

Patron: His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales

PRESS RELEASE

May 8, 2017

President pledges continued commitment to Iwokrama on its 21st anniversary

President David Granger today pledged his continued commitment to the Iwokrama International Centre, which is marking 21 years since it was created through an Act of Parliament.

During his first visit to the Centre's High Street, Kingston, Georgetown head office, the President congratulated the staff for the work they are doing with minimal resources. He declared that Iwokrama is central to the government's vision of creating a "green" state and as such he would continue to support the work of the Centre.

"This President is completely committed (to Iwokrama)," reaffirmed Dane Gobin, Chief Executive Officer of Iwokrama.

He said that apart from his visit to the head office, President David Granger has made two visits to the Iwokrama forest, located in the heart of Guyana, since he was elected to office two years ago. Gobin noted that President Granger is the only President to have spent a night in the Iwokrama forest.

To celebrate the 21st anniversary, the Iwokrama Centre decided to focus on capacity building for young students with special circumstances, giving them an opportunity to have an appreciation for the environment.

"You know if you talk about climate change to the younger ones they can actually change behaviours; they grow up being more responsible, using less fuel, littering less and so on," he stated. Students attached to the Joshua House took part in various interactive sessions, during which they composed poems, made animal figurines using play dough, and were quizzed on various subjects.

The Iwokrama forest, measuring one million acres, was pledged to the nations of the Commonwealth back in 1989 by then President Desmond Hoyte to be used "in a manner that will lead to lasting ecological, economic and social benefits to the people of Guyana and the world in general."



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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As a result of President Hoyte's pledge, legislation which enjoyed bi-partisan support in the National Assembly, was passed in 1996 to govern the use of the forest, and the Iwokrama International Centre was set up to oversee the experiment.

Iwokrama's forest-based businesses are a unique blend of science, technology, ancient culture and traditional knowledge developed to test innovative models of private-public community partnerships.

Timber from a sustainably managed tropical rainforest that demonstrates how a rainforest can be used for real sustainability, real climate change, protection and real community benefit.

In late 2015, the Centre signed an agreement with local company Farfan and Mendes to undertake a project to test the sustainable use of the forest.

In October, 2016, Iwokrama received certification from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), and thus the Iwokrama forest is now the only area in Guyana that has been certified for meeting international best practices for Forest Management.

Gobin noted that with only 2-3 trees are being cut for every hectare of forest over a period of sixty years, and national guidelines ascribe a maximum of 20 cubic meters per hectare which is roughly about 10 trees.

Mr Gobin noted that this low impact sustainable forestry operation has opened up the UK timber market for Guyana, and Iwokrama hopes to roll out its model to show that you can "use the forest without losing it" and that "forests are worth more alive than dead."

The Iwokrama forest is the best researched and managed ecosystems in Guyana, which measures the impact of forest-based businesses and evaluates the social, economic and ecological changes that occur.

While the Iwokrama Centre is looking forward to receiving continuous budgetary support from the government, Mr Gobin said that the Centre aims to increased revenues not only from its sustainable forestry operation but also through eco-tourism, training and eco-system services.

He noted that the Centre is expected to have a large corporate donor for its science programme soon and this will add to other projects already underway, thanks to the European Union and the Japanese government.



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Iwokrama would like to express appreciation to all that supported this event today and other events for the week namely, His Excellency the President David Granger and the First Lady Sandra Granger, Republic Bank, Survival Supermarket, Giftland Mall, Banks DIH ; Conservation International-Guyana , Beacon Cafe and our friends Odacy Davis, Meshach Pierre and Neil Marks. Outreach activities continue Tuesday, May 9th and Saturday, May 13th.

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.



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