Remarks by Dr. Thomas Gittens UNDP Country Director at the ‘PROJECT WRITING TRAINING 23 OCTOBER TO 25TH OCTOBER’
Stadszending, Paramaribo
Wednesday, 23rd October 2013

Mr. Cedric Nelom, Acting Director National Institute for Environment and Development,
Participants, Colleagues, consultant
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am most pleased to deliver remarks on behalf of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) at this project writing training workshop for major groups in Suriname. as you may know the Major Groups consist of i) Business and Industry, ii) Children and Youth, iii) Farmers, iv) Indigenous Peoples, v) Local Authorities, vi) NGOs, vii) Scientific and Technological Community, viii) Women, and ix) Workers and Trade Unions. This grouping was formulated as part of the Sustainable Development agenda coming out of the Rio conference of 1992.

The essence of the major groups is to ensure that all segments of society have a platform to voice their priorities and concerns but certainly actively participate at community, district, national and international level on the direction (the path) that our world is on.

To participate and have a voice that is heard and clearly understood you must be in the position to formulate what you see as priority or issues that need to be addressed at the different scales (community, District, National and international). You also need to be able to communicate this in an unambiguous
manner that certainly also includes solutions as well as actively participate in the implementation and better yet lead in the implementation of the solutions.

We often ask the question are we actually improving people’s capacities. One essential element of capacity strengthening is and I quote from a UNDP Capacity Development publication:

“Capacity development is about transformations that empower individuals, leaders, organizations and societies. If something does not lead to change that is generated, guided and sustained by those whom it is meant to benefit, then it cannot be said to have enhanced capacity, even if it has served a valid development purpose.”

Participants’, ladies and gentlemen achieving transformation is never easy task and in part dependent on increased technical and functional capacities but more so on empowering major groups to engage governments and political leaders and provide solutions that result in a shift from business as usual to meaningful and sustained change.

Today is about strengthening skills that support you in addressing the issues and priorities in your communities as identified by you. The need for such training was identified as early as 2012 and reconfirmed during the Major Group Capacity Strengthening seminar of 18th January 2012. In this instance the identified participants are from the following major groups; Women, Indigenous and tribal communities and CBO’s/NGO’s.

We will be working during the coming days on the technical and functional skills we are however committed to also working on empowering major groups to engage government of Suriname and its political leaders that result in meaningful change. The objectives the UNDP and its sister agencies have committed to supporting Suriname in achieving are defined within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I take this opportunity to commend the unwavering resolve of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in delivering this training. This training clearly also contributes to achieving the objectives as defined in the UNDAF.

In preparing for this training we had the fortuity to partner with the National Institute for Environment and Development (NIMOS) as well as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) SGP program implemented by the UNDP. We have
also been able to acquire the support of an experienced national consultant in delivering similar grassroots training.

Future assessment reports around progress towards the Millennium Development Goals will provide the evidence (report card) on what you will already be experiencing at village, district and national level such as improved and secure access to affordable energy, safe drinking water; government buildings that are accessible for persons with disabilities, improved access to government information, improved and efficient public transportation, and reduction in child mortality.

You participants I wish to thank for the travelling to the city for this training which is a reflection of your commitment to your community and the work that needs to be done. Pls. be open and at the same time critical with the objective of concretizing your project idea into tangible project document that can be submitted to GEF SGP program in Suriname.

I again wish to thank NIMOS for the partnership and GEF SGP for the support to achieve this.

I thank you.

Thomas Gittens