

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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University of Guyana Hosts Panel Discussion on Inclusion and Acceptance for World Refugee Day

In commemoration of World Refugee Day, on 20 June 2024, the University of Guyana, in collaboration with the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) Guyana, HIAS Guyana, and the Least of These Foundation (LTF), organised a panel discussion titled: “Building Bridges Beyond Borders: Inclusion and Acceptance.”

The event which was held at the University of Guyana’s George Walcott Lecture Theatre (GWLTL), was aimed at raising awareness and sharing lived experiences on the topic of displacement, both globally and within Guyana. Distinguished speakers included UG’s Vice-Chancellor Professor Paloma Mohamed Martin, UG’s Director of the International Centre for Migration and Diaspora Studies, Dr. Coreen Jacobs-Chester and Head of the National Office, UNHCR Guyana; Adriana Negry among others.



From left, Dr Lisa Edwards, Interim Director, Institute of Gender Studies; Ms Lyn Morales, Economic Inclusion Specialist, HIAS Guyana; Ms Francesca Tomasso, Associate GBV Officer, UNHCR Ms Jenel Greene, Associate Protection Officer, UNHCR; Director of the Centre for Migration and Diaspora Studies, Dr Coreen Jacobs-Chester; Vice-Chancellor Professor Paloma Mohamed; UN Resident Coordinator, Yesmin Oruc; Founder of Least of these Foundation, Sharon James; Rep from the Suriname Embassy; Head of National Office, UNHCR, Adriana Negry; Rep from the US Embassy; and Director of IHRSSF, Ms Debbie Hopkinson

In her remarks, Vice Chancellor Professor Mohamed Martin stated that the University of Guyana, through its International Centre for Migration and Diaspora Studies, is dedicated to ongoing research and teaching on this important topic to raise awareness about the plight of displaced persons and the importance of supporting integration efforts at all levels of the society.

Director of UG’s International Centre for Migration and Diaspora Studies, Dr Jacobs-Chester said: “International Days are occasions to educate, inform, explain, and raise awareness among the public. World Refugee Day, 2024 is no different, as the University of Guyana, International Organisations, and Civil Society use this day as a springboard to raise awareness of the ever-present issue of forced displacement globally. Overall, World Refugee Day is a day to recognise the dignity and humanity of refugees and commit to building a world where everyone can live safely and in peace.”

In her speech, UNHCR Head, Ms. Adriana Negry emphasised the crucial role of solidarity and unity in addressing the forced displacement crisis. She stated: “World Refugee Day theme of this year, “For a world where refugees are welcome,” highlights the crucial role of solidarity and unity, a reminder that our shared humanity binds us together. Building bridges creates pathways to understanding, cooperation, and mutual respect.”



A section of the audience at the World Refugee Day Panel Discussion in the George Walcott Lecture Theatre

The panel discussion featured experts in protection and inclusion, including Francesca Tomasso and Jenel Greene from UNHCR, Lyn Morales from HIAS, and Sharon James, Founder of the Least of These Foundation. The discussion focused on key issues and opportunities for enhancing refugee support and integration in Guyana, focusing on gender and child-specific perspectives.

During the event, winners of the UNHCR’s World Refugee Day Poetry Contest 2024; 13-year-old Guyatri Praimchan and 14-year-old Zariah Kowlessar, recited their poem titled; “Refugees, they

are just like you and me,” and “Somewhere between Then and Now,” respectively. The World Refugee Day Poetry Contest allows children and adolescents from the forcibly displaced and host communities to share their experiences and talents.

About UNHCR: UNHCR is a global organisation dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution. We lead international action to protect and assist refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people.

About World Refugee Day: World Refugee Day is an international day designated by the United Nations to honour refugees worldwide. It falls each year on June 20th and celebrates the strength and courage of people forced to flee their home country to escape conflict or persecution.

About The University of Guyana:

The University of Guyana, the national University of Guyana, now in its 60th year, was founded in October 1963, three years before Guyana became independent. “UG” as it is fondly referred to offers over 160 distinct programmes in over 60 disciplines from Certificates, Diplomas, Associate Degrees, Bachelor’s Degrees, Master’s Degrees to Ph.D.’s. These programmes are offered online, face-to-face or in blended formats. UG delivers through a Guyana-based system across eight campuses. This includes its 35-year-old community-based Institute for Distance and Continuing Education (IDCE) and the second major campus at Tain in Berbice celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2025. The University of Guyana’s student population is over 11,000.

Through its 8 academic divisions, including an accredited College of Medical Sciences, School of Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation and the Faculty of Earth and Environmental Sciences which is ranked # 5 globally. “UG” has provided education, training and research for over 60,000 alumni over its 60-year history with significant national and global impact. Other faculties include the Faculty of Engineering and Technology, the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry, the Faculty of Natural Sciences, the College of Behavioural Sciences and Research, the Faculty of Education and Humanities and the Faculty of Social Sciences. The University is also home to 10 Research Institutes including the internationally important Centre for Biodiversity, the Institute for Food and Nutrition Security, the Institute for Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the Institute for Energy Diplomacy, the Green Institute, the Institute for Human Resiliency, Strategic Security and the Future, and the International Centre for Excellence in Early Childhood Education. The mission of the University of Guyana is to discover, generate, disseminate and apply knowledge of the highest standard for the advancement of communities, the nation, and mankind within an atmosphere of academic freedom, transparent accountability, pragmatic innovation and universal respect.

UG’s forward-thinking Blueprint 2040 is currently setting the course for the University’s future design and institutional response to the changing needs of Guyana, the region and the world. UG

is currently celebrating its 60th anniversary with a renewed focus on becoming the leading teaching and research University in Guyana. Visit UG at www.uog.edu.gy.

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