

# "Continental Destiny"

by Janet Jagan

Very little comment has so far developed over the signing of the constituent treaty setting out the legal framework of the new Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) which took place on May 23 last in Brasilia. Guyana was one of the 12 signatories to this treaty which, basically, seeks in many ways to unite the twelve countries of South America.

Guyana, through the decades has been moving slowly in this direction. In the early 40's of the last century, there was a call, not well heeded, that the then British Guiana, had a "continental destiny". Whoever created that phase would have been happy at this new development seen in the treaty of UNASUR.

Because of its history, British Guiana being a colony of Great Britain, which also colonized a major part of the Caribbean, spoke English, adopted English customs and forms of governance. We related more to the English-speaking Caribbean and were joined in the various efforts to form some sort of Caribbean union, although we did



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not join the ill-fated Caribbean Federation. As early as the 1950's, I remember being the representative, when I was a minister at Caribbean Commission conferences held in Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, Guadeloupe and Curacau, aimed to bring the colonies of Holland, England, France and the USA closer together. This, of course, led to nothing. By the way, in those days, French was the official language at the Conferences.

Later, the British changed course and began the process of joining its colonies together within the Caribbean and including British Guiana. If I remember correctly, it was first named Carifta and later developed, over the years into what is now known as Caricom.

I should imagine that, in the coming years, there

may be serious evaluations over the direction Guyana will take as regards these two unions – one with the Caribbean islands and the other, with our neighbouring countries of South America. Will the two unions operate together, without conflicting

number of specific objectives. These include:

**\*\* strengthening of political dialogue among member states to guarantee a space for consultation to reinforce South American integrations and the participation of UNASUR in the**

**catastrophic and in combating the causes and effects of climate change.**

**\*\* consultation of a South American identity through the progressive recognition of the rights of nationals of a Member State resident in any of the other Member**

to social security and health services, promotion of economic growth, cultural diversity and to strengthen the fight against drug trafficking, elimination of land mines and the promotion of cooperation among judicial authorities.

Commenting on the matter, Odeen Ishmael, Guyana's Ambassador to Venezuela and an authority on Latin America, drew our attention to this:

"UNASUR brings together the 12 nations with a joint population of about 390 million and an annual GDP nearing 2 trillion dollars. The continent's intra-regional trade amounted to more than US\$72 billion in 2006, while its economy grew by 5.7 percent in 2007, mainly due to foreign direct investment which reached a record US\$106 billion. And according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the bloc's economy will grow a further 4.7 percent this year.

It is quite evident that the signing of the treaty setting up UNASUR by Guyana and the other eleven South American nations is a profound development and one that requires our closest attention.

**I should imagine that, in the coming years, there may be serious evaluations over the direction Guyana will take as regards these two unions – one with the Caribbean islands and the other, with our neighbouring countries of South America. Will the two unions operate together, without conflicting developments, or the other be ended? Already, there appears to be cracks in the relationship with Caricom. Whether there are serious, or will widen, is yet to be seen. And, of course, the new union with South American nations, which also includes Suriname, also a member of Caricom, is in its very early stage of growth.**

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According to the treaty, UNASUR has a

*international scene.*

**\*\* inclusive and equitable social and human development in order to eradicate poverty and overcome inequalities in the region.**

**\*\* energy integration for the integral sustainable use of the resources of the region, in a spirit of solidarity.**

**\*\* protection of bio-diversity, water resources and ecosystems, as well as cooperation in the prevention of**

*States, with the aim of attaining a South American citizenship.*

**\*\* Cooperation on issues of migration with a holistic approach, based on an unrestricted respect for human and labour rights for migratory regularization and humanization of policies.**

There are many more objectives, all highly admirable, to eradicate illiteracy, to provide universal access