

Patron: His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales

PRESS RELEASE

Commonwealth Secretary General visits Iwokrama

11th July, 2016

Georgetown, Guyana.

Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland visited the Iwokrama International Centre and the Iwokrama Forest on July 6th. She was accompanied by Minister Sydney Allicock and Dane Gobin, CEO of Iwokrama.

The Iwokrama programme is a joint initiative between the Government of Guyana and the Commonwealth Secretariat and the agreement is enshrined under the Iwokrama Act of 1996.

During her visit, the Secretary-General toured the Centre's River Lodge location at Kurupukari and paid a visit to the village of Fair View, the only community located within the Iwokrama Forest. The Centre's CEO, Dane Gobin, briefed the Secretary-General on the current work programmes and activities of the Centre and on the challenges that Centre was facing.

The Secretary-General stated that she was pleased to have been the first Commonwealth Secretary-General, in at least fifteen years, to have visited the Centre's River Lodge location and was committed to continuing to support the Centre.

She noted that the signing of the international climate change agreement in January 2016 1) had underscored the urgency with which the international community was treating the issue of climate change, and 2) was going to revolutionize approaches to dealing with negative effects of climate change. She stated that the Iwokrama Centre, with a background in sustainable forest management and a close working relationship with local communities, was in a good position to take advantage of these new opportunities including:

1. Being the testbed for new technologies for alternative energy and climate friendly products such as carbon-absorbing building materials
2. Developing best practice models in sustainable forest management
3. Carbon farming and carbon sinks
4. The development and study of blue carbon
5. Furthering the study of biomimicry
6. In partnership with the local communities identify and develop forest based medicines and remedies

The Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development is an autonomous non-profit institution established by Guyana and the Commonwealth. The Centre manages the nearly one million acre (371,000 hectare) Iwokrama Forest in central Guyana to show how tropical forests can be conserved and sustainably used for ecological, social and economic benefits to local, national and international communities.

The Secretary-General also said she supported President Granger's vision for the Iwokrama Forest to house a state-of-the-art world class biodiversity institute.



Iwokrama CEO, Dane Gobin (extreme left) briefs Commonwealth Secretary-General, Baroness Patricia Scotland (extreme right) and Minister Sydney Allicock (centre) on the Centre's activities



The Secretary-General being greeted by school children from Fair View Village waving Guyana and Commonwealth flags

Notes to the Editors:

About Iwokrama

The Iwokrama International Centre (IIC) was established in 1996 under a joint mandate from the Government of Guyana and the Commonwealth Secretariat to manage the Iwokrama forest, a unique reserve of 371,000 hectares of rainforest “in a manner that will lead to lasting ecological, economic and social benefits to the people of Guyana and to the world in general”.

The Centre, guided by an international Board of Trustees is unique, providing a dedicated well managed and researched forest environment. The forest is zoned into a Sustainable Utilization Area (SUA) and a Wilderness Preserve (WP) in which to test the concept of a truly sustainable forest where conservation, environmental balance and economic use can be mutually reinforcing. The IIC collaborates with the Government of Guyana, the Commonwealth and other international partners and donors to develop new approaches and forest management models to enable countries with rainforests to market their ecosystem services whilst carefully managing their resources through innovative and creative conservation practices.

Iwokrama brings together:

- 20 local communities (approximately 7,000 people) who are shareholders and participants in the IIC’s sustainable timber, tourism, research operations and forest management activities through complex co-management and benefit sharing arrangements;
- Scientists and researchers engaged in ground breaking research into the impacts of climate change on the forest and measuring the scope and value of its ecosystem services; and
- A portfolio of sustainably managed and certified business models using innovative governance systems which include participation of the private and public sectors and the local communities, earning income from the forest and its natural assets whilst employing international social, environmental and economic best practice, whilst still keeping abreast of the ever changing thinking on funding for environmental projects in the face of climate change and the perennial scarcity of international finance.

This alliance and the Centre’s work programmes are committed to showing how a rain forest can be used for real sustainability, real climate change protection and real community benefit.

For further details about the Iwokrama International Centre please visit www.iwokrama.org , www.iwokramariverlodge.com or contact Dane Gobin, Chief Executive Officer on dgobin@iwokrama.org