

**Patron: His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales**

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**February 20, 2017**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Iwokrama plans for the next 20 years**

#### **- Progress in setting up Biodiversity Research Centre key this year**

The Iwokrama International Centre (IIC) is currently developing its vision for the next 20 years with a view to become the cornerstone of Guyana's green development strategy.

Over the years, Iwokrama has provided many services and benefits to Guyanese including training and capacity building programmes.

The Centre has also brought many accolades to Guyana including:

- 2006: 111 persons trained as rangers and tour-guides and in areas including protected area management and collaborative management
- 2007: Model low-impact sustainable timber harvesting operation started in the Iwokrama Forest.
- 2008 and 2016: Iwokrama Forest Certified by Forest Stewardship Council for Forest Management
- 2008: First inland fisheries management system – the Arapaima Management Plan developed with the North Rupununi for Guyana. Formally gazetted by the Ministry of Agriculture.
- 2009: Iwokrama collaborates with NGOs, Local Communities and Government to develop community manual on Climate Change and the Role of Forests; more than 400 community members and private and public sector representatives trained
- 2011: Iwokrama partnered with Global Canopy Programme and NRDDDB to launch innovative Community Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) System
- 2015: Iwokrama launched second phase of its sustainable timber harvesting and sawmilling operations with a local private sector partner.
- 2016: UK lifts ban in October on Guyana's Greenheart by approving FSC™ wood from the Iwokrama Forest

The Centre, established through bipartisan support of Guyana's legislature in 1996, will this year concentrate most of its efforts on establishing a Centre of Excellence for Biodiversity Research in collaboration with the University of Guyana.



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.

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The Centre will be built in the Iwokrama Forest which lies in the green heart of Guyana. The forest, measuring approximately 1 million acres, was pledged by President Desmond Hoyte to the international community at the 1989 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting for purposes of research into sustainable management and development of tropical rain forests.

Said Dane Gobin, Chief Executive Officer of the Iwokrama Centre: “When former President Desmond Hoyte offered this tract of land to be used by the international community in the study of the sustainable use of the rainforest, it was an extremely novel idea; it was innovative and ahead of its time.”

He noted, citing the continuing relevance of Iwokrama’s work, that it was only last year that the United Nations moved to include sustainable management of the rainforest and halting biodiversity loss as part of its new Sustainable Development Goals.

According to Gobin, this Goal speaks to the work of Iwokrama in developing models to show how you can use the forest without losing it and to be able to prove the premise that forests are worth more alive than dead.

He added: “We’ve been able to integrate people, science and business to generate these models, because the rainforest provides services for people – at the community, local, regional and international levels.

“Guyanese look to the rainforest for livelihoods in forestry, mining, tourism and other uses. A country with 80% of its land being under forest cover has to find a way to balance conservation and sustainable and wise use. Complete protection or irresponsible use are not options.

“The asset we have in Guyana is this huge rainforest with all its natural assets and biodiversity value - floral and faunal. How do you harness money from this great resource? The way to do it is through research.”

Mr Gobin explained that the Biodiversity Research Centre will in the first instance offer the international research community a space to conduct their research. The Centre will be a full-service facility that will include features such as laboratories, classrooms, a conference centre and accommodation together with full supporting services such as transport and restaurant facilities. Later on, the Centre will morph into a full-blown institution of learning that will offer biodiversity studies and courses to students from around the world.

Funding is being sought for the Centre, which will be constructed using a biomimicry design.

President David Granger is a forceful advocate for Iwokrama and its work and has pledged resources to ensure it fulfills its mission and a new board is expected to be constituted shortly.



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## 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](http://www.iwokrama.org) , [www.iwokramariverlodge.com](http://www.iwokramariverlodge.com) or contact Dane Gobin, Chief Executive Officer on [dgobin@iwokrama.org](mailto:dgobin@iwokrama.org)



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