138 million expansion of the Cheddi Jagan International Airport. A sum of \$5 billion has been allocated to complete works, including the extension of the runway, rehabilitation of the building to house the arrivals terminal, and the construction of the departure terminal. The upgraded Airport will be able to accommodate larger aircraft and handle an increased number of passengers.

4.99 In an effort to guide the continued transformation and modernisation of the aviation sector, work on the development of an aviation master plan will commence, in 2018. We have set aside \$250 million to improve our airstrips and aerodromes across the country, of which \$140 million will be used to commence the rehabilitation of airstrips at Bemichi and Kamana. Another 12 airstrips across the hinterland regions will be rehabilitated at a cost of \$110.3 million. Government is also in negotiation with a multilateral donor to secure a US\$15 million loan, to finance a project for further aerodrome and airstrip development across the hinterland. Under that programme, the Lethem airstrip will be upgraded into a regional hub and international aerodrome, in order to receive flights originating from Brazil and other Latin American neighbors.

vi. Energy

4.100 Mr. Speaker, our Nationally Determined Contribution, under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), specifies that we, as a nation, have undertaken to develop a 100 per cent renewable energy supply by 2025. This Government intends to honour this commitment to our people and the world. We have, and will continue to prioritise interventions in solar, hydropower and other renewable sources, as well as energy efficient technologies. This commitment is also expected to be restated in the Green State Development Strategy.

4.101 Mr. Speaker, Government continues to explore our options for realising substantial conversion to renewable sources by 2025. Evidently, hydropower continues to be an integral part of the renewable options. However, Government has already expressed deep and open reservations about the Amalia Falls Hydropower Project being the primary hydropower solution. In addition to unresolved technical, cost, environmental and other issues, the main sponsor, Sithe Global, has withdrawn from the project. Government has opted, therefore, for a comprehensive energy mix with natural gas being actively considered as a prime component. In the meantime, we are currently examining the feasibility of hydropower projects at Kumu Falls and Moco Moco Falls; together, they are anticipated to generate sufficient power to meet the demands of planned households and industrial zones within the immediate and

surrounding communities. We will package these projects in a manner that would attract investors' interests.

4.102 Mr. Speaker, this year, we commenced the construction of Guyana's first ever solar farm in Mabaruma, which we expect to become operational in 2018. We have also commenced feasibility studies for the establishment of solar farms in Port Kaituma and Bartica. Government buildings, including ministries, schools, and health centres, are being outfitted with solar photovoltaic panels, to reduce Government's dependence on the national grid. To date 70 buildings have been equipped with such panels, resulting in a 1.86 gigawatt of power savings. In 2018, another 74 buildings will be outfitted. Government is also implementing an energy efficiency programme. So far, we have installed 10,427 LED lamps and 3,766 motion-sensors across 46 buildings and, in 2018, we will endeavor to install an additional 10,610 lamps and 1,486 motion sensors. Our intervention in 2018 is anticipated to save our taxpayers \$45.5 million per year in energy costs.

4.103 Government will be supporting the efforts of the Guyana Power and Light (GPL) to improve the quality and efficiency of its electricity distribution network. In that regard, we have allocated \$2 billion for the Power Utility Upgrade Programme, in 2018. In addition, we will be examining the feasibility of using natural gas as a more affordable and cleaner energy source until such time as we are able to move to 100% renewable energy. Already, GPL has invited expressions of interest for the installation of a 50MW capacity natural gas fired plant.

e. Building Sustainable Communities

i. Water

4.104 Mr. Speaker, the provision of safe and potable drinking water is a basic human right to be enjoyed by all Guyanese. To this end, we have allocated \$3.2 billion to improve the quality of water supply across the country, 9.7% above the projected amount for 2017. Our efforts in this area continue to be guided by the Guyana Water

Inc.'s strategic plan, which aims to achieve universal access to safe and affordable drinking water.

4.105 Mr. Speaker, in 2018, we will continue the expansion of our water supply capacity, with works anticipated to start on the construction of three new water treatment plants that will cater for the following catchment areas: Goed Bananen Land-Sheet Anchor, in Region No. 6; Diamond-Herstelling, in Region No. 4; and Cornelia Ida-De Kinderen, in Region No. 3. Over 20,000 households are anticipated to benefit from these water treatment plants and thousands more will benefit from the anticipated completion of eight new wells across the country, in 2018.

4.106 To improve the efficiency of our existing water distribution systems, we will also be upgrading transmission lines across the country, including in 11 villages across the hinterland, such as Port Kaituma, Lethem, and Mabaruma; and expanding the system at Moblissa, Three Friends, and the Shelter Belt. We will install an additional 10,000 meters by the end of 2018 compared to the over 10,000 already projected for 2017. Institutional strengthening of GWI will continue to target the reduction of commercial and technical losses and improve the billing system.

ii. Sanitation

4.107 Mr. Speaker, as part of our commitment, also aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals, we continue to strive to manage all waste in an environmentally sound manner, in order to minimise their adverse impacts on public health and the environment. In 2017, we expended \$338 million on improving our solid waste management, including the rehabilitation of the access road to the Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill; the commencement of the inventory and survey of all landfill sites; the completion of the construction of Kara Kara Landfill access road; the commencement of the rehabilitation of existing landfill sites at Lusignan, Bartica, and Linden; and the undertaking of final consultations on the National Integrated Solid Waste Management Strategy.

4.108 Mr. Speaker, in 2018, another \$178.6 million will be expended to further improving our capacity to handle solid waste. We will aim to complete designs for new sanitary landfills at Bartica, Linden, and Mahdia, as well as rehabilitate and upgrade access roads at the Lusignan, Belle Vue, and Rosehall sites. We will also commence preparation of Cell 2 of the Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill. As part of the solid waste programme, we will continue to provide training in solid waste management practices.

4.109 In addition, the public relations campaign to educate the populace - involving a tour of Haags Bosch Landfill, sensitisation efforts at the Municipal Expo, and outreaches will continue, in 2018. Government recognises that we must not only manage the handling of waste, but, also, modify our consumption patterns as a nation, if we are to live in a truly greener and more sustainable Guyana.

iii. Housing

4.110 Mr. Speaker, the provision of housing is essential for the achievement of economic development, social equality and social cohesion. With the departure from the old housing model, Government housing programme going forward must consider the challenges that currently beset this sector. These include cost of financing, inadequate public infrastructure and services, absence of strategic planning, and an inadequate and inefficient application process, all of which combine to contribute to low occupancy of housing schemes. There is need to find an optimal mix of providing site and services and completed houses solutions, while giving due regard to accounting for affordability, efficiency, and innovative financing, in order to address the needs of a wider cross section of the population. Government has placed affordable housing at the forefront of its social policy and is cognisant of the value of home ownership and its nexus with reducing poverty and improving living standards.

4.111 Mr. Speaker, a systemic review of the Government housing programme was undertaken, in light of the continued backlog of over 50,000 applicants, which remains a cause for significant concern. As a result, a joint technical working group was established and tasked with examining the challenges that the Central Housing and

Planning Authority (CHPA) must overcome, in order to deliver on its mandate and realise Government's vision. A position paper that addresses the challenges facing the housing programme has been completed and is currently drawing the attention of the Cabinet. Solutions that target low and middle income households, including young professionals, are being considered, such as: (i) public-private partnerships towards community solutions; (ii) access to more affordable financing including graduated interest rates; and (iii) shared ownership/phased equity.

4.112 The CHPA has already commenced looking at ways to deliver the promised complete housing units – such as single houses, duplexes, and condominiums – to the public. In 2017, CHPA has piloted 6 duplexes, 2 elevated single family houses; issued 2,116 land titles; regularized 322 squatters; and allotted 381 house lots. The pilot units will be evaluated and the models refined accordingly.

4.113 In an effort to address the issue of housing needs for low income families Government has concluded negotiations for a US\$30 million loan to improve occupancy of existing housing schemes through the provision of quality public infrastructure as well as the provision of housing subsidies for home improvements and core homes. In addition, a further 164 full house replacement subsidies and 38 roof replacement subsidies are anticipated to be disbursed under the Hinterland Sustainable Housing Programme which is allocated \$240 million in 2018.

f. Production Transformation and Agricultural Diversification

4.114 Mr. Speaker, the global issues that affect agricultural production across the world have led us to a point in history which forces countries to approach agricultural development in a climate-change resilient, environmentally sustainable manner. As we grapple with climate change and the need for climate adaptation and mitigation measures here at me, we have begun exploring the possibility of harnessing the vast agricultural potential of the Intermediate and Rupununi Savannahs. We recognise, also, that we must do more to improve the competitiveness of our farmers, through diversification and agro-processing. In 2018, we will facilitate the development of the

Savannahs; work with the private sector to stimulate growth in agro-processing; expand our investment in non-traditional crops, livestock, extension services, and further research; and consolidate our drainage and irrigation services. To this end, a total of \$19.4 billion has been allocated to the agriculture sector, for 2018.

4.115 Mr. Speaker, our intensified focus on diversification and value-added production in the non-sugar agriculture sector becomes absolutely critical at this point as the sugar industry continues to undergo restructuring. This is key to ensuring that the sector remains productive and growth-stimulating. In 2018, the Special Purposes Unit (SPU) is tasked with examining and articulating the way forward with respect to the divestment of the Skeldon, Rosehall, and East Demerara estates. With respect to the remaining estates, the SPU will also work to reconfigure operations to guarantee economic viability. Our taxpayers must no longer be burdened to carry the weight of an unprofitable, inefficient, and antiquated public corporation. Government has allocated \$6.3 billion, in 2018, to support the reduced operations of GuySuCo.

4.116 The Government intends to uphold its duty to the communities and families in the areas affected by divestment, as part of the GuySuCo restructuring. In order to ensure continued livelihoods, a skills re-training programme is anticipated to be offered for those who choose to pursue new opportunities. Those who wish to continue with a livelihood in agriculture may see an opportunity to own their own farmland. In addition, the Government will assume responsibility for social services, including health centres and community centre grounds. We will also undertake critical drainage and irrigation services for the areas affected by divestment.

4.117 Mr. Speaker, the Government is committed to improving the livelihoods of rice farmers. The Government recognises that one important aspect of strengthening stability and sustainability of Guyana's rice sector is to increase productivity per unit area. As such, the Government will partner with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), through the Malaysia Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI), in updating the expertise and technology in rice production, through a Reverse Linkage Project to the tune of US\$863,000. This will be done through the introduction of

innovative rice varieties from MARDI that are more resilient and will significantly increase rice yields per unit.

4.118 Mr. Speaker, in 2018, an allocation of \$265 million has been made to design and commence construction of an agricultural centre and reservoir in Lethem, and commence upgrading of the agricultural research station in Ebini. These stations will facilitate research programmes in cassava, peanuts, orchards, livestock, and pasture development in the Savannahs; and complement the existing demonstration farms for turmeric, black pepper and ginger in Hosororo and Mabaruma, all geared towards the expansion of non-traditional crop production. In addition, discussions have begun with a view to conducting a feasibility study for the most suitable options to opening up of the Linden-Ituni-Kwakwani and Kwakwani-Ebini corridors. The development of agriculture in these areas would result in a more resilient industry that will no longer be affected by the coastal threats caused by climate change.

4.119 However, while we tackle the issue of geography, we must ensure that competitiveness is not compromised. Government remains proactive in the promotion of nontraditional agricultural products, new technologies and supporting infrastructure towards the ultimate goal of enhancing national production and productivity. These efforts will not only maintain national food security, in an efficient and sustainable manner, but, also substantially transform the cost structure and competitiveness of our agriculture sector. The National Agriculture Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) will continue to support the expansion of our agricultural base and reduce our dependence on imports, through research in improving the yield of non-traditional crops, as well as testing the feasibility of agro-processing in various areas. To complement these efforts, draft regulations for general food safety which will cover fruits and vegetables; water; slaughterhouse regulations; beef inspections and grading; and poultry, milk, and eggs will be completed, in 2018, in a conscious effort to standardise the outputs of the sector, thereby improving competitiveness and promoting easier access to international markets.

4.120 Mr. Speaker, Government has embarked on a targeted livestock development programme, which will see Guyana not only rebuilding its herd with a view to exporting beef, but, also, establishing two modern abattoirs in Regions No. 5 and No. 9. When completed, these facilities will enable farmers to slaughter and process their livestock according to international standards and will support certification for export.

4.121 Mr. Speaker, the inclement weather in 2017 resulted in the significant loss of livestock and dampened agricultural production overall. In recent years, we have experienced extreme rainfall patterns, which resulted in the flooding of critical agricultural regions of the country. The negative impacts of this on the sector and the livelihoods of many have been painful. As a climate change adaptation and mitigation intervention in 2018, Government will procure the services of a contractor to design and supply nine (9) fixed and five (5) mobile pumps to augment the existing inventory of 60 fixed and mobile pumps. These pumps will provide services to targeted areas along the coast that are susceptible to excessive flooding and have limited natural drainage capacities. Over 50,000 acres of rice cultivation, cash crops and cattle are expected to benefit from the installation of the fixed pumps. Additionally, the five mobile pumps will serve areas that have a larger residential population such as La Penitence South, Cummings Canal, Church Street, Sussex Street and Ruimveldt South.

4.122 Mr. Speaker, Government will continue to dedicate significant resources to the development, rehabilitation and maintenance of our drainage and irrigation systems, with over \$6.1 billion being allocated in 2018. In addition, over 75 km of canals and drains and over 20km of dams will be constructed, rehabilitated and/or maintained, clearing approximately 150 acres of land for cultivation and benefitting over 100 farming households.

4.123 Mr. Speaker, work will commence, in 2018, on the development of aquaculture and inland fisheries regulations and we will finalise the marine fisheries regulations. It is also expected that increased monitoring and surveillance will be executed with the aim of increasing licensed vessels in the artisanal fleet. Further, the fisheries department will benefit from \$54 million to purchase a vessel of their own to ensure

more effective at sea monitoring. Tuna fishing is also being developed and there is expression of interest from other private investors in other areas of fishing such as mariculture. The Fisheries Department will continue to work closely with all stakeholders to facilitate the development of a diverse and thriving industry.

4.124 Mr. Speaker, given the changing agro-economic landscape and the collapse of sugar industry, we have to be thoughtful, vigilant and strategic in our outlook. Investment in the agriculture sector must have sustainable cost structures, address the needs of our people, be data-driven and supported by evidence-based planning. To this end, we must first take stock of the current configuration of farmers, farming systems and cost structures across the country, through a national agricultural census. Such an exercise was last undertaken over half a century ago. The census will be critical in the development of land-use plans for the agriculture sector and facilitate a more efficient allocation of resources by both Government and the private sector. In 2018, a sum of \$200 million has been allocated towards this activity. The census will also complement our interventions, especially as we escalate our attention and investment in the Intermediate and Rupununi Savannahs.

G. National Security

a. Foreign Policy, Economic Diplomacy, and Diaspora Relations

4.125 Mr. Speaker, the preservation of Guyana's territorial integrity and sovereignty has always been a paramount responsibility of this Government. The defence of our territory is a defence of our patrimony, our public infrastructure, the private assets of our people and investors, and their right to enjoy those assets within the limits of our laws. Towards this end, we have endeavoured to bring closure to the border controversy with the support of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Good Offices Mechanism, and we will continue to do so, in 2018.

4.126 In February 2017, Guyana chaired the 28th Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and

we are working to ensure that CARICOM continues to provide wider opportunities for our people under the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), especially given that our trade within the Community represents about 25 percent of our GDP. In this regard, Guyana has actively joined in efforts to finalise negotiations on expanding CARICOM-Cuba trade relations, CARICOM-Japan cooperation, and plans on deepening CARICOM-South Korea relations, all of which contain rich economic benefits and opportunities for foreign investment in Guyana. These efforts already have borne fruit with Guyana penetrating the Cuban rice market and also receiving Japanese grant assistance of US\$15 million for alternative energy uses. For 2018, Government will continue to work with our bilateral and multilateral partners to support our further development and the vision and deliverables of the Green State Development Strategy.

4.127 Mr. Speaker, the development of the oil and gas sector has brought increased interest in Guyana from countries near and far. Interest ranges from providing logistic support to offering training in the sector. In this regards, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is currently developing an Investment Assessment Tool to evaluate the risks and benefits of potential investments to Guyana's security. Furthermore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working assiduously towards presenting a favourable image of the country to all investors through its relations with the Diaspora guided by the Diaspora Engagement Strategy in an effort to leverage the expertise, talent, and investment.

b. Safeguarding Public Security, Rebuilding Public Trust

4.128 Mr. Speaker, this year, a tragedy befell our nation which caused us to collectively hold our breath and wonder. I am referring to the rioting of prisoners and the razing of the Camp Street Prison, which was so frightening as to cause public advisories to be issued cautioning citizens to stay indoors. This wanton act of violence and mayhem threatened our national security. It is an experience that has illuminated the state of dysfunction and disarray into which our security services had fallen over the past two decades. Government places great emphasis on both the safety of our citizens and public officers, as well as the rehabilitative process to support the successful reintegration of prisoners into society thereby reducing the rate of recidivism. This catastrophe has

forced us, therefore, to undertake a comprehensive examination of the security sector. It has resulted, also, in the diversion of scarce resources to address both the immediate security and management concerns, as well as the judicial and other related systems.

4.129 Mr. Speaker, while the joint services launched Operations CLEANSWEEP and SAFEGUARD, in order to quickly address the immediate situation, Government has risen to the task of addressing the long term needs of the security sector.

4.130 Mr. Speaker, in 2018, we have allocated \$30.7 billion to implement several initiatives in the sector. Of that amount, our Prison Service will receive approximately \$1.5 billion to address the expansion and rehabilitation of the prison infrastructure. This work will include the expansion of the Mazaruni Prison to accommodate 400 inmates, or 61 percent more than its current capacity. In addition, work on the construction of a new Georgetown Prison is likely to begin in the new year. Over \$150 million has also been allocated to purchase surveillance equipment, body scanners, and beds, among other items. Provisions have been made for the strengthening of the Prison Service's capacity for case management, as well as rehabilitation and reintegration. Furthermore, in Budget 2018, \$1.8 billion has been provided to cater for the Prison Service's operational costs, a 4.6 percent increase over Budget 2017.

4.131 Mr. Speaker, we will continue to modernise our Police Force in the coming year. Our 114 police stations across the country will benefit from increased vehicular access to support their response times to reported crimes. Further, team policing efforts are expected to deliver 24 hour patrol service. While six police stations were remodeled, in 2017, another 6 stations will be targeted in 2018. In addition, police stations at Cove and John, Lethem, Springlands, Central (New Amsterdam), and Matthews Ridge are slated for rehabilitation, and a new police station in Parfaite Harmonie will be constructed to service the catchment area. Another \$200 million has been allocated for the purchasing of equipment for the Police Force; this will supplement the generous gift received from the Government of the People's Republic of China, comprising of vehicles, riot gear and other equipment worth \$500 million.

4.132 Mr. Speaker, not only are we improving the capacity of our security services, but, also, we are aggressively pursuing the training of youth to create avenues for income generation and sustainable livelihoods as a preventative measure; no person should ever feel like their only option is to pursue a life of crime in order to survive. To this end, 300 youth will be trained, in 2018, in the areas of entrepreneurship, conflict resolution, and violence prevention, and parenting, as part of the citizen security initiative. Overall, since this Government took office, the number of reported serious crimes is estimated to have declined by about 23 percent.

4.133 Mr. Speaker, our Fire Service will receive its first fire boat, in 2018, and a sum of \$165 million has been budgeted to make the final payment. The boat will be fully equipped and will form part of a package of interventions to improve the capacity of the Service to respond to fires, both on waterways and bridges. An allocation of \$60 million will be used to expand our fire service coverage, to cater to residents of Melanie Damishana, Mabaruma, and, for the first time, Onverwagt.

H. Harnessing Our Human Capital

a. Education for Development

4.134 Mr. Speaker, there is clear need for reform and innovation across all levels of education delivery – nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary. In recognition of this, Government established a Commission of Inquiry, whose report is expected to make searching recommendations to guide the innovation and reform initiatives. Our children must no longer be subjected to frequent teacher absenteeism, poor curriculum delivery, shortages of text books and materials, and non-submission of grades at tertiary levels.

4.135 Improving the quality of education will not be fixed by building more schools and buying more furniture. While non-academic standards continue to be critical to the quality of education delivery, it is the presence of a teacher who cares enough to ensure that each child masters literacy and numeracy at the lower grades that will influence their performance in future years.

4.136 Mr. Speaker, we will continue to add to the pool of trained teachers, which currently stands at 77 percent, in order to ensure that each child is afforded the best possible education. This year, we expect that 450 graduates will join the trained teacher workforce and 37 untrained teachers will complete the teacher upgrading programme, to prepare for the trained teachers' certificate programme. In 2018, we expect an additional 335 trained teachers to join the workforce.

4.137 We intend to improve the quality of learning by providing a stimulating environment. In this regard, Government will intensify efforts to transform our systems of education delivery via technology. To date, 610 teachers have received basic IT training, while 162 have been trained in the use of software to facilitate those who learn at different paces. Additionally, 56 teachers are currently being trained in website building and online teaching. These and other initiatives are expected to continue, in 2018. Other programmes, such as the Digital Classroom Programme, are slated to commence, also. This particular programme is set to benefit about 3,540 students and 170 teachers. In 2018, priority will be given to creating e-material for improved learning in classrooms.

4.138 Mr. Speaker, in 2018, much emphasis will be placed on early childhood education literacy programmes and, in this regard, the roll out of 200 early childhood resource kits, and the continued roll out of the 'READ PLAY LOVE' mass media campaign will continue. Passion for science technology engineering mathematics (STEM) subjects must be aroused at an early stage in a child's development and transitioned throughout the primary and secondary levels. In this regard, the Government is implementing an Inquiry Science Education approach, which is being piloted in 10 primary schools. In addition, 250 mathematics kits, to facilitate better learning outcomes, have already been distributed to secondary schools.

4.139 Mr. Speaker, technical vocational education and training is one of the pathways students can choose, in order to develop skills and trade that will allow them to become gainfully employed. To this end, Government will support the construction of practical

instruction departments at secondary schools in Mabaruma, Bartica, Mahdia, and St. Ignatius, and practical instruction centres in Fellowship, Beterverwagting and Hopetown. The upgrade and expansion of these centres will create an enhanced learning environment necessary to equip students with marketable skills. By 2021, we envisage a total of 42 workshops being constructed and/or refurbished to cater for over 2,900 students. Training will be conducted in the fields of joinery, masonry, cookery, garment production and motor vehicle repairs, amongst others. Additionally, Government will support the construction of a technical and vocational centre at Bina Hill.

4.140 Mr. Speaker, Government has boosted the School Feeding Programme, to provide wider access to a larger cohort of students. The community-based hot meal programme has expanded from 110 schools to 172 schools. The programme now includes schools in the riverain communities of Region No. 2, in addition to the hinterland Regions Nos. 1, 7, 8 and 9.

4.141 Mr. Speaker, in the area of capital improvements to the education infrastructure, we have budgeted to spend over \$4.7 billion on the construction, rehabilitation, extension and maintenance of educational facilities throughout Guyana. New secondary schools will be constructed at Good Hope and Parfaite Harmonie, while St. Rose's High and Wismar/Christianburg Secondary Schools will be re-constructed. The University of Guyana will receive a subvention of over \$2.4 billion, in 2018. It is expected that the skill sets within the leadership of the University will ably manage these resources in a fiscally-responsible manner.

4.142 Mr. Speaker, we can do everything I have just mentioned and more, but there is still one thing that will prevent us from achieving the good life as it relates to education – that is, ensuring that teachers are available in all corners of the country. Too often, as we go out to the hinterland regions, the stories of quality of living comparisons to the coastland abound from our education officials. The cost of bread, water, cooking gas, the isolation from the wider communities, having to travel miles to get basic supplies, are only some of the daily issues confronting our hinterland teachers. In order to ensure that we improve the quality of education and the opportunities for our young people, the

availability of good teachers is vital, and we must both retain and move additional teachers to those locations. As such, Budget 2018 caters for an 80 percent increase in the Remote Area Incentive (RAI). Persons currently in receipt of \$5,000 and \$7,000 will see increases to \$9,000 and \$12,600, respectively.

b. Moulding a Healthy Nation

4.143 Mr. Speaker, the challenges faced by the public health sector are many and varied: shortage of drugs and problems of procurement; continued stress on the National Referral Hospital; health infrastructure deficits; and, disparities between the hinterland and coastland are but a few of them. Notwithstanding, our administration continues to make every effort to ensure that every dollar invested in the public health system is geared towards improving service delivery – quality, efficiency and effectiveness. In 2018, we have budgeted to spend another \$33.3 billion, 7 percent more than in 2017, 12.5 percent of Budget 2018 and 4.2 percent of the GDP, in our quest to modernise and transform the sector. These statistics testify to the seriousness with which we view the sector and its significance in the attainment of the good life.

4.144 Mr. Speaker, Government has made important strides, this year, to improve the capacity for delivering specialist diagnostic health services to the public. Specifically, we purchased a mammography machine for the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) – the first such machine in approximately 20 years at a public health facility. We have made provision to purchase a second machine, in 2018. Screening for breast cancer no longer needs to be outsourced at great cost to patients, as capacity is being built for early diagnosis and treatment of this type of cancer. In addition, the public health system will now benefit from a new viral load machine, procured this year, to improve our capacity for HIV testing, Zika screening, and other specialist tests, some of which had to be sent overseas. We will also be piloting a point of care testing programme at the National Care and Treatment Centre, in 2018, for non-HIV sexually transmitted infections.

4.145 To facilitate the mentioned interventions, Government will continue to deploy specialists across the regions. In 2017, we added an additional 9 medical specialists to Regions No. 1 and No. 9. However, we recognise that more must be done to bring regional health facilities up to standard, so that our specialists can treat patients on site and not have to have them medevac-ed. In 2018, we have allocated \$2.4 billion for the upgrading, maintenance and construction of health infrastructure across the country; nearly \$600 million has been budgeted for the procurement of medical equipment; and over \$2.2 billion have been allocated for drugs and medical supplies.

4.146 Mr. Speaker, an investment of US\$8 million, over five years, will be made to improve maternal child health. The project got underway this year; in 2018, we have budgeted to spend \$150 million on activities, which include the rehabilitation of the obstetric unit in the 'CC' Nicholson Hospital and the provision of essential obstetric and newborn care equipment for GPHC. The project also involves capacity building towards an eventually improved supply chain management system for health facilities. These initiatives and more are intended to improve the health outcomes for mothers and children, by contributing to the reduction of the maternal and infant mortality rates.

4.147 Mr. Speaker, mental health also remains a major concern for Government, especially since accessing such services still remains a taboo for many. A self-harm surveillance project was piloted earlier this year and, at GPHC alone, there were over 80 reported instances of self-harm. It is time we recognise and advocate that there is nothing wrong with approaching a therapist or counsellor for help, in order to break the stigma. Depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and panic are all just some of the issues that many of us have to face in our daily lives without even realising that these are mental health issues and that we do not have to face them alone. To assist, in this regard, we expect to train almost 500 health professionals, over the period 2017-18, to better detect and treat mental illnesses.

4.148 Mr. Speaker, in implementing the SDGs to promote healthy lives and well-being for all ages, the Ministry of Public Health has successfully rolled out programmes, in 2017, for men's health, at 7 health care facilities. In 2018, the Ministry plans to

introduce an elderly health programme, with the aim of having one health care facility in every Region offering a package of services for the elderly.

4.149 Mr. Speaker, while we can continually invest in infrastructure, equipment and medical professionals, our progress will be slowed if we do not have efficient systems for health administration and health planning in place. Towards improving our current planning systems, the Ministry of Finance piloted a Budgeting for Results platform with the Ministry of Public Health, which allows for improved programme budgeting and results-based management. It is anticipated that the Ministry of Public Health will be better equipped, in 2018, to develop and articulate health programmes in a manner that delivers better value for money, and is explicitly linked to results in health-related outcomes.

4.150 In addition, in 2018, we will continue to assess the potential for a Geographic Health Information System (GHIS), which was piloted, in 2017, at 7 locations. This GHIS is intended to improve data collection, allowing for the coordination and harmonisation of the various aspects of patient care towards effective resource allocation and care management. Further, we anticipate, in 2018, that the System of Health Accounts, which commenced in 2017, will be completed and will map the financing flows of the entire health sector by its various sources. It is our hope that all stakeholders will work closely with the Ministry of Public Health to have this exercise expeditiously completed, in 2018, so that this assessment can be used to inform health policy and decision making.

c. Our Youth, Our Future

4.151 Mr. Speaker, globally, young people are increasingly recognised as crucial partners for development and have the power to shape the future, not only for themselves, but, also, for their organisations, communities and country. In Guyana, our young men and women are calling for meaningful civic, economic, social and political participation. In response, Government has crafted a multi-faceted, multi-tiered and multi-agency approach to create the enabling environment through which our youth can

express their multi-talented capabilities, capacities and values in a wide and varied cross section of endeavours.

4.152 Acknowledging that youth represent a significant proportion of Guyana's population and that the future success and growth of Guyana depends on how equipped this section of the population is to handle emerging and future challenges, Government stands resolute towards ensuring that concerted efforts are made in satisfying the needs of our young people. In this regard, Government's approach to the development of our young people is based on the twin pillars of youth empowerment; and youth employment and entrepreneurship.

4.153 Mr. Speaker, in relation to Youth Employment, several initiatives have been, and are currently being, rolled out to ensure that our young people are gainfully employed in environments where their skill sets can be readily applied, and where they can make meaningful contributions. The Youth Innovation Project of Guyana (YIPoG), Youth Entrepreneurial Skills Training (YEST), Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Development (SLED) Programme, and the Hinterland Employment and Youth Scheme (HEYS), are programmes designed to ensure that youth attain the relevant skill-set that is required for the job market, either to become employable or be their own bosses. Taken together, in 2018, Government will be investing over \$1.7 billion on youth programmes.

4.153 Specifically, the Youth Innovation Project, seeks to engender creative thinking amongst youth, and provides grant resources up to \$2 million to finance innovative solutions. In and out of school youth, between the ages of 16-35, are benefitting from the programme. The project, which operates under the theme, "Aspire, Inspire to reach", was designed to decrease unemployment among youth; engage youth in the development of a green state; and foster creative thinking for problem solving through Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture, Anthropology, Archaeology, Architecture, Arts, Mathematics and Spirituality. In this regard, Government has invited youth to submit proposals for financing, which will promote civic education, political

awareness, entrepreneurship, business development and the rule of law; empower women and youth; and combat social ills, including corruption.

4.154 Under the Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Development (SLED) programme, grants have been awarded to youth Cooperative and Friendly societies, to equip them to engage in sustainable, economic ventures. In 2017, Societies from Regions Nos.3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 10 benefitted from interventions such as salted fish processing, block making, lemon grass planting and harvesting, cash crop farming, chicken and pig rearing, food preservation, catering and hospitality. In 2018, the sum of \$150 million has been budgeted to continue this venture.

4.155 Mr. Speaker, Government's investment in the establishment of business incubators in several regions and the establishment of a small business development fund, afford further opportunities for youth to benefit in creating business initiatives; to invest in value added enterprises; and to participate in Government's small business procurement regime.

4.156 Mr. Speaker, in collaboration with development partners, Government has commenced arrangements for the construction of a Centre for the creative arts, which will allow youth an avenue to express themselves through music, dance, drama and the visual arts. This centre will also provide a platform for young people to pursue and develop their artistic careers. Investments in excess of \$520 million are also being made in sporting facilities and programmes, providing youth access to amenities and structured approaches to nurture their athletic abilities.

4.157 Mr. Speaker, in relation to youth in governance, Government continues to ensure that our youth are incorporated into policy, legislative and programming decision making, through several mechanisms including Youth Parliament, President's Youth Award Republic of Guyana (PYARG) and through the drafting of a national youth policy, which will articulate young people's perspectives on politics and good governance in Guyana.

d. Families and Children

4.158 Mr. Speaker, this Government continues to uphold the values of family; it is the bedrock of our society and is responsible for moulding our future generations. As such, programmes across Government will be geared to strengthen the family unit to provide for rich early childhood experience and to ensure the rights of the child are upheld and respected.

4.159 In 2017, we launched the National Multimedia Child Abuse Awareness Campaign to strengthen vulnerable families by building their capacity to undertake the role of parenting; this benefited 342 families in Regions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10. In addition, capacity building of child protection workers continued, and approximately 80 daycare facilities were licensed according to national standards.

4.160 During 2018, the Childcare and Protection Agency will continue to engage in public awareness and hold community outreaches to combat child abuse and violations of the children's rights. We will be hosting Structured Family Conferencing sessions, which will target 65 families in order to develop amicable solutions for child care problems. Over 30 communities and religious groups across the country are expected to participate in the community-based child-focused initiatives and parenting programmes.

4.161 In addition to these initiatives and the various others I have already mentioned, such as the Juvenile Justice Bill and the child-focused public expenditure assessment, \$144 million has been allocated in 2018 towards the completion of the new Sophia Drop-In Centre.

e. Elderly and Persons with Disabilities

4.162 Mr. Speaker, many generations of Guyanese have been raised to duly respect our elders. This administration has focused on ensuring that quality care is delivered to those resident in care homes. In 2017 the minimum standards for elderly residential

care facilities were completed and enacted. Of the 20 facilities in Guyana, we have evaluated 8 and will evaluate an additional 2 before the end of this year. In 2018, we aim to have all facilities evaluated and to commence work on the requisite legislation to empower the authorities to issue official licenses and to enforce the standards.

4.163 It is anticipated that much work will be needed by all service providers to bring these facilities up to standard in the coming year. The Palms, one of the 20 care facilities in the country, has been allocated \$50 million for building repairs and additional funds to purchase a wheelchair accessible bus. In addition, to improve the quality of life for the elderly, the Ministry of Public Telecommunications will be assisting in piloting a mobile money programme for the electronic payment of old age pension eliminating the need for many of our elderly queue at post offices. Going forward into 2018, Government will commence the development of the country's first ever Strategic Plan for Elderly Care, which will tangibly articulate related interventions to be undertaken in the medium term towards improving the quality of life for the elderly.

4.164 Mr. Speaker, with regards to our work with differently-abled persons, the Board of Industrial Training will continue to carry out training programmes targeting this group to improve employability having trained persons in 2017 and in anticipation of training about 140 in 2018. In addition, we will be installing lifts at the newly constructed pedestrian bypasses to ensure both the elderly and differently-abled persons are able to cross the busy roadways in safety.

f. Culture and Arts

4.165 Mr. Speaker, the preservation and nurturing of our rich cultural heritage continues to be critical, especially so, in an ever-globalising world. Our culture and art define who we are as a people, reflecting our various traditions and identities, and fosters social cohesion. As such, we will expand our Village Day commemorations, promote the production of material in indigenous languages, continue to maintain and develop our museums which, in 2018, will include support for the implementation of the second phase of the digitisation of select exhibits of the Guyana National Museum. Our

stock of national monuments will benefit from four new monuments namely a new 1823 Memorial at Independence Park, a Chinese arrival monument, a Portuguese arrival monument and a memorial for the Ruimveldt Massacre. In addition, we will be proceeding with 6th phase of the digitisation of the National Archives.

g. Hinterland Development and Preservation of Indigenous Culture

4.166 Mr. Speaker, in our Government's pursuit of inclusive growth within the Green State Development Strategy, our hinterland regions become prime in their importance given their immediate custodial role in the conservation of ecosystems. Our hinterland communities remain with disproportionately less access to key social services and with this in mind, the reduction of economic and social disparities between coastland and hinterland communities is a necessity towards the promotion of inclusivity and equality.

4.167 Mr. Speaker, the flagship initiative, Hinterland Green Enterprise Development Centre, is being constructed at a cost of \$200 million at Bina Hill Institute in Region 9. This is a key facility for job creation for hinterland communities. The new centre is intended to focus on training that leverages indigenous and traditional knowledge and drive upstream demand for local products and services. The Centre is expected to serve 120 students from Regions 1, 7, 8, 9 and 10 and is allocated \$79 million to commence the construction. The complex will benefit from the completion of 2 dormitories in 2018 that will cater for 60 males and 60 female students.

4.168 In addition, provision is made in 2018 for the establishment of a lapidary workshop which will provide employment for youth within Monkey Mountain and nearby villages of Tuseneng, Kurukabaru and Kato.

4.169 Mr. Speaker, efforts will also be geared towards establishing a community based sustainable income generating project under which ground coffee farming, processing & packaging will be conducted in the community of Santa Rosa. This initiative is expected to create employment for approximately 20 farmers and 5 agro processors. A further provision is being made for enhanced value added products in communities like

Imbotero, Smith Creek and Aruka through the establishment of a fish and crab meat processing facility within the Imbotero community.

4.170 Additionally, an agro-processing facility will be established in Kwebanna with the aim of creating a sustainable village economy through the production of cassava and wheat flour mixture geared targeted at local markets. This undertaking will benefit approximately 48 farmers. Further, farmers residing in Regions 1 and 9 can also benefit from an agricultural investment fund which will be established to support farmers in the growth of traditional and non- traditional crops.

4.171 Mr Speaker, the ICT programmes for hinterland regions will be one of the key vehicles through which we will reduce inequality. Over \$200 million has been allocated to support eservices to hinterland communities this year. Additional initiatives promoting the development of hinterland regions and indigenous peoples include presidential grants, support to eco-tourism and cultural projects, the upgrading of farm to market roads and the provision of all - terrain vehicles, boats and outboard engines for village development.

5.

Targets for 2018

A. Real Gross Domestic Product

5.1 Mr. Speaker, the real growth of the economy is targeted at 3.8 percent, with the non-sugar growth rate anticipated to be 4.6 percent. We anticipate that growth across all sectors, with the exception of sugar, will allow this target to be realised.

a. Agriculture, Fishing, and Forestry

5.2 Mr. Speaker, growth in the agriculture, fishing, and forestry sector, will be driven by the expected expansion in the various subsectors, except sugar. Building on the solid performance in 2017, the rice industry is expected to expand to 617,353 tonnes, an increase of 2.5 percent. The other crops subsector is anticipated to grow by 2.3 percent, as diversification efforts continue and productivity gains are made. The forestry subsector is expected to grow by 8 percent to 320,760 cubic metres, as the reallocation of concessions continue, new concessionaires establish operations, and stimulus measures are put in place in 2018. The livestock and fishing subsectors are projected to grow by 2 percent and 2.3 percent, respectively, driven by consumer demand. On the other hand, sugar production is expected to contract by 24 percent to 115,447 tonnes. Overall, the agriculture, fishing, and forestry sector is anticipated to contract in 2018 by 0.7 percent, largely due to the challenges facing the sugar industry.

b. Extractives Industries

5.3 Mr. Speaker, the mining and quarrying sector is projected to rebound in 2018, expanding by 5 percent. This growth will be driven by the bauxite, gold, and quarrying industries. The bauxite industry is projected to produce 1,897,205 tonnes, resulting in an increase of 23.3 percent. Gold declaration is budgeted at 736,000 ounces, an improvement of 3.3 percent, as a result of favourable prices, as well as measures by regulatory bodies to improve recovery rates and ensure compliance. Other mining is

anticipated to grow by 3.8 percent, premised on increased activity in the construction sector.

c. Manufacturing

5.4 Despite the expectation that rice and other manufacturing will expand in 2018, by 2.5 percent and 2.4 percent, respectively, the decline of the sugar industry will depress the overall growth of the manufacturing sector, which is expected to remain virtually the same.

d. Construction

5.5 Mr. Speaker, growth in the construction sector is targeted at 15 percent, contingent on an improved implementation rate of the PSIP and expansion in the housing sector.

e. Services

5.6 The services sector is projected to grow by 3 percent. All categories of services are expected to rise, with significant growth of the transportation and storage, information and communication, and education subsectors.

B. Monetary Policy and Inflation

5.7 Mr. Speaker, inflation is expected to be 2.4 percent in 2018.

C. Balance of Payments

5.8 Mr. Speaker, the balance of payments deficit in 2018, is expected to widen to US\$79.7 million from US\$53.1 million in 2017. This increase is driven by an expansion of the current account deficit to US\$292.6 million, from US\$235 million in 2017, due to a widening of the merchandise trade deficit. Imports are projected to increase at a

higher rate than exports, with growth in each projected to be 5.7 percent and 0.8 percent, respectively.

5.9 Exports are projected to rise in 2018, as both production and commodity prices are expected to rise, with gold receipts projected to continue to strengthen. Gold, timber, and 'other' exports, which account for nearly 78 percent of all exports, will see an increase in export earnings. Growth in merchandise imports is forecasted at 5.7 percent driven primarily by non-petroleum imports. The capital account surplus will increase marginally to US\$212.9 million, on account of higher net inflows to the private sector in the form of foreign direct investment which will be driven by expansion of activities in the petroleum industry.

D. Targets for the Non-Financial Public Sector

a. Central Government

5.10 Mr. Speaker, total revenue is anticipated to rise by 4.8 percent to \$201.9 billion in 2018. This is driven by a projected rise in tax revenue by 7.3 percent. Non-tax revenue is expected to decline by 13.1 percent to \$20.5 billion, as a result of a decline in transfers from statutory bodies by \$3.8 billion.

5.11 Central Government expenditure is expected to increase by 6 percent to \$256.8 billion. Recurrent expenditure is anticipated to grow to \$197.1 billion in the coming year, an increase of 7.1 percent. This will be driven by an 8.6 percent increase in personal emoluments, to \$59 billion; a 6.5 percent increase in transfer payments, to \$76.7 billion; and an 8.3 percent increase in interest payments, to \$8.7 billion. Capital expenditures are budgeted to rise by 2.7 percent, to \$59.7 billion.

5.12 Mr. Speaker, our Central Government overall deficit is projected to be 5.4 percent of GDP in 2018, below the budgeted 5.6 percent of GDP for 2017.

5.13 Overall, the size of **Budget 2018 is \$267.1 billion**, a 7.1 percent increase over the revised Budget 2017.

b. Summary of Operations of the Public Enterprises

5.14 The combined revenues of the Public Enterprises are expected to increase by 3 percent, to reach \$123.5 billion, fueled by GuyOil's launch and marketing of a new High Octane High Performance "Super 95" brand. The combined expenditures are expected to decline to \$116.5 billion, by 2.4 percent. The deficit for 2018 is estimated at \$10.1 billion compared to latest forecast of \$12.8 billion in 2017. GuySuCo, Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL), and the National Insurance Scheme are projected to record deficits of \$5.2 billion, \$5.5 billion, and \$481 million, respectively, which will be tempered by a surplus of \$4.4 billion from the other public enterprises.

6.

Measures

6.1 Mr. Speaker, as expounded in previous budgets and elsewhere, the Government is committed to achieving and maintaining fiscal sustainability through an efficient and effective tax regime that promotes growth and development and improves the country's competitiveness, while being supportive of the business community and rewarding effort. To achieve this objective, we have been constantly reviewing the tax system, and streamlining and modernizing tax administration.

6.2 We have stressed, repeatedly, that we intend to broaden the tax base and to use the revenue gains to lower marginal tax rates to, among other things, improve equity in the tax system, principally, lowering the income and other tax burdens on the low-income groups. We started this major effort in Budget 2017. Although it has been under a year since their implementation, several of the measures have undergone a preliminary review, to assess their performance and impact. The results of that assessment together with the representations made by private sector bodies and individuals, during the pre-budget consultations, and the Inter-Ministerial Roundtable with the Guyana Manufacturing and Services Association (GMSA), have informed a number of the measures now being proposed.

A. Measures in Support of Our Green Agenda

6.3 Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2017, hybrid vehicles below a certain engine capacity benefitted from tax concessions, while there were no engine capacity limits for electrically powered vehicles. In an effort to further reduce emissions, I propose to:

- a) exempt the Excise Tax on vehicles principally designed to accommodate LPG gas, with an engine capacity not exceeding 2000 cc and not exceeding four years old from the date of manufacture to the date of importation.
- b) amend Part III B (i) of the First Schedule to the Customs Act, Chapter 82:01 to exempt machinery and equipment from the payment of Customs duties to set up

refilling stations for such vehicles, as determined by the Commissioner-General. The VAT will still be payable.

These measures take effect from January 1, 2018.

B. Measures to Increase Workers' Income

I. Income Tax - Personal Allowance

6.4 Mr. Speaker, currently, a person who works for a part of the year can claim only a part of the Personal Allowance of \$720,000. By way of an example, if a person works for only six months in an entire year and earns \$600,000, he/she would only be able to claim half of the Personal Allowance, or \$360,000. Therefore, income tax of \$67,200 would have to be paid on chargeable income of \$240,000 (the difference between \$600,000 and \$360,000).

6.5 I now propose that the minimum Personal Allowance of \$720,000 be given in full, regardless of whether a person works for the whole year or a part of the year. The tax deducted by the employer and remitted to the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA), will be refunded to those employees whose income did not reach \$720,000. This relief will clearly benefit those 'low income' earners who may have been unable to work for the entire year. This new measure will help, also, to simplify the personal allowance calculation, thus easing the administrative burden for GRA. The revenue loss is estimated to exceed \$400 million. This measure takes effect from Year of Income 2018.

II. Income Tax - Travel Allowance

6.6 Mr. Speaker, currently, public sector employees enjoy a tax-free vacation allowance, regardless of whether they spend their vacation in Guyana or abroad. On the other hand, private sector employees are only given the allowance to the extent of the cost of the passage to travel abroad. I propose to remove this anomaly, thereby allowing private sector employees to enjoy the vacation allowance tax-free and to use it as they see fit. As in the case of public sector employees, a tax-free vacation allowance to a

private sector employee will be allowed up to a maximum of one month of the employee's base salary. The GRA will scrutinize these allowances closely to ensure that the previous abuse of this benefit-in-kind, where employees were being paid huge vacation allowances, in lieu of salaries, does not recur. This measure takes effect from January 1, 2018.

C. Measures in Support of the Elderly and those in Difficult Circumstances

6.7 Mr. Speaker, since May 2015, the Government has consistently showed its concern for the plight of the elderly and those who find themselves in difficult circumstances. In this regard, we have increased the Old Age Pension, annually, to its present amount of \$19,000. In addition, we relieved pensioners from the payment of Departure tax, driver's licence and passport. With effect from January 1, 2018 Old Age Pensions will rise to \$19,500, an almost 49 percent increase in just two and half years. Similarly, effective January 1, 2018 Public Assistance will be increased to \$8,000, approximately 36 percent growth over the same period.

D. Measures in Support of the Private Sector

6.8 Mr. Speaker, the following measures are proposed in support of the private sector and to stimulate economic activity:

I. Forestry

6.9 Mr. Speaker, the following package of incentives to the forestry sector is intended to improve its competitiveness and boost output and incomes:

- a) As announced earlier this month, the restriction of the importation of Pine Wood and Pine Wood Products, with effect from January 1, 2018.
- b) Following strong representation at the recent meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED), an organ of Caricom, Guyana's request for

Suspension to increase the Common External Tariff (CET) on Pine Wood and Pine Wood Products, from 5 percent to 40 percent, has been approved. The new tariff will be in effect from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019.

- c) With effect from January 1, 2018, I propose to exempt from VAT, a supply of logs and rough lumber to the sawmilling industry. This would improve the cash flow of operators in the industry by at least \$80 million.
- d) The sum of \$120 million has been set aside to commence a forest inventory.
- e) An amount of \$50 million has been allocated, in Budget 2018, as an indication of Government's preparedness to partner with the private sector in a Public Private Partnership, to establish a Dimension Stockyard.

II. Gold

6.10 Mr. Speaker, the gold and diamond industry has been making a valuable contribution to Gross Domestic Product, income, export earnings and employment. In recognition of this, the Government has enabled small and medium scale miners to benefit from tax concessions on machinery, equipment and fuel; and waiver and remission of taxes on vehicles, based on gold declarations. For 2016, a total of \$47.6 million in taxes was waived on motor vehicles, while, for 2017, such waivers have amounted to \$64.4 million for personal motor vehicles and \$188 million for fuel, so far. Many operators in the sector have been approved to hold foreign exchange retention accounts; instead of the 10 percent, they have been allowed unlimited retention of foreign exchange to purchase mining equipment.

6.11 Following strong representation by the Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners Association (GGDMA), I propose the following additional incentives to the industry:

- a) A reduction in the Tributor's Tax from 20 percent to 10 percent, with effect from January 1, 2018. Tributors will continue to file annual tax returns and pay any taxes due or be refunded as appropriate. Both the GRA and the GGMC will intensify their efforts to bring operators in the industry within the tax net.
- b) Replacement of the current “2% of the gross proceeds” regime with a sliding scale percentage that is based on the price of gold:

Price of Gold (per ounce)	Percentage Income Tax Payable
Under US\$1,100	2% Income Tax (Final Tax)
US\$1,100 and under US\$1,300	2.5% of Gross Proceeds (Final Tax)
US\$1, 300 and under US\$1,600	3% of Gross Proceeds (Final Tax)
Over US\$1,600	3.5% of Gross Proceeds (Final Tax)

6.12 Operators in this industry will continue to keep records in keeping with the provisions of Section 33E (5) of the Income Tax Act, Chapter 81:01 which states, “Nothing in this section shall be construed as exempting a gold or diamond miner from the requirement to keep adequate records of the income from mining operations.”

III. Housing

6.13 Mr. Speaker, in an effort to support the housing sector and encourage the building of low cost houses, I propose to exempt from VAT, complete housing units costing up to \$6.5 million, that are built by, or on behalf of, the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA) or any other approved entity.

IV. Transportation

6.14 Mr. Speaker, transportation is a critical sector in any economy and the Government has a responsibility, through policies, regulations and investments, to ensure that the sector functions optimally. We recognise that the ability to acquire appropriate vehicles at more affordable prices will increase the number of vehicles operating especially in the hinterland regions, thereby affording increased access to transportation for both businesses and individuals. As such I propose to introduce the following measures, with effect from January 1, 2018:

- a) The reduction in the rates of Excise Tax on the importation of overland transportation used for tourism purposes in Regions Nos. 1, 7, 8 and 9. This concession will be applicable to vehicles between 2,000 cc and 4,000 cc that are used exclusively in the tourism sector for the transport of persons by incorporated entities that have been operating in those regions for at least five years. For vehicles 2,000 cc to under 3,000 cc and which are less than 4 years, the Excise Tax would be slashed from 110 percent to zero; for vehicles over 3,000 cc to 4,000 cc and which are less than 4 years, the Excise Tax would be reduced from 140 percent to zero. (Appendix VIII)
- b) I propose to grant free vehicle licences to motor buses and motor vehicles that operate in Regions Nos. 1, 7, 8 and 9.
- c) I propose to remove the VAT on vehicles that are less than 4 years, which are used to transport more than 21 persons.
- d) I propose to remove the Excise Tax flat rate of US\$6,900 and replace it with a VAT of 14 percent, on vehicles 4 years and older that carry between 22 and 29 passengers.

V. Small Business

6.15 Mr. Speaker, many small businesses do not adequately utilize the various concessions available under the various Tax Acts, the Small Business Act and those offered through Investment Development Agreements (IDAs). In particular, small businesses do not get the benefit of concessions under the Small Business Act. Exemptions go a begging, and the various allowances under the Income Tax Act, the Income Tax (in Aid of Industry) Act and the Customs Act are often not utilised. The Ministry of Business, through GO-INVEST, and the Ministry of Finance, through GRA will be embarking on an intensive education program aimed at sensitizing small businesses to the availability and accessing these concessions. Meanwhile, the sum of \$100 million has been allocated in Budget 2018 to replenish the Small Business Development Fund.

VI. Educational Services

6.16 Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2017, as part of our efforts to widen the tax base, services provided by private educational institutions were standard rated, while educational supplies previously zero-rated were exempted from the payment of the VAT. In view of the representations made, I propose to remove the VAT on the provision of all educational services, with effect from January 1, 2018. At the same time, efforts will continue by the Guyana Revenue Authority to ensure that these institutions become tax-compliant. The potential revenue loss is \$342 million.

VII. Day Care Centres

6.17 Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2016, I intimated that concessions would be given to employers who provide day care services to their employees, and to businesses that provide and construct handicap facilities. The capital costs and expenses related to such provisions will be allowed in full as an expense to these employers and businesses.

E. Amnesty

6.18 Mr. Speaker, I propose to grant an amnesty to all delinquent taxpayers - corporate and individual - who are outstanding in the filing of true and correct tax returns and payment of their true and correct taxes. This amnesty will be in effect from January 1, 2018 through September 30, 2018. Taxpayers who file and pay all principal taxes on or before June 30, 2018 will have all interest and penalties waived, while those who file and pay all principal taxes between July 01, 2018 and September 30, 2018 will have 50 percent of interest and penalties waived.

6.19 Taxpayers who expect to benefit from this amnesty must file true and correct returns. Those found to be in violation will be subject to an audit and the attendant penalties and interest will be applied. The GRA will be devoting increased resources to enforcement of the income tax laws.

F. Deposit to a Board of Appeal and a Judge in Chambers

6.20 Mr. Speaker, Section 82(5) Appeals to the Board against Assessments stipulates:
No appeal shall lie to the Board unless the person aggrieved by an assessment made upon him by the Commissioner-General has paid to the Commissioner-General, tax equal to two-thirds of the tax which is in dispute.

6.21 Further, Section 98 of the Income Tax act stipulates that:
No appeal shall lie under Section 86(1)(a) to a judge by a person to pay tax aggrieved by an assessment made upon him by the Commissioner-General or by a decision of the Board, unless that person has paid to the Commissioner-General the whole amount of tax which is in dispute under the assessment made upon him.

6.22 In several cases, the lodgment of these deposits has proven to be onerous for businesses and ordinary taxpayers. I propose to reduce the deposits for these appeal matters to one-third (1/3) of the tax in dispute, if less than \$20 million; and the lodgment of a bond or other acceptable form of guarantee, for disputes that are over \$20 million.

G. Filing of Corporate Tax Returns without Audited Financial Statements

6.23 Mr. Speaker, over the years, many companies have habitually filed their corporate tax returns after the due date of April 30, thereby incurring needless penalties and interest. In an effort to alleviate this problem, I propose that, in certain instances, as predetermined by the Commissioner-General, draft management accounts be accepted for filing purposes, and the audited accounts filed on or before December 31st of the year in which the return falls due.

H. Provisional Licences for Businesses

6.24 Mr. Speaker, statistics show that there are a large number of businesses that operate without licences, because of the difficulties in obtaining some of the requirements, including approved building plans, and safety and sanitary certificates. Many of them businesses have constantly approached the GRA with a view of having their businesses registered. After careful consideration of the current requirements, I propose that a Provisional Licence be issued for a period not exceeding two (2) years, for premises conducting some of the following businesses: Grocery Shops, Variety Stores, and Snackettes. It must be noted that this Provisional Licence cannot be used to acquire any additional licence such as a Liquor Licence. In addition, upon expiration of the Provisional Licence, no extension will be granted. This measure takes effect from January 1, 2018.

I. Clean up of VAT Legislation and Schedules

6.25 Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2017, a suite of amendments were introduced to the VAT Act and Schedules. With the benefit of a thorough review, it is recognised that additional amendments would be necessary to correct errors and omissions, on the one hand, and to bring greater clarity to certain definitions and areas of the law. None of these proposed amendments will negatively affect any individual or business.

7.

Conclusion

7.1 Mr. Speaker, we made a promise of a Good Life to the citizens of our country. In the words of His Excellency President David Granger, "A 'good life' is about making people happy. People will be happy when they know that they have a government which cares for them; when they see a bright future for their children and grandchildren; when they can be assured of life's basic needs - food, clothing, shelter, safe water, safe streets, a sound education and high standards of health care."

7.2 Mr. Speaker, we did not promise that the Good Life would be achieved in our first term, for we have always been cognisant that it will be a long journey on a road with many a winding turns. We have mapped out the direction and, in just two and one half years, can count several accomplishments and achievements, amongst the many challenges and obstacles thrown along the path to our destination. But, Mr. Speaker, to become the realizers of the Good Life, we must challenge and re-image ourselves; we must be prepared to reinvent and create anew. Again, we are reminded by His Excellency that "A 'good life' is about removing inequalities and providing opportunities for every citizen to be the best he or she can be." This is what our Government has set about to achieve; this is what all of our budgets to date have set out to do - to put in place the conditions for people to realize their aspirations and dreams for themselves.

7.3 This is what Budget 2018 seeks to do. Our budget continues to be a platform for social and economic transformation for all Guyanese, addressing key problems and creating tangible outcomes that citizens feel in their daily lives. Today's budget goes beyond allocating resources and establishing development priorities for next year. It articulates the destiny we all want, which is the Good Life. It underscores the difficulties that lie ahead and sets realistic objectives and targets. As we continue to clear the pathway on our journey to the Good Life, let us, together, forge not only common dreams and commitments, but, also, become the architects of the ideals that we share.

7.4 Mr. Speaker, let me close with this simple quote from Albert Schweitzer:

“To work for the common good is the greatest creed.”

Thank you!



APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

SELECTED SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS

INDICATORS	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 Forecast
1.10 NATIONAL ACCOUNTS AGGREGATES						
1.11 Growth Rate of Real GDP (New Series)	4.8	5.2	3.8	3.2	3.4	2.9
1.12 GDP at current basic prices (US\$M) (New Series)	2,506.8	2,611.3	2,676.5	2,775.9	3,045.8	3,140.2
1.13 GNP at current basic prices (US\$M) at 2006 Base	2,505.6	2,582.7	3,649.8	2,751.2	3,050.4	3,160.8
1.14 Per capita GDP (US\$) at 2006 Base	3,148.0	3,248.2	3,594.7	3,741.2	4,096.6	4,223.5
1.15 Per capita GNP (US\$) at 2006 Base	3,146.4	3,212.7	3,558.9	3,707.9	4,102.8	4,251.2
1.16 Gross National Disposable Income (US\$M) at 2006 Base	2,808.0	2,797.8	2,870.2	2,940.1	3,370.8	3,440.0
1.17 Private Consumption as % of Gross Domestic Expenditure at 2006 Base	70.3	74.2	64.4	65.9	57.0	56.8
1.18 Public Consumption as % of Gross Domestic Expenditure at 2006 Base	10.3	11.2	13.2	14.3	15.7	16.7
2.0 EXTERNAL TRADE AND FINANCE (US\$M)						
2.1 BOP Current Account Balance	(366.6)	(425.3)	(385.2)	(149.8)	13.0	(235.0)
2.2 Imports of Goods and Non-Factor Services (G&NFS)	(2,523.1)	(2,347.7)	(2,217.5)	(1,900.3)	(1,909.1)	(2,100.0)
2.3 Exports of Goods and Non-Factor Services (G&NFS)	1,713.2	1,540.6	1,348.4	1,306.2	1,606.4	1,606.3
2.4 Resource Balance	(809.9)	(807.0)	(869.5)	(548.9)	(302.8)	(493.7)
2.5 Imports of G&NFS/GDP (%) at 2006 Base	100.6	89.9	82.6	68.8	62.7	66.9
2.6 Exports of G&NFS/GDP (%) at 2006 Base	68.3	59.0	50.2	47.3	52.7	51.2
2.7 Net International Reserves of Bank of Guyana	825.2	751.2	652.2	594.7	596.7	616.8
2.8 External Public Debt Outstanding	1,358.6	1,246.0	1,216.4	1,143.0	1,162.5	1,234.5
3.0 PRICES, WAGES & OUTPUT						
3.1 Rate of Inflation (% change in CPI)	3.5	0.9	1.2	(1.8)	1.3	2.0
3.2 Public Sector Monthly Minimum Wage in G\$(e.o.p)	37,657.7	39,540.0	42,703.0	50,000.0	55,000.0	60,000.0
3.3 % Growth Rate	5.0	5.0	8.0	17.1	10.0	9.1
3.4 Electricity Generation (in M.W.H)	690.5	711.0	716.7	750.7	790.3	805.9
4.0 POPULATION & VITAL STATISTICS						
4.1 Mid-Year Population ('000)	748.9	746.9	744.6	742.0	743.5	741.4
4.2 Population Growth Rate (e.o.p)	-2.3	-2.7	-3.1	-3.5	-2.0	-2.8
4.3 Net Migration ('000)	-13.4	-13.5	-12.7	-4.5	-18.5	-18.5
4.4 Visitor Arrivals ('000)	176.6	200.1	205.8	206.8	235.3	249.2
4.5 Crude Birth Rate (per 1,000 persons)	18.4	18.5	19.8	17.6	19.9	13.1
4.6 Crude Death Rate (per 1,000 persons)	6.9	6.6	7.3	6.8	6.9	4.9*
4.7 Crude Marriage Rate (per 1,000 persons)	6.4	6.3	6.5	6.5	6.0	4.0*
4.8 Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)	13.8	12.9	23.3	21.8	21.5	21.0
4.9 Under 5 mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)	16.2	15.8	23.9	22.5	21.2	23.1
5.0 HEALTH AND EDUCATION						
5.1 Public Expenditure on:						
5.1.1 Education as % of National Budget	13.8	13.6	14.8	16.0	17.5	17.2
5.1.2 Health as % of National Budget	8.9	8.5	9.9	9.5	11.9	12.5
5.2 Number of Physicians per Ten Thousand Population	7.7	9.5	13.3	14.1	17.5	18.7
5.3 Number of Nurses per Ten Thousand Population	14.2	15.3	30.5	31.4	36.2	37.8
5.4 Number of Hospital Beds per Ten Thousand Population	25.4	25.4	25.4	25.4	25.4	25.4
5.5 Low birth-weight babies (<2500g.) as a % of live births	9.6	8.9	11.7	11.9	7.4	8.9
5.6 Severely malnourished	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	1.6	0.2
5.7 Moderately malnourished	2.2	2.0	1.9	2.1	1.5	1.0
5.8 Overweight (%)	5.7	7.6	7.8	8.7	1.2	0.5
6.0 IMMUNIZATION COVERAGE						
6.1 1 year olds Immunized against DPT/ (Pentavalent) (%)	97.4	98.0	98.0	96.0	97.0	72.0
6.2 1 year olds Immunized against MMR, Yellow Fever (%)	99.1	97.5	100.0	90.6	100.0	69.0
6.3 1 year olds Immunized against polio (%)	97.4	97.5	97.0	96.0	94.0	72.0
6.4 1 year olds Immunized against TB, BCG (%)	98.0	97.8	99.0	90.0	95.0	65.0
7.0 CRIME						
7.1 Reported Serious Crimes	4,549.0	5,667.0	3,688.0	3,925.0	2,894.0	3,030.0
7.2 of which: Murder	139.0	155.0	147.0	149.0	142.0	116.0

Note: 1/ Rate of inflation in 2010 is presented under the New Series with base year December 2009, while for 2005 to 2009 data is presented under Series with Base Year December 1994.

2/ Revisions made from 2009 in population estimates and per capita GDP due to current trends derived from current count of the population and updated vital statistics data from health sector.

3/ Revisions made from 2012-2015 values for indicators 1.13, 1.15, 1.16, 1.17, 1.18, 2.1, 2.4, 2.8, 4.3, 5.1.1 and 7.1 due the collection of actuals to update 2015 estimates.

4/ * Data from January to September 2016 reported by MOPH & GTA

APPENDIX II

GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT AT 2006 PRICES BY INDUSTRIAL ORIGIN

INDUSTRY	ACTUAL 2013	BUDGET 2014	ACTUAL 2014	BUDGET 2015	ACTUAL 2015	BUDGET 2016	ACTUAL 2016	BUDGET 2017	FORECAST 2017	BUDGET 2018
Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry	69,151	72,718	73,051	74,772	74,772	74,065	67,140	70,523	67,284	66,829
Sugar	11,024	12,744	12,761	13,644	13,644	14,301	10,800	12,277	8,947	6,795
Rice	11,845	11,976	14,053	15,220	15,220	13,938	11,823	13,152	13,313	13,646
Other Crops	17,245	18,107	18,107	18,469	18,469	18,931	18,931	19,772	19,385	19,831
Livestock	10,305	10,644	10,605	11,225	11,225	11,273	10,593	10,924	11,057	11,278
Fishing	9,401	9,612	6,892	6,713	6,713	6,492	8,082	7,690	8,166	8,354
Forestry	9,330	9,635	10,633	9,501	9,501	9,130	6,911	6,708	6,417	6,925
Mining and Quarrying	43,656	44,895	38,631	42,107	42,107	49,078	61,208	61,643	60,064	63,063
Bauxite	6,261	6,979	5,763	4,992	4,992	4,992	5,086	6,007	4,971	6,131
Gold	32,376	32,610	26,078	30,343	30,343	37,014	47,964	46,705	47,964	49,531
Other	5,018	5,306	6,789	6,772	6,772	7,072	8,158	8,931	7,129	7,400
Manufacturing	24,524	26,260	27,148	28,576	28,576	28,381	25,933	27,054	26,861	26,881
Sugar	2,931	3,388	3,392	3,627	3,627	3,802	2,905	3,264	2,407	1,828
Rice	7,420	7,495	8,804	9,473	9,473	8,731	7,461	8,315	8,405	8,618
Other Manufacturing	14,173	15,378	14,952	15,477	15,477	15,848	15,567	15,475	16,049	16,435
Electricity and Water	6,208	6,657	6,371	6,394	6,701	6,941	6,999	7,242	7,314	7,685
Construction	35,520	38,185	41,930	37,750	37,750	41,714	40,147	40,923	45,567	52,402
Wholesale and Retail Trade	48,930	51,132	47,485	47,181	47,181	49,021	46,337	46,139	47,773	48,299
Transportation and Storage	33,422	36,219	38,001	43,336	43,160	44,365	43,653	45,336	45,336	47,740
Information and Communication	24,769	25,810	25,711	27,125	27,125	27,884	27,450	28,885	28,082	28,924
Financial and Insurance Activities	17,764	19,868	17,910	19,248	19,248	19,920	19,722	21,089	20,866	21,847
Public Administration	26,787	27,322	27,188	27,868	27,868	28,202	27,877	28,569	28,240	28,607
Education	16,016	16,650	16,650	17,279	17,279	17,718	17,545	18,072	17,896	18,333
Health and Social Services	6,977	7,243	7,243	7,509	7,509	7,696	7,590	7,805	7,779	7,967
Rental of Dwellings	4,176	4,551	4,426	4,537	4,537	4,687	4,594	4,776	4,777	4,968
Other Service Activities	14,153	15,228	14,719	14,976	14,976	15,350	15,829	16,817	16,383	16,940
<i>less adjustment for FISIM</i>	<i>(12,294)</i>	<i>(12,786)</i>	<i>(12,887)</i>	<i>(13,354)</i>	<i>(13,354)</i>	<i>(13,381)</i>	<i>(13,825)</i>	<i>(14,283)</i>	<i>(14,378)</i>	<i>(15,053)</i>
TOTAL	359,757	379,952	373,576	385,304	385,435	401,641	398,199	410,590	409,845	425,430

Note: FISIM - Financial Intermediation Services Indirectly Measured

APPENDIX III

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

	ACTUAL 2016	BUDGET 2017	REVISED 2017	BUDGET 2018
Total Revenue	177,338.9	186,029.0	192,689.8	201,866.9
Revenue	177,322.0	186,022.0	192,673.2	201,859.9
Tax	151,745.5	162,591.9	169,083.1	181,370.9
Income taxes	60,624.2	58,613.8	66,786.7	71,646.2
Value Added and Excise Taxes	67,507.0	79,699.8	75,716.9	81,569.9
Trade taxes	16,947.9	16,712.8	17,876.0	19,291.1
Other	6,666.4	7,565.5	8,703.5	8,863.8
Non-tax	25,576.5	23,430.1	23,590.1	20,489.0
Private sector	10,300.4	7,630.1	7,538.9	8,289.0
Public enterprise & BOG	15,276.1	15,800.0	16,051.2	12,200.0
GRIF Inflows	-	-	-	-
Total expenditure	216,769.9	242,563.6	242,258.7	256,798.6
Current expenditure	170,151.8	185,805.2	184,112.7	197,096.2
Non-interest expenditure	163,425.0	177,528.7	176,061.1	188,379.5
Personal emoluments	49,360.5	54,845.2	54,281.8	58,952.4
Other goods and services	46,800.6	51,589.2	49,710.2	52,685.2
Transfer Payments	67,263.9	71,094.3	72,069.1	76,741.9
Interest	6,726.8	8,276.5	8,051.6	8,716.7
External	4,842.0	6,153.3	6,081.1	7,294.5
Domestic	1,884.8	2,123.2	1,970.5	1,422.2
Primary balance	13,897.0	8,493.3	16,612.0	13,480.4
Current balance	7,170.2	216.8	8,560.5	4,763.8
Capital Revenue	16.9	7.0	16.6	7.0
Capital Expenditure	46,618.1	56,758.4	58,146.0	59,702.4
Overall Balance before Grants	(39,431.0)	(56,534.6)	(49,568.9)	(54,931.7)
Grants	7,860.2	14,124.4	15,263.3	11,684.8
HIPC relief	2,452.5	2,464.3	2,449.9	2,457.7
Original	-	-	-	-
Enhanced	967.8	979.6	965.2	973.0
CMCF	1,484.7	1,484.7	1,484.7	1,484.7
MDRI	-	-	-	-
Other	5,407.8	11,660.1	12,813.4	9,227.1
Projects	3,095.2	3,909.5	5,377.0	6,221.0
Non-projects	2,312.6	7,750.6	7,436.5	3,006.1
Overall Balance after Grants	(31,570.7)	(42,410.2)	(34,305.5)	(43,246.8)
Financing	31,570.7	42,410.2	34,305.5	43,246.8
Net External Borrowing	7,836.8	9,569.1	11,135.3	9,211.2
Disbursements of Loans	12,824.7	18,243.8	19,714.3	21,103.3
Debt Repayments	5,516.1	9,066.0	8,966.8	12,122.9
Rescheduling	528.3	391.3	387.7	230.8
Guysuco - Escrow A/C	-	-	-	-
Overseas Deposits	-	-	-	-
Net Domestic Borrowing	23,733.9	32,841.1	23,170.3	34,035.6
Overall Deficit as a % of GDP	(4.4)	(5.6)	(4.5)	(5.4)

APPENDIX IV

URBAN CONSUMER PRICE INDEX - NEW SERIES (GEORGETOWN)											
GROUP	2016	2017									
	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Dec
ALL ITEMS	113.5	114.3	114.6	114.1	114.0	114.2	114.7	115.0	115.1	115.2	115.7
FOOD	130.7	132.6	132.7	131.2	131.2	132.4	133.7	134.9	135.1	135.0	136.6
CLOTHING	95.4	95.6	97.8	97.5	97.7	96.3	95.1	94.2	93.6	93.9	92.2
FOOTWEAR AND REPAIRS	94.0	94.0	93.8	93.8	93.5	94.4	93.9	93.9	93.9	94.4	94.6
HOUSING	98.8	99.1	99.1	99.0	98.9	98.9	98.9	98.8	98.8	98.9	98.8
FURNITURE	91.3	91.3	91.2	91.7	91.8	91.7	91.8	91.8	91.8	91.9	92.0
TRANSPORT & COMMUNICATION	116.7	117.6	117.4	117.3	117.4	117.3	117.2	117.3	117.3	117.7	117.8
MEDICAL & PERSONAL CARE	123.5	123.4	125.1	125.2	125.4	126.4	126.2	126.8	127.0	127.0	127.7
EDUCATION, RECREATION, CULTURE	94.7	94.6	98.0	98.3	96.8	95.8	97.7	97.7	97.6	97.7	98.1
MISC. GOODS & SERVICES	120.9	120.6	121.9	122.5	122.5	119.9	120.0	119.1	119.3	119.6	118.7

GROUP	OLD SERIES	NEW SERIES COMMENCED 1st JANUARY 2010								
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	% Change
	DEC	DEC	DEC	DEC	DEC	DEC	DEC	DEC	DEC	DEC - DEC
ALL ITEMS	100	104.5	107.9	111.6	112.6	113.9	111.9	113.5	115.7	2.0
FOOD	100	110.4	113.2	124.0	124.1	126.7	125.4	130.7	136.6	4.5
CLOTHING	100	99.3	101.8	98.0	98.4	99.3	98.5	95.4	92.2	-3.4
FOOTWEAR AND REPAIRS	100	100.5	103.5	104.6	89.8	96.1	96.3	94.0	94.6	0.7
HOUSING	100	99.7	100.4	100.7	100.8	100.6	98.8	98.8	98.8	0.0
FURNITURE	100	99.2	101.1	100.6	95.9	95.4	91.8	91.3	92.0	0.8
TRANSPORT & COMMUNICATION	100	104.8	115.5	114.6	121.9	121.2	117.2	116.7	117.8	0.9
MEDICAL & PERSONAL CARE	100	101.4	101.3	111.7	116.0	121.6	122.2	123.5	127.7	3.4
EDUC., RECR. AND CULTL. SERVICE	100	102	98.7	98.4	96.9	98.7	95.1	94.7	98.1	3.6
MISC. GOODS & SERVICES	100	102	107	111.0	112.6	120.9	120.9	120.9	118.7	-1.9

APPENDIX V

BALANCE OF PAYMENTS ANALYTIC SUMMARY

ITEM	ACTUAL 2016	BUDGET 2017	REVISED 2017	BUDGET 2018
A Current Account	13.0	(45.3)	(235.0)	(292.6)
1.0 Merchandise (Net)	(7.2)	(137.7)	(147.2)	(226.2)
1.1 Exports (f.o.b.)	1,440.6	1,453.7	1,439.1	1,450.3
1.1.1 Bauxite	92.1	115.4	90.7	90.7
1.1.2 Sugar	73.4	75.1	46.5	39.7
1.1.3 Rice	178.8	209.7	194.4	176.9
1.1.4 Gold	830.7	797.4	843.3	852.0
1.1.5 Timber	40.4	40.2	38.6	41.6
1.1.6 Other	205.5	195.1	214.0	235.4
1.1.7 Re - exports	19.8	20.8	11.7	14.1
1.2 Imports (c.i.f.)	(1,447.8)	(1,591.4)	(1,586.3)	(1,676.5)
1.2.1 Fuel & Lubricants	(344.3)	(433.4)	(371.8)	(388.5)
1.2.2 Other	(1,103.5)	(1,158.0)	(1,214.5)	(1,287.9)
2.0 Services (Net)	(300.2)	(200.5)	(374.3)	(358.1)
2.1 Factor	(4.6)	1.4	(21.2)	(8.5)
2.2 Non Factor (Net)	(295.6)	(201.9)	(353.0)	(349.6)
3.0 Transfers	320.4	292.8	286.5	291.7
3.1 Official				
3.2 Private	320.4	292.8	286.5	291.7
B Capital Account	(13.2)	65.2	181.8	212.9
'1.0 Capital Transfers	14.8	17.5	14.0	18.6
'2.0 Medium and Long Term Capital (Net)	(23.6)	93.7	188.8	228.5
2.1 Non - Financial Public Sector Capital (Net)	(21.8)	(43.8)	45.5	33.0
2.1.1 Disbursements	57.7	54.6	86.9	92.6
2.1.2 Amortization	(79.5)	(98.4)	(41.4)	(59.6)
2.1.3 Other	-	-	-	-
2.2 Private Sector (Net)	(1.8)	137.5	143.4	195.5
'3.0 Short Term Capital	(4.4)	(46.0)	(21.0)	(34.2)
C Errors and Omissions	(53.2)	0.0	0.0	0.0
D OVERALL BALANCE	(53.3)	19.9	(53.1)	(79.7)
E Financing	53.3	(19.9)	53.1	79.7
1.0 Bank of Guyana net foreign assets	(2.0)	(93.2)	(20.1)	6.5
2.0 Change in Non-Financial Public Sector Arrears	-	-	-	-
'3.0 Exceptional Financing	55.3	73.3	73.2	73.2
3.1 Debt Relief	2.6	17.7	17.7	17.7
3.2 Balance of Payments Support	-	-	-	-
3.3 Debt Forgiveness	52.8	55.5	55.5	55.5
3.4 Debt Stock Restructuring	-	-	-	-

Figures: US\$m

Source: Ministry of Finance,
Bureau of Statistics and Bank of Guyana

APPENDIX VI

ACTUAL AND PROJECTED TOTAL PUBLIC DEBT

ITEMS	Actual End-December 2015 (After E-HIPC & MDRI Reduction)	Actual End-December 2016 (After E-HIPC & MDRI Reduction)	Revised End-December 2017 (After E-HIPC & MDRI Reduction)	Projected End-December 2018 (After E-HIPC & MDRI Reduction)
TOTAL PUBLIC DEBT	1,538.69	1,601.07	1,662.37	1,755.89
TOTAL EXTERNAL DEBT	1,143.10	1,162.48	1,234.54	1,304.75
1.0 Multilateral	692.19	693.78	723.28	762.86
CDB	143.63	146.77	147.60	156.70
CDF	4.43	5.89	6.51	8.06
CMCF	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
EEC	6.84	6.21	6.48	5.99
IDB	489.29	487.72	497.49	511.53
IDA	20.44	25.01	44.16	59.20
IFAD	8.98	8.43	8.27	9.59
IMF	3.85	0.00	0.00	0.00
OFID	14.74	13.76	12.77	11.79
2.0 Bilateral	432.88	450.96	476.14	507.50
2.1 Paris Club Creditors:	29.22	22.65	15.78	7.73
Italy	3.23	2.95	3.10	2.89
T&T	25.32	19.07	12.11	4.31
USA	0.67	0.63	0.58	0.53
-PL 480	0.67	0.63	0.58	0.53
2.2 Non-Paris Club Creditors:	403.66	428.32	460.36	499.77
Argentina	14.54	14.88	15.22	15.56
Bulgaria	0.16	0.05	0.00	0.00
China (Eximbank)	124.17	145.56	178.05	213.09
India (Eximbank)	19.96	18.36	16.76	22.37
Kuwait	72.01	74.04	77.54	80.29
Libya	42.94	43.23	43.51	43.79
Serbia	1.31	1.33	1.36	1.38
UAE	7.65	7.78	7.91	8.04
Venezuela (PDVSA)	120.92	123.09	120.02	115.24
3.0 Private Creditors	18.03	17.74	35.12	34.39
3.1 Commercial Banks	5.39	5.08	22.46	21.74
Barclays Bank	3.47	3.47	3.47	3.47
Lloyds Bank (O/Draft)	1.92	1.61	1.68	1.68
Republic Bank Limited (T & T)	0.00	0.00	17.31	16.58
3.2 Others ^{1/}	12.63	12.65	12.66	12.66
TOTAL DOMESTIC DEBT	395.59	438.59	427.83	451.14
4.0 Domestic Securitites	393.89	437.06	426.47	449.95
4.1 Treasury Bills	375.00	394.52	385.11	409.69
91-Days ^{2/}	43.02	29.04	0.00	33.89
182-Days	1.23	34.63	57.45	38.50
364-Days	330.74	330.84	327.66	337.31
4.2 Debentures ^{3/}	18.88	42.52	41.34	40.24
BOG Variable Interest Rate Debentures	18.88	18.88	18.88	18.96
NIS Debenture (GOG/NIS No. 1/2016) ^{4/}	0.00	23.64	22.46	21.28
4.3 Bonds	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
Defence Bonds	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
5.0 Domestic Loan	1.70	1.53	1.36	1.19
NIS Loan (CARICOM Building Project)	1.70	1.53	1.36	1.19

Notes:

1/ Includes Ruston Bucyrus Bond, Guyana Perpetual Railway Stock and External Payments Deposit Scheme (EPDS) debts.

2/ Includes K-Series

3/ Excludes Bank of Guyana Non-Interest Bearing Debentures

4/ Payment to NIS to assist in recovering from losses due to their investment in CLICO (Guyana) as per Debenture Agreement dated September 16, 2016.

5/ Exchange rate used USD/GYD:\$206.50

APPENDIX VII

TAX REMISSIONS BY CATEGORY

ITEM	ACTUAL 2016	PROJECTED 2017
TOTAL TAX REMISSIONS	(42,298,048)	(47,037,628)
I HOSPITALS	(323,469)	(141,391)
II COMPANIES/BUSINESSES	(30,444,246)	(35,125,136)
III CHURCHES/CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS	(1,455,166)	(1,459,534)
IV PUBLIC OFFICIALS/OFFICERS	(1,446,460)	(1,132,557)
V MINISTRIES OR GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS	(4,111,155)	(4,982,114)
VI REMIGRANTS	(1,237,269)	(838,491)
VII DIPLOMATS	(1,807,151)	(1,303,714)
VIII FOREIGN FUNDED PROJECTS	(1,473,132)	(2,053,743)
IX NATURAL DISASTERS	-	(947)

APPENDIX VIII

Revisions to Tax Structure for the Importation of Vehicles

Motor vehicles principally designed for the transport of persons

Age of Vehicle	Engine capacity	Current Rate			Proposed Rate		
		Duty	Excise	VAT	Duty	Excise	VAT
less than 4 years	>2000cc but <=3000cc	45%	110%	14%	45%	0%	14%
less than 4 years	>3000cc	45%	140%	14%	45%	0%	14%
4 years & older	>2000cc but <=3000cc	0%	$((\text{CIF} + \text{US\$}13,500) \times 70\%) + \text{US\$}13,500$	0%	0%	$((\text{CIF} + \text{US\$}13,500) \times 35\%) + \text{US\$}13,500$	0%
4 years & older	>3000cc	0%	$((\text{CIF} + \text{US\$}14,500) \times 100\%) + \text{US\$}14,500$	0%	0%	$((\text{CIF} + \text{US\$}14,500) \times 50\%) + \text{US\$}14,500$	0%

Motor Vehicles (Buses) for the transport of 10 persons or more, including the driver

Age of Vehicle	Engine capacity	Current Rate			Proposed Rate		
		Duty	Excise	VAT	Duty	Excise	VAT
less than 4 years	>21 persons but <=29 per	10%	10%	14%	10%	10%	0%
less than 4 years	exceeding 29 persons	0%	0%	14%	0%	0%	0%
4 years & older	>21 persons but <=29 per	0%	US\$6,900	0%	0%	0	14%
4 years & older	exceeding 29 persons	0%	0	0%	0%	0	0%