

**Patron: His Majesty King Charles III**

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## PRESS RELEASE

Georgetown, Guyana – March 4, 2025

### **Collaborative Enforcement Activities see Arrests of Illegal Miners in the Iwokrama Forest**

Ongoing efforts of the Iwokrama International Centre together with support from the Government of Guyana agencies to stem the illegal gold mining situation within the Protected Area has resulted in further arrests.

A mission with the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission along with Guyana Police Force and support from Ministry of Natural Resources saw several persons being arrested on Republic Day, February 23, 2025. These illegal miners included a Brazilian national with family ties to a nearby community, who has a long history of illegal incursions in the Iwokrama forest along with two other Guyanese – from the Essequibo Coast and Paramakatoi Village.

Iwokrama, over the past years has been besieged by illegal gold mining in the Siparuni area and has sent stern warnings that such intrusions will be forcefully dealt with. Several enforcement activities led by Government of Guyana regulatory agencies have been undertaken to curb these illegal activities which saw 14 persons were arrested in 2024.

Community leaders associated with Iwokrama have also strongly condemned resident community persons' involvement in illegal gold mining within Iwokrama and signed on to a joint communique in October 2024.

Iwokrama and North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB):

1. Strongly condemn these illegal operations in the Iwokrama Forest.
2. Undertake to ensure that members of the communities understand that gold mining is illegal in the Iwokrama Forest and that supplying these illegal operations with materials and supplies is also illegal.
3. Work together on a comprehensive monitoring programme that will include communication and reporting mechanisms amongst each other and report on any suspicious activities in and around their communities and the Iwokrama Forest.



The mark of  
responsible forestry

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.

4. Are grateful for the Government of Guyana support in eradicating this major problem and will continue to engage with and support the Government in their efforts to curb this activity.
5. Would like to remind the general public of the importance of the Iwokrama Forest to 1.) the livelihoods of the communities of Regions 8 and 9 and 2.) the national reputation of Guyana as a country known for its biodiversity conservation initiatives.

The Centre would like to once again remind the Public that gold mining activities are absolutely not allowed in the Iwokrama Forest. Furthermore, such illegal activities are a threat to the Centre's international certification and to Guyana's forest management system as a whole and will be tolerated. Iwokrama reserves the right to publish the names and photographs of persons found conducting illegal gold mining activities on the Protected Area.

Iwokrama's management acknowledges that collaboration is the most effective way to target such illegal activities and are grateful for the continued support from the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission, the Guyana Police Force, the Protected Areas Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency.

For further information on the management of the Iwokrama Forest and to report any illegal activities in the forest, please contact Dr Raquel Thomas, Director, Resource Management on [rthomas@iwokrama.org](mailto:rthomas@iwokrama.org). More information on the Centre's work is available on [www.iwokrama.org](http://www.iwokrama.org) , [www.iwokramariverlodge.com](http://www.iwokramariverlodge.com) and [www.iwokramacanopywalkway.com](http://www.iwokramacanopywalkway.com)

**Photos: Illegal Mining and damage in the Iwokrama Forest**







**Notes to the Editors:**

**1. 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. In more recent years, the Centre has received support from corporate partners such as Exxon Mobil (Guyana) Limited who has funded the development of its Science Programme and continues to provide an annual contribution to the implementation of this Programme.

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).