

Guyana builds LCDS thrust in New York

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FROM popular actor Harrison Ford to Australia's Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Guyana last week continued to garner support for its Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) at several key events in New York. President Bharrat Jagdeo was among more than 100 world leaders invited to the special climate change summit convened by United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon and he continued plugging Guyana's case, building on the country's high international profile and leadership role in the global climate change battle.

The special Climate Change summit was held on Tuesday at the United Nations headquarters in New York, immediately prior to Wednesday's opening of the two-day 64th UN General Assembly at the same venue.

"The climate change summit was excellent. I think for the first time, leaders themselves got involved in the issue of climate change (but) as for the General Assembly (GA), I think it was an anti-climax, after the special summit on climate change; it was just people going through the motion at the GA," the Guyanese head-of-state told the Sunday Chronicle in an interview at the UN yesterday.

With the clock ticking towards this December's climate change conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, President Jagdeo reiterated his optimism that world leaders are much closer to 'sealing the deal' when they meet again in just under 80 days time.

His optimism is being fueled, in part, by the successful outcome of a crucial round-table meeting he co-chaired earlier in the week with the British Prime Minister.

Financing was one of the main issues discussed during the round-table meeting, and President Jagdeo said participants, having recognised that climate change is the pre-eminent geopolitical and economic issue of the 21st Century, acknowledged that it would take as much as, and maybe even more, US\$100B to fight the impacts at this point in time.

Speaking with the Chronicle shortly after that session, President Jagdeo said the idea was to get leaders together to have a free-flowing discussion about what it would take to "seal the deal" in Copenhagen, and to "break the deadlock which seems to be part of the negotiations at this time."

According to the Guyanese head-of-state, the discussions were centered around five political areas the leaders felt would be useful to the future. These, he said, ranged from deep cuts by the developed countries, aimed at assisting mitigation actions from the developing world, to adaptation and institutional governance structure to deal with the environment in the future.

"These were just some of the areas that we thought we needed clarifications for ...and then of course, the very important matter of financing... So we had a free-flowing discussion, and we think that we have

made some progress towards having a better understanding of what it would take to have this deal in Copenhagen on the part of all the players -- the developed countries, the developing world -- and what quantum of financing is needed," President Jagdeo said.

According to him, the leaders immediately recognised the magnitude of the problem and "started talking about a large sum of money... in excess of US\$100B."

Those figures get closer to the sums required, he said, noting that in the past, those figures used to range in the tens of millions of dollars, and that clearly, would not be adequate for mitigation and adaptation action, and wouldn't have led to a deal in Copenhagen.

"So I think [that] out of the round-table, we had leaders participating, and we have built some level of momentum and optimism that we may be able to secure this deal in Copenhagen," President Jagdeo told the Chronicle.

IN THE GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT

While in New York, the President did more interviews with leading global media agencies and newspapers.

He was interviewed by Reuters, one of the largest news agencies in the world; the American TV network, CNN; the BBC, and he also met the editorial board of the prestigious New York Times.

The Guardian newspaper of London also carried the full text of the President's remarks at the 'Team Earth' public event in Greeley Square, New York on Monday last when he shared the spotlight with movie actor and environmentalist, Harrison Ford.

President Jagdeo, who is slated to be back home in Guyana tomorrow morning, was interviewed by the Wall Street Journal, the Financial Times, and was scheduled for an interview with the Economist yesterday.

The Guardian headlined the President's Monday speech at the Greeley Square event as 'Guyana is a model of forest protection that could solve the climate crisis'.

In that speech, President Jagdeo stressed that a deal at the UN climate change summit in Copenhagen, Denmark in December must enable countries like Guyana to generate an income by conserving forests rather than cutting them down.

In his interview with Reuters, the President noted that he wants to turn this country into one of the world's most environmentally progressive countries by preserving vast swathes of tropical rain forest -- if rich nations pay for it.

"We can generate money from preserving the forests; we can use these resources to invest in low-carbon opportunities, and we can use some of the money to make our economy climate-resilient," Mr. Jagdeo said.

Protecting forests is crucial, he said, as destruction of tropical forests releases more carbon dioxide than all the world's cars, trucks, planes and trains combined.

He said his preservation model could be replicated in other countries, and incorporated into a new climate change agreement to be signed in Copenhagen.

"By Copenhagen, we can show a real country model working that would address all of the issues that have come up in the negotiations," he said.

The President said the biggest stumbling blocks to making his model work were persuading rich countries that payments they make to poor ones would be used transparently, and convincing poor countries they would not give up sovereignty when they agree to set aside forests for conservation.

These were among the points he stressed later in the week in New York.

Mr. Jagdeo was among 13 Heads of State and Government and senior ministers, as well as the President of the World Bank, at the High-Level Event Mr. Ban Ki-moon convened on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD).

Under current proposals, a REDD mechanism would provide financial incentives for developing countries to stop illegal logging, and a system for countries to offset their carbon emissions by investing in projects promoting sustainable forest management.

'REDD+', an enhanced and updated version of the concept, would add a focus on forest preservation and carbon conservation.

MOVE BEYOND FRINGES

Mr. Jagdeo agreed that REDD provided the "most cost-effective abatement solution" in the climate change debate. But while it could deliver immediate results, it had not received the acclaim of other issues, like renewable energy and energy efficiency.

He said one reason for that was a focus on problems with the mechanism, rather than its delivery potential. Ongoing pilot projects, such as those cited by the World Bank, were supposed to provide further information on that potential, but it was past time to wait for "lessons learned," he said.

"The task is before us today," he said, stressing that financial facilities available through the World Bank were nowhere near the scale of the resources needed. It was time for talk to move beyond the issue's fringes and determine whether adequate funds would be made available.

To that end, he called for an interim financing in the order of 1.5 cents per day for each person from the Annex I countries, as well as sufficient market and fund mechanisms in the longer term. “If we can’t provide adequate funding for the lowest cost solution [to climate change], how will the others be financed?”

In sync with Guyana’s arguments, Ban said that immediate action on reducing deforestation was a critical part of the solution to climate change, as he opened the REDD High-Level Event.

“Whichever way you look at it, protecting the world’s forests is a good investment,” he said, pointing to the social and economic benefits of forested lands, as well as their capacity for carbon storage. [Forests are believed to store more than 1 trillion tons of the world’s carbon, and deforestation is estimated to cause nearly 20 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.]

“We now need to mobilise further funding for REDD, and establish transparent systems to distribute payments and measure results,” he added.

Echoing the Secretary-General’s emphasis on the role a REDD mechanism could play at the conference in the Danish capital, World Bank President, Robert Zoellick offered examples whereby reforestation projects funded by the institution were providing local communities with social and economic benefits from the use of their forests.

The acrimony currently being heard in the international climate change negotiations were absent in those cases. Instead, the projects showed how reforestation and reducing deforestation could address climate change while protecting biodiversity and economic growth.

He said that while those projects were just start-up ventures -- th- the the “blue-collar workers” of climate change -- th- the they aimed to determine what worked on the ground so that REDD financing could be built into a global climate-change financing strategy. “Our job is to design the right tools to connect environmental stewards to funding opportunities.”

NO DEAL WITHOUT REDD

Emphasizing the funding nexus as he addressed the event on behalf of the Coalition for Rainforest Nations, Prime Minister Michael Somare of Papua New Guinea said developing countries could achieve rapid and significant emission reductions at a reasonable cost, but in order to ensure success, “rich countries must get serious.”

The implications of not doing so could be profound, he said, because without financial support, the governments of developing countries would be unable to make a strong case to their people for preserving their forests.

In turn, it could prove impossible to avoid catastrophic levels of global warming in the most vulnerable countries without strong action on REDD+. There would be no agreement in Copenhagen without commitments to a robust REDD+ instrument, he said, stressing: "We cannot seal the deal without REDD+."

Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg of Norway said REDD would be part of a Copenhagen agreement and, to that end, his country had pledged US\$500 million a year towards its implementation.

Like several other speakers from developed countries, however, he stressed that an international agreement would have to include standards and support mechanisms for verifying both emissions and the savings provided by forested lands, among other things. There was also a need for a transparent structure for financial incentives.

Voicing his agreement, Prime Minister Rudd said that in order for REDD to be credible with both public and private financial institutions, effective measurement was critical. To that end, he called for an "open, frank and public" debate, based on facts about the accuracy, cost and effectiveness of the REDD proposals.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom called for increased coordination among the various programmes and funds working in the field, saying that while public funding for forests was vital, there was an urgent need to harness private sector interest in protecting forests and to develop further new instruments to leverage them.

Among the Heads of State and Government speaking at the UN over the past week were President Denis Sassou-Nguesso of the Congo, and Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt of Sweden (on behalf of the European Union).

The Deputy Prime Minister of Gabon also addressed the special Climate event, as did senior ministers from Indonesia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Japan, Colombia, China and Bangladesh.

Negotiations for Copenhagen among 190 nations are stalled over how to share the burden of curbs on gas emissions through 2020 between rich and poor nations, and how to raise perhaps \$100 billion a year to help the poor combat warming and adapt to changes such as rising sea levels.

"What will constitute a good agreement in Copenhagen for me is one that has deep emission cuts, adequate financing, and improving forests as an abatement solution," Mr. Jagdeo told reporters in New York, adding that: "Developed countries need to take the biggest steps."

Although he wants to turn Guyana into a low-carbon economy that relies on green energy, he said only rich countries should face mandated deep cuts in carbon emissions.

Poor countries fear they might sacrifice future economic growth if they agree to mandatory reductions.

"We don't want to pass blame, but many of the developed countries used these traditional tools to get where they are today. Many people feel that they are kicking away the ladder now, they don't want us to use the same development tools, which were high carbon," he said, adding:

"We believe we don't have to go that route; we believe that we can shift to a low-carbon direction without compromising our development prospects, but we have to be helped to that route."

CNN also reported on the President's stand on its website.

Australian Prime Minister Rudd on Monday lauded Guyana's leadership on climate change.

In a meeting with President Jagdeo in New York, Rudd expressed his country's interest in collaborating with Guyana in the global effort to address climate change.

President Jagdeo also took the opportunity to outline Guyana's LCDS. Australia has committed to supporting Guyana's Monitoring Reporting and Verification (MRV) System and remote monitoring of its forests.

This development builds on Guyana's recent work on developing its MRV System in which several experts from the Australian Climate Office participated.

Prime Minister Rudd and President Jagdeo agreed to continue discussions at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Trinidad in November to explore other areas of bilateral cooperation on climate change, as well as regional initiatives for the Caribbean Community.

And in response to a question from the Sunday Chronicle, shortly after the conclusion of a high-level meeting between Caricom leaders and UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon at the UN headquarters yesterday afternoon on the critical areas that Guyana will be giving priority focus to between now and Copenhagen, President Jagdeo said: "We have created a bit of interest, as you would have seen over the past few days, so we will continue with the advocacy and the model building... We will be working with Norway and the others to add an international dimension to this LCDS model."

On this note, the President disclosed that "within a matter of weeks," Guyana will be signing an MOU with Norway, one which he said will hopefully add an international dimension to the LCDS model. (Additional reporting from Sharief Khan in Guyana)

Jagdeo challenges world leaders to reach climate change deal

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By Stabroek staff | September 27, 2009 in Local News

President Bharrat Jagdeo has challenged world leaders to reach a climate change deal in his address last week at the 64th session of the UN General Assembly at UN Headquarters in New York.

Bharrat Jagdeo

“We need to move beyond simply understanding the challenge. We need to work as a global community to shape a solution that is in all our interests,” Jagdeo is quoted by GINA as saying.

Noting that the vision exhibited by the United Nations (UN) Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, and the work of leaders and citizens from countries across the world had led to a level of understanding of the nature of the climate challenge, President Jagdeo urged his fellow leaders to turn these building blocks into an agreement that could start to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.

“In doing so, we should be guided by science and by the need for solutions that treat all countries fairly. But we also need to recognize that the challenge now is as much about political will as it is about scientific, economic or institutional considerations.”

Jagdeo contended that there was need to recognize that all countries, developed and developing, had concerns about the commitment of others to such a long-term partnership, GINA reported.

Developing countries questioned whether the international community would commit to the scale of financial transfers that were needed, while others were worried that acting on climate change now would stymie their national development, precisely at the time when many were poised for historical levels of economic growth and social advances.

On the other hand, Jagdeo argued, many developed countries were worried that the financial transfers required would be an excessive burden on their budgets during extremely challenging economic times. There were also fears from individual countries that they would be expected to carry a greater burden than other developed nations.

“These political concerns could be a recipe for a stalemate that the world cannot afford. Failure to overcome them now will mean misery for future generations, and the eventual costs of tackling climate change will be even greater than they are now,” Jagdeo warned.

In that light, Jagdeo said that he welcomed the proposals laid out by the United Kingdom, and subsequently supported by the European Union, to generate funding of about US\$100B per annum to

address climate change in the developing world. This, he said, was a proposal that started to square up to the magnitude of funding that was required.

“What matters now is that we see it move from proposal to action, in a way that is fully additional to existing aid contributions from the developed world. We also need to learn from our experiences of the aid agenda – if we are to combat climate change, developing countries must not be seen as passive recipients of aid, but as equal partners in the search for climate solutions. If this happens, it can start to send the signal that the developed world is serious about solving the problem of climate change,” Jagdeo asserted.

Deforestation and forest degradation

The Guyanese head-of-state underscored that it was urgent that ways be found to work together to address the 17% of greenhouse gas emissions that resulted from tropical deforestation and forest degradation globally.

He observed that as with climate change generally, the world had a large degree of clarity around the nature of this specific problem.

“We know that it causes more emissions than the entire European Union, and we know that this is because the world economy makes trees worth more dead than alive. We also know that the only sustainable way to address the problem is national-scale action in forest countries coupled with international incentives that place a value on trees to make them worth more alive than dead,” he stated.

Jagdeo also informed the UN Assembly that Guyana was ready to play its part and had launched the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) which set out how the country’s vast tropical rainforests could be placed under long-term protection to not only provide the world with badly needed climate services, but also to move Guyana’s economy onto a long-term sustainable low carbon development path, where jobs were created across the country in sectors that did not threaten the forests.

“Thanks to the visionary leadership of the Prime Minister of Norway (Jens Stoltenberg), our two countries are also working together to provide a functioning model of how low deforestation and low carbon economies can be created in countries such as ours,” the President stated.

And Guyana also continued to play its part in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process, he told his fellow leaders, which must provide the long-term framework for combating forest-based emissions through the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation mechanism, or REDD+.

The world could quickly move, he said, to slow down deforestation starting now, not in 2013.

“Guyana was pleased to participate in the April G-20 side meeting that addressed how this can happen. We support the proposals from the Informal Working Group on Interim Financing for REDD report,

which was set up after the G20 side meeting, that lays out how the world can achieve a 25% reduction in global deforestation rates by 2015 with an investment of less than €25B in total,” Jagdeo said.

Using highly conservative estimates of forest carbon, this could lead to seven gigatons of greenhouse gas emissions being avoided between now and 2015, which would be the single biggest contribution to averting climate catastrophe over this period.

“And it can be done – rainforest countries representing the vast majority of the world’s tropical forests worked with the informal working group, and are willing to act. The question now is will the developed world understand the enormous potential this offers our world, and will they act to generate the finances that are needed,” the President challenged.

Government, IDB ink US\$1.45M Technical Cooperation Agreements

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- To support Guyana’s Climate Change agenda and related initiatives

Minister of Finance Dr Ashni Singh and Country Representative of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Marco Nicola yesterday inked two technical cooperation agreements totaling US\$1,450,000.

The two agreements will provide support for the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) and Guyana’s efforts to improve disaster risk and flood management. The agreements were signed at the Ministry of Finance.

Country Representative of the IDB Mr. Marco Nicola hands over the agreements to Minister of Finance Dr Ashni Singh after the signing ceremony.

One of the agreements which will provide support to the LCDS caters for the strengthening of national institutional capacities for effectively dealing with climate change; and supporting a nation-wide consultation process on the LCDS.

Minister Singh, highlighting Guyana’s efforts in the global fight against climate change, stated that the LCDS does not only cater for environmental protection but also for development. He pointed out that President Bharrat Jagdeo has been a global champion for the cause of preserving and protecting rainforests and advocating for the recognition of the contribution that standing forests make in this regard.

“One of the great ironies of our circumstances is that while we face a disproportionate exposure to climate change because of our population concentration on the coast, because of the coast being below sea level, because of our productive economic activity being concentrated on the coast; while we face a disproportionate vulnerability to climate change, we at the same time make what I consider to be a disproportionate contribution to the global fight against climate change. We have as a government and

through very deliberate policies ensured the protection and preservation of this valuable rainforest asset,” the Minister said.

The IDB Country Representative noted that the Bank seeks to assist its member countries in moving towards low carbon growth paths, supporting policy innovations towards climate change and sustainable energy institutional frameworks, as well as policy reforms in strategic sectors.

“This support is consistent with IDB Strategy for Climate Change, recognising that the Latin American and Caribbean Region offers significant opportunities for avoided and reduced Green House gas emissions and therefore it can contribute significantly in the world’s effort against global climate change,” Nicola stated.

“This technical cooperation agreement will look at strengthening national institutional capacity for effectively dealing with climate change and supporting the nationwide consultations that are already ongoing on the LCDS, targeting the stakeholders and economic actors across the sector, but in particular the indigenous and forest communities that depend on the country’s forest and natural resources,” Nicola said.

The agreement represents the first technical cooperation agreement and second effort of the bank to support and provide technical advice to the Low Carbon Development Strategy.

In the recent past, the Bank funded a case study related to ‘Climate Change and Biodiversity Mainstreaming through Avoided Deforestation’, focusing on a conceptual and analytical framework for assessing Guyana’s needs, challenges and opportunities in the context of Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) and its impacts on national development and biodiversity conservation on the Georgetown-Lethem transport Corridor.

The second Technical Cooperation Agreement supports Guyana’s efforts to improve disaster risk and flood management and is consistent with the agreed upon country strategy with Guyana (2008-2012), given its focus on disaster risk management and climate change to promote competitiveness. Beneficiaries of this project will include vulnerable communities and national and local governmental agencies such as the Ministries of Agriculture and Public Works and Communication, the National Climate Change Committee and regional and neighbourhood democratic councils.

The grant will fund the identification of country risk indicators and flood risk evaluation; the development of a National Integrated Disaster Risk Management plan and institutional strengthening and capacity building at national and local levels; it will also fund the design of an investment programme in flood prevention and mitigation, taking into consideration the Bank’s existing lending instruments, as well as potential co-financing from other donors.

Additionally, in order to ensure an integrated approach to disaster risk management, climate change adaptation and environmental management, during project execution a steering committee on

environment, climate change and disaster risk management will be created under the Office of the President. This group will comprise public sector agencies and donor and non-governmental organisations.

The risk information database at the Civil Defence Commission and training of key government entities responsible for flood risk management in the techniques for integrated disaster risk reduction into sector planning, will facilitate a greater use of risk information in decision making as well as ensure sustainability of use of the risk information platform for flood risk management. Taking into account that climate change and sea level rise are likely to significantly increase disaster risk in Guyana, the collective application of these approaches, under an appropriate legal and institutional framework, are expected to reduce the loss of life and property due to natural disasters, including those associated with the flood hazard.

Noting that the majority of Guyana's population resides on the Coastal Plain, Minister Singh highlighted the importance of having an integrated risk management plan developed reflecting on the 2005 flood which was caused due to unprecedented and continuous rainfall.

"We would recall in fact that the floods of January 2005, imposed on our economy costs equivalent to 60 percent of our gross domestic product, a shock that by any standards is potentially devastating. I believe that the fact that we did not experience macro economic dislocation, the fact that we were able to come through that disaster...that cost 60 percent of our GDP, but we were still able to maintain stability in our country, is indeed something that as a country we should take pride and satisfaction from," the Minister said.

"The concept of disaster risk management and the need for us to be better prepared for disasters, be better able to predict, be better able to respond, the need I believe is obvious," Minister Singh opined.

The IDB Country Representative highlighted the importance of the project, stating, "As we all know, natural disaster risk management and prevention is an important and key element to promote the competitiveness of Guyana and also to reduce the social and economic cost that the country may face during natural disaster."

Also present at the signing ceremony were Presidential Adviser on Governance Gail Teixeira and Head of the Project Implementation Unit in the Ministry of Finance Mr. Tarachand Balgobin. (GINA)

President addresses World Leaders Forum at Columbia University

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- answers questions on Guyana's economic transformation, forest conservation during very interactive session

By Mark Ramotar in New York

PRESIDENT Bharrat Jagdeo yesterday joined a prestigious list of World Leaders to have addressed a special forum at Columbia University in New York, where scores of persons including many Guyanese turned up to be part of a highly interactive session with the President.

This World Leaders Forum programme, organised by the University's Earth Institute and the Institute of Latin American Studies, featured a brief keynote address by President Jagdeo, followed by a lengthy question and answer session with the audience.

The Guyanese Head of State, whose extraordinary vision is set to make Guyana one of the most environmentally progressive nations on earth, briefly outlined his plans to build Guyana's economic development around the preservation of its vast forests.

While explaining the intricacies of climate change and what it would mean for small and poor developing countries, Mr. Jagdeo made it clear that the people who are most susceptible to climate change are the ones that have the least capacity to adapt to those changes.

He also spoke about the "distrust" that currently exists between the developed and developing worlds, and the urgent need for political will and crucial financing from the main players in the climate change fight.

The President used the opportunity to brief the audience on some of the issues that were raised and discussed over the past week at the level of the United Nations.

He also answered questions about the REDD, REDD-Plus and their inclusion on the Copenhagen agenda, carbon trading, financing, the world economic and financial crisis, and Guyana's development pathway.

Most of the persons who asked questions at the forum lauded President Jagdeo for his vision of developing Guyana, and encouraged him in his committed fight in the climate change battle.

The President also, in a good-natured manner, put senior officials at Columbia University in an uncomfortable position when, during the question-and-answer segment, he exposed flaws in a collaborative study done by Yale University and Columbia University on an Environmental Performance Index.

According to the President, it "boggles" his mind how Guyana got ranked at a number in the 130's on that index, but the United States (a major contributor to global greenhouse gas emission) is only ranked at number 34.

He had the audience laughing when he politely requested from the University officials present at the forum to kindly ensure that this misconception is corrected.

Many of the persons in the audience whom this newspaper spoke with yesterday alluded to the unprecedented social and economic reforms in Guyana under Jagdeo's tenure as President, that include improved access to education; healthcare reform; water and sanitation system expansion; and large-scale development of road, river and air transport networks. While pursuing these reforms, President Jagdeo also reduced the national debt and reformed the tax and investment regimes.

President Jagdeo served as chairman of the Board of Governors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Group from September 2005 until September 2006. He has been awarded the Pushkin Medal by the Government of Russia and the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award by the Government of India.

In recent years, President Jagdeo has spoken frequently of the need for developing countries to be at the forefront of identifying solutions to avert the worst extremes of climate change, whilst ensuring economic development of developing countries. He has repeatedly raised the issue at the United Nations and Summits of Latin American and Commonwealth Heads of Government.

In June 2009, he launched a "Low Carbon Development Strategy," hailed by a wide cross-section of the Guyanese people and the international community as being an unprecedented plan for national development that secures the forest ecosystem in the global fight to address climate change. This Strategy has received much support domestically and internationally, and it is expected to be a critical model for developing countries to adopt after the Copenhagen Climate Change Meeting.

Among those from the Guyana delegation accompanying the President at Columbia University yesterday were Advisers to the President Mr. Kevin Hogan and Mr. Shyam Nokta; Mr. Michael Brotherson, from the Climate Change Unit that Nokta heads at the Office of the President; and Mr. Brentnol Evans, Guyana's Consul General in New York.

AFC meets Norwegian delegation on climate change action plan

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Welcoming Norway's willingness to contribute to funding Guyana's climate change fight, the AFC held discussions on Thursday with a Norwegian delegation on crafting an action plan and the need to put transparent mechanisms in place when funds will be expended.

AFC executive members including Chairman Khemraj Ramjattan, (first, left) and Sheila Holder (second, right) pose with members of the Norwegian delegation here to discuss aspects of the Guyana/Norway partnership on the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS).

AFC executive members including Chairman Khemraj Ramjattan, (first, left) and Sheila Holder (second, right) pose with members of the Norwegian delegation here to discuss aspects of the Guyana/Norway partnership on the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS).

In a press release, the party said it proposed a discussion on three major issues with the Norwegian delegation when some of its executive members met with them on Thursday. The AFC said it sought discussions on the crafting of an action plan for climate change based on the 2006 National Development Strategy (NDS), the establishment of a truly representative Multi-Stakeholder Consultation and Steering Committee “unlike the highly partisan one” currently established; and the need to put in place transparent mechanisms for any disbursement of funding Guyana will benefit from.

On the latter issue, the AFC ideally wanted Norway to channel funding into a body of reputable Guyanese trustees including at least one Norwegian government appointee and a representative of the indigenous peoples of Guyana, subject to complete oversight by the National Assembly and the Auditor General’s office. The party is gravely concerned that any bilateral support “ought never to go directly to the Office of the President as is proposed in the Government LCDS document.”

The party said it also made presentations about its concerns and sought clarifications about the state of negotiations between Guyana and Norway at the meeting. It said presentations by national executive members Clayton Hall and Martin Cheong were well received. Further, it added that the Norwegian team, lead by spokesperson Marte Nordseth, gave assurances that all questions will be dealt with in time as the process and negotiations had just begun and were ongoing.

The party said it expects that handling the money will be a challenge although the Norwegians believed that internal national processes about how to disburse the funds will have to be finalised by Guyanese. The team said funds will enter the country through the World Bank and that alternative opportunities will have to be found if the existing arrangements have to be halted. They also gave assurances that the rights of Amerindians will be preserved.

As regard the multi-stakeholder consultations the team said it was assured by what has so far transpired however, concerns will be addressed as they come up, by a local team and an expert institution called IID.

The team also said cooperation will be based on results where criteria agreed will have to be realised. The monitoring, reporting and verification model currently under discussion by experts will be the foundation of the cooperation agreement.

Moreover, the Norwegians emphasised that accountability, transparency and principles of good governance will form the base for a relationship with Guyana on its LCDS.

The AFC noted that Norway’s Minister of Environment will be visiting Guyana in November to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with President Bharrat Jagdeo. The modalities of the MoU are currently being worked out.

Political will lacking on REDD – Jagdeo

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President Bharrat Jagdeo said in spite of the recognition that forests must be used as a solution for first world countries to meet their emission reduction targets, there is still the lack of political will to move the process forward.

He said in addition to the fact that REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries) is not getting the kind of attention and focus as the other emissions abatement solutions, there is little financing being put on the table for it and the focus seems to be on the niggling details as to how exactly a REDD mechanism will work.

Jagdeo further said that people are aware of the importance of forests to the world both for biodiversity and as an abatement solution and reminded the audience that it would be mathematically impossible for the developed countries to meet their targets as outlined by the Inter- Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) without including offsets which come from forests.

Speaking at the special meeting on REDD held at the UN headquarters in New York on Wednesday, Jagdeo said preserving the forests can yield almost immediate results, as opposed to abatement initiatives such as carbon capture and storage and clean energy solutions, which will both take time to implement.

President Jagdeo sounds urgency on REDD

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By Mark Ramotar in New York

IN an unprecedented display of cooperation between developed and developing countries on climate change, eighteen Heads of State gathered at UN headquarters in New York to publicly express their commitment and support for REDD – Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries.

They asserted that the new climate change agreement to be negotiated in Copenhagen must address in an effective and equitable way the role of forests as a mitigation option.

But President Bharrat Jagdeo, one of the main speakers during yesterday’s REDD meeting, lamented the sloth in commitment coming from developed countries with regard to the crucial issue of financing for REDD, and sounded an ‘urgent call’ for them to be much more decisive and firm in their financial commitment to deforestation.

“Everyone recognises the importance of REDD, but what we are lamenting is that in spite of this recognition that it is a low cost abatement solution, and forests are an important part of the solution,

there isn't adequate financing currently on the table," President Jagdeo told a news conference he chaired at the UN headquarters last evening, immediately following the high-profile REDD meeting.

President Jagdeo also expressed concern that too many persons seem to be more focused on the problems associated with REDD rather than its potential solution.

He feels it is due to this that REDD is not getting the type of attention that it needs to be included prominently in the Copenhagen agreement.

President Jagdeo, who was accompanied and supported at the news conference by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Sir Michael Somare, and the Environmental Minister from Congo, Mr. Henri Djombo, told reporters: "We hope to change that. So we are saying 'this is an urgent matter – and the time for pilots and technical details and all of that...that time is long gone; there is urgency now and we have to get forests (REDD) included prominently at Copenhagen.'"

"...we are prepared to lock our forests away for a global good, in exchange for resources to develop alternatives – to give people an alternative lifestyle, to ensure that our countries prosper while we are at the same time contributing to a global solution," he added.

"So unless there are willing partners on the other side, we will expend political capital..." the president said.

"We don't need to keep re-articulating and re-analysing the problem. We know that deforestation and forest degradation cause more emissions than the European Union. We know that deforestation is 17% of the climate change problem, we know that it happens because trees are currently worth more dead than alive, and we know that only action at national scale or large-scale sub-national scale will work in the long term. Above all, we know that unless we take major, impactful action urgently to reduce these emissions, we will frankly be unable to achieve climate stabilisation at 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

" And that is why moving away from a problem focus and towards defining and implementing a solution is urgent today and in the next two months before Copenhagen. Solving deforestation and forest degradation is hard, but it is no more difficult than finding solutions for other climate solutions. Just as with technology for carbon capture and storage, or sorting out the planning process for the large-scale expansion of wind farms in European or North American countries, REDD has many issues that need to be solved. But the key to solving them is positioning REDD within the right strategic framework. That is what has been missing to date, where the focus is too often on the minutiae and not enough on the big prize that is there to be won. And that is why getting first-order political attention on the problem is so important."

Following the previous day's Summit on Climate Change, and in advance of the critical Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen taking place this December, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon convened leaders and dignitaries from developed and developing countries to dialogue and publicly support REDD.

President Jagdeo spoke at the meeting on behalf of Latin America and the Caribbean, with Head of State from the Republic of Congo speaking on behalf of the Presidents and Prime Ministers from Africa; (Papua New Guinea) on behalf of Asia and the Pacific; industrialised countries (Australia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom) and World Bank President Zoellick took the stand to support progress and actions on REDD.

High ranking officials from Bangladesh, Belgium, Bolivia, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Indonesia, Japan and China also underlined their commitment.

The event marked the largest gathering of countries to date on the issue of REDD, with the participation of over 80 countries and over 150 dignitaries and leaders from international and non-governmental organisations, academia, think-tanks and the private sector from around the world concerned with climate change and forests.

“This convergence of world leaders; highlights a positive, growing momentum in support of REDD and signals how this mechanism may be feasible from a technical, financial and collaboration perspective,” Secretary-General Ban said about the event.

“While drastic reductions in fossil fuel-related emissions are crucial in addressing climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from forests and land use is pivotal to the overall equation.”

According to President Jagdeo, participating developing countries expressed their willingness to undertake significant cuts in deforestation and forest degradation, provided that they receive sufficient financial support.

A report by the informal Working Group on Interim Finance for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (IWG-IFR) estimates a 25 % reduction in deforestation could be achieved with a financial commitment of 15-20 billion Euros (US\$22-29B) by 2015.

Deforestation and the degradation of forests are responsible for just under one-fifth of global greenhouse gas emissions, more than all the world’s cars, trucks, ships and planes combined. In addition to storing over one trillion tonnes of the world’s carbon, forests provide for essential human needs, including adaptation.

Yet under the current Kyoto Protocol, developing countries cannot receive credit for the social and environmental benefits their forests provide. The absence of rewards for maintaining forests means they continue to be cut, burnt and degraded.

A REDD mechanism that will be discussed during the climate change negotiations this December in Copenhagen proposes to change the perverse incentives that make forests worth more dead than alive.

Australian Prime Minister Lauds Guyana Leadership On Climate Change

September 22nd, 2009 | By Guyana Chronicle | Filed Under [News](#)

Australian Prime Minister, the Hon. Kevin Rudd has lauded Guyana's leadership on climate change. In a meeting with President Jagdeo in New York on Monday, Prime Minister Rudd expressed his country's interest in collaborating with Guyana in the global effort to address climate change. President Jagdeo also took the opportunity to outline Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy. President Jagdeo and Prime Minister Rudd are in New York for, among other things, today's High Level Meeting on Climate Change convened by UN Secretary General, Mr Ban Ki-Moon, in the framework of the 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Australia has committed to supporting Guyana's Monitoring Reporting and Verification (MRV) System and remote monitoring of its forests.

This development builds on Guyana's recent work on developing its MRV System at which several experts from the Australian Climate Office participated.

Prime Minister Rudd and President Jagdeo agreed to continue discussions at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Trinidad in November to explore other areas of bilateral cooperation on climate change as well as regional initiatives for the Caribbean Community.

Renewed Optimism Ahead Of Copenhagen

September 23rd, 2009 | By Guyana Chronicle | Filed Under [News](#)

WITH the clock ticking towards this December's climate change conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, President Bharrat Jagdeo is optimistic that world leaders are much closer to 'sealing the deal' when they meet again in just under 80 days time. His optimism is being fuelled, in part, by the successful outcome of a crucial round-table meeting he co-chaired yesterday with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown at the United Nations headquarters in New York. Financing was one of the main issues discussed during the round-table meeting and President Jagdeo said participants, having recognised that climate change is the pre-eminent geopolitical and economic issue of the 21st century, acknowledged that it would take as much as, and maybe even more, than US\$100B to fight the impacts at this point in time.

Speaking with the Guyana Chronicle shortly after the session, President Jagdeo said the idea was to get leaders together to have a free flowing discussion about what it would take to “seal the deal” in Copenhagen and to “break the deadlock which seems to be part of the negotiations at this time”.

According to the Guyanese Head of State, the discussions were centered around five political areas the leaders felt would be useful to the future. These, he said, ranged from deep cuts by the developed countries aimed at assisting mitigation actions from the developing world, to adaptation and institutional governance structure to deal with the environment in the future.

“These were just some of the areas that we thought we needed clarification for ...and then of course the very important matter of financing...so we had a free flowing discussion and we think that we have made some progress towards having a better understanding of what it would take to have this deal in Copenhagen on the part of all the players, the developed countries and the developing world, and what quantum of financing is needed,” President Jagdeo said.

According to him, the leaders immediately recognized the magnitude of the problem and “start talking about a large sum of money, in excess of US\$100B”.

Those figures get closer to the sums required, he said, noting that in the past, those figures used to range in the tens of millions of dollars and clearly that would not be adequate for mitigation and adaptation action and it wouldn't have led to a deal in Copenhagen.

“So I think out of the round-table we had leaders participating and we have built some level of momentum and optimism that we may be able to secure this deal in Copenhagen,” President Jagdeo told the Chronicle.

Among the countries that participated in the round-table discussions were Sweden, Mexico, Tanzania, Switzerland, Germany, Sri Lanka, Poland, Fiji, Singapore and Ghana. Yesterday's summit at UN Headquarters in New York is the largest ever on climate change, with more than 100 heads of State and Government in attendance.

It takes place just under 80 days before the start of the Copenhagen conference, where nations are aiming to wrap up negotiations on an ambitious new agreement to curb greenhouse gas emissions that would go into effect in 2012 when the Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period expires.

Stronger Signal Needed by US in Climate Change Fight

September 21th, 2009 | By Guyana Chronicle | Filed Under [News](#)

While acknowledging the strides made by the United States in the fight against climate change, especially in recent times, many persons felt the U.S. should have sent a “stronger signal” that it is

prepared to cut greenhouse gas emissions, during President Barack Obama's address at the opening of the United Nations Climate conference in New York.

President Obama, during his much anticipated address yesterday, challenged the world to act swiftly to fight global warming but offered no new proposals that could jumpstart stalled talks on a U.N. climate pact.

In his speech, Obama said time was running out to address the problem.

"Our generation's response to this challenge will be judged by history, for if we fail to meet it -- boldly, swiftly, and together -- we risk consigning future generations to an irreversible catastrophe," he said.

In an interview with the Chronicle, President Bharrat Jagdeo shared the sentiment that he had also expected a "stronger" statement from President Obama. He, however, expressed the hope that it was just a "tactical move" by the US President.

"We have to understand that President Obama has moved significantly from where the U.S. was on climate change to where they are today and that is largely because of his leadership...but whether what the U.S. is doing now is adequate to have this global deal (in Copenhagen), that's another issue," President Jagdeo told this newspaper.

"So I think most people were looking forward to his (Obama) sending a stronger signal that the U.S. is prepared to reach that deal and I felt that was absent from his speech this morning" the President added.

He said one would think that it is "a tactical thing", and one would hope that it is.

Prior to yesterday's special UN summit on global warming, activists had hoped the United States and China would inject momentum, just two-and-a-half months before 190 nations gather in Copenhagen aiming to complete a deal to slow climate change.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who called the meeting, said talks were moving too slowly.

"Failure to reach broad agreement in Copenhagen would be morally inexcusable, economically short-sighted and politically unwise," Ban said.

"We cannot go down this road. If we have learned anything from the crises of the past year, it is that our fates are intertwined," he said.

Speaking shortly after Obama yesterday, Chinese President Hu Jintao pledged to reduce the carbon intensity of his country's economic growth.

Asked what were his views on President Jintau's presentation, Mr. Jagdeo said: "I think he made some significant signals in his address."

"Although he spoke about endeavouring to achieve targets, he started out using some important terminologies that were part of the debate before; he spoke about a 2005 baseline and he spoke about 20/20 targets...", Mr. Jagdeo said.

"But China has signaled some important commitments," he stressed.

President advances climate change model in media

September 20th, 2009 | By Guyana Chronicle | Filed Under [News](#)

PRESIDENT Bharrat Jagdeo is supplementing the international lobby for Guyana's climate change model in more interviews with leading global media agencies and newspapers. He has been interviewed by Reuters, one of the largest news agencies in the world, the American TV network CNN, and has met the Editorial Board of the prestigious New York Times on the sidelines of the special climate change summit called yesterday by United Nations Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon.

The Guardian newspaper of London yesterday also carried the full text of the President's remarks at the 'Team Earth' public event in Greeley Square, New York Monday when he shared the spotlight with popular actor and environmentalist Harrison Ford.

He has been interviewed by the Wall Street Journal, the Financial Times and is scheduled for an interview with the Economist later this week.

On Friday, Mr. Jagdeo is due to advance his pitch in a speech at the renowned Columbia University.

The Guardian headlined the President's Monday speech at the Greeley Square event as 'Guyana is a model of forest protection that could solve the climate crisis'.

In that speech, President Jagdeo stressed that a deal at the UN climate change summit in Copenhagen, Denmark in December must enable countries like Guyana to generate an income by conserving forests rather than cutting them down

"The UN general assembly this week is going to change the world. This is because quiet conversations in meeting rooms and corridors around the UN complex will shape the world's [climate negotiations in Copenhagen in December](#) — and all of our lives, and those of every generation that follows", he said.

And this is all going to happen because of trees. This week, among the talk of recession and growth, defence and terrorism, economic stimuli and trade sanctions, world leaders will discuss one of the key solutions that we need to focus on to tackle [climate change](#) — the world's [forests](#), he added.

In his interview with Reuters, the President noted that he wants to turn this country into one of the world's most environmentally progressive countries by preserving vast swaths of tropical rain forest -- if rich nations pay for it.

"We can generate money from preserving the forests, we can use these resources to invest in low carbon opportunities, and we can use some of the money to make our economy climate-resilient," Mr. Jagdeo said.

Protecting forests is crucial, he said, as destruction of tropical forests releases more carbon dioxide emissions than all the world's cars, trucks, planes and trains combined.

He said his preservation model could be replicated in other countries and incorporated into a new climate change agreement to be signed in Copenhagen.

"By Copenhagen, we can show a real country model working that would address all of the issues that have come up in the negotiations," he said.

The President said the biggest stumbling blocks to making his model work were persuading rich countries that payments they make to poor ones would be used transparently, and convincing poor countries they would not give up sovereignty when they agree to set aside forests for conservation. Negotiations for Copenhagen among 190 nations are stalled over how to share the burden of curbs on gas emissions through 2020 between rich and poor nations and how to raise perhaps \$100 billion a year to help the poor combat warming and adapt to changes such as rising seas.

"What will constitute a good agreement in Copenhagen for me is one that has deep emissions cuts, adequate financing and improving forests as an abatement solution," Jagdeo said. "Developed countries need to take the biggest steps."

Although Jagdeo wants to turn Guyana into a low-carbon economy that relies on green energy, he said only rich countries should face mandated deep cuts in carbon emissions.

Poor countries fear they might sacrifice future economic growth if they agree to mandatory reductions.

"We don't want to pass blame, but many of the developed countries used these traditional tools to get where they are today. Many people feel that they are kicking away the ladder now, they don't want us to use the same development tools, which were high carbon," he said.

"We believe we don't have to go that route, we believe that we can shift to a low carbon direction without compromising our development prospects, but we have to be helped to that route."

CNN also reported on the President's stand on its website.

Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on Monday lauded Guyana's leadership on climate change.

In a meeting with President Jagdeo in New York, Rudd expressed his country's interest in collaborating with Guyana in the global effort to address climate change.

President Jagdeo also took the opportunity to outline Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy.

Australia has committed to supporting Guyana's Monitoring Reporting and Verification (MRV) System and remote monitoring of its forests.

This development builds on Guyana's recent work on developing its MRV System at which several experts from the Australian Climate Office participated.

Prime Minister Rudd and President Jagdeo agreed to continue discussions at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Trinidad in November to explore other areas of bilateral cooperation on climate change as well as regional initiatives for the Caribbean Community.

President to attend UN climate change meeting in New York

September 19th, 2009 | By Guyana Times | Filed Under [News](#)

President Bharrat Jagdeo leaves for the United States on Sunday to attend a United Nations Conference on climate change as he continues to plug strong action on the part of developed countries to cut emissions in order to avoid catastrophic climate change.

The president will be meeting the Norwegian minister of environment to take forward an agreement for forest funding.

He said that a Memorandum of Understanding will be completed and an agreement to this effect negotiated, which will be signed in Georgetown sometime in early November.

In addition to this, the president will be participating in a host of other meetings, including co-chairing a round table discussion on climate change with UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown. He will also be speaking at a special side event on REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), and making speeches at Columbia University and at a UN Secretary-General's dinner on financing for climate change.

Jagdeo will also be attending several bilateral meetings with several countries, including Australia. He said the meetings will serve to raise Guyana's profile on its climate change campaigning with its Low Carbon Development Strategy as it looks towards getting a good agreement in Copenhagen.

He said that the country is getting a large amount of attention in the international media because of its leading position on REDD. According to the UN website, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is convening the summit on September 22, 2009 to focus heads of state and government on the need for urgent action. It also seeks to mobilise the highest level political will needed to reach a fair, effective and

scientifically ambitious global climate deal at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen this December.

More Plaudits For Guyana

September 20th, 2009 | By Guyana Chronicle | Filed Under [News](#)

Guyana is scoring more points for its climate change leadership role and its deforestation model that seems certain to set the pattern for other forest countries. Building on this international high profile, President Bharrat Jagdeo left Sunday for a round of key climate change talks at the United Nations General Assembly in New York and meetings on the sidelines. Further commendations for the country's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) have come from the government of Norway and the prestigious Clinton Foundation. The Norwegian government expects to conclude an agreement soon with this country that could result in funds to help its avoided deforestation and forest degradation model.

President Jagdeo announced at a press briefing at his official State House residence Friday that he was to meet Norwegian Minister of the Environment and International Development, Erik Solheim in New York on Sunday.

The two countries are negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that will see Norway providing Guyana will resources to implement the LCDS and Mr. Jagdeo said they expect to sign this in Georgetown in early November. This will be a significant step for Guyana ahead of the UN summit on global climate change in Copenhagen, Denmark in December.

Guyana and Norway agreed to establish closer cooperation on climate and forest issues earlier this year when President Jagdeo met Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg during his trip to Europe to attend the World Economic Forum in Switzerland.

It was agreed that this co-operation, which is guiding the negotiations on the MoU, will be founded on a broad-based, transparent, inclusive multi-stakeholder national strategy developed in Guyana, which led to the LCDS and the widespread stakeholder consultations that were held all over Guyana.

In New York, the President is scheduled to attend up to 16 different events, including a round table on climate change that he will co-chair with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

"I will also speak on the special side event on REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation). I will address the General Assembly. I will speak at Columbia University and I will also be speaking at the Secretary General's (Ban Ki-moon's) dinner on financing for climate change," he said. Mr. Jagdeo is also to have bilateral meetings including with a delegation from Kenya and Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd.

"It's a packed week and I think it is lending a lot of profile to Guyana. I have already had, earlier today (Friday), an interview with the Wall Street Journal. Later tonight I will be speaking with the Guardian

(newspaper) and sometime on Monday with the Financial Times about our strategy and our views on how we can proceed to have a good agreement in Copenhagen,” President Jagdeo said.

“The country is getting quite a bit of attention in the international media largely because we are leading in terms of REDD and the discussions on including forests in the Copenhagen agreement.”

MRV WORK ADVANCES

International experts have also supported the framework for establishing a Guyana Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system for REDD-Plus (REDD+) with the Clinton Foundation and other groups helping to advance the process.

The MRV was advanced at workshop sessions last week at the Guyana Forestry Commission and the International Convention Centre, Liliendaal. The workshop was organised by the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) and the Office of Climate Change with support from the Government of Norway and the United Nations Development Programme.

Dr. James Baker, Director of the Clinton Foundation’s Climate Initiative, Global Carbon Measurement Programme, said the organization is working with the Guyana Government to help reduce deforestation and forest degradation through the development of an MRV.

“We are focusing on helping the Government of Guyana working with the Office of Climate Change and the GFC to put together a plan for that MRV to be in place. We are at the point of discussing that. We had an expert meeting review Monday; the experts agreed on a framework to move forward and we are now taking the next steps to make that happen”, he explained.

Baker said the United Nations climate change summit in Copenhagen, Denmark in December will be an important step for all governments to make decisions about how climate change can be mitigated to try to reduce emissions.

“All the issues about climate change will be discussed in Copenhagen but there will be a major focus on reducing deforestation and forest degradation which is a large part of the problem and something that can be addressed, particularly in tropical developing countries”, he said.

He commended Guyana as a major leader for having an LCDS, adding that President Jagdeo “is the only world leader that has come out (and) made a major speech that a country should have a national LCDS; and part of that is dealing with forest in the right way – reducing deforestation and forest degradation.”

“And that is an important part of the LCDS. The GFC has developed a Readiness Preparation proposal and that has been accepted by the World Bank so that will be an important piece and our work is to help support the GFC in making that happen”, he said.

Mr. Gary Richards, also with the Clinton Foundation, said that based on discussions from the workshop on Monday, it was recommended that a carbon accounting technical team be established in Guyana.

Two senior advisers from the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment, Ms. Inger Naess and Ms. Marte Nordseth, were among other experts and representatives from the World Bank, the Clinton Foundation, the Australian Government and others at the sessions.

They commended Guyana for its thrust towards an LCDS with Nordseth saying the process has been “very positive” and “impressive”.

Naess noted that globally, deforestation and forest degradation represent almost 20 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions and that Guyana is a country with huge forest cover and a very low deforestation rate.

“It’s important that your country conserve or sustainably manage the forest that you have. That’s an important contribution to the global climate for all of us. But I also think it’s important for Guyana to protect the forest for the livelihood of your people, for water resource management and for biodiversity”, she said.

She said the draft LCDS is “a good start and we are really looking forward to have a positive process. I think it’s very important to have this LCDS. It’s really going into the future to meet the new challenges of climate change – the need to have a low carbon energy supply.”

Nordseth told the session that Guyana has demonstrated tremendous leadership in the deforestation model and is doing a lot of good work nationally.

She said too that within the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), the two countries are working on how funding for REDD compensation can be structured.

Nordseth pointed out that there is not yet a REDD mechanism and Guyana and Norway are hoping they can set a global standard for this.

Mr. Shyam Nokta, Head of the Office of Climate Change in the Office of the President and Chairman of the National Climate Change Committee, said the two-day meeting brought together some of the leading global experts and specialists in climate change to provide advice and guidance on how to design and implement a REDD+ MRV System for Guyana.

Also at the meetings were officials from the US Forestry Service, the Canadian Forestry Service, Winrock International, the World Resources Institute and the Meridien Institute.

Nokta said their presence here was an assurance of the international recognition and support for Guyana and its climate initiatives.

He pointed out that in the context of climate change and forests, the MRV refers to forest carbon but can also include land use and forest cover change and other parameters.

“The MRV system will be the mechanism through which Guyana will be monitored for compliance as part of any agreement for receiving payments for avoided deforestation, whether from international partners such as Norway, or through the international carbon market as part of a REDD Mechanism”, he said.

Nokta said that globally, the design and development of an MRV system for REDD and REDD+ is relatively new and there are few examples to look to.

“While this could be seen as a challenge, it presents an opportunity for Guyana to engage in model building and to set the standard, especially as it relates to countries with High Forest Cover and Low Deforestation Rates.

“Clearly, we need to develop an MRV System that is transparent, accountable, and in accordance with international best practice and guidelines. But at the same time, we need to develop a system to suit our national circumstances, and one which is robust, cost effective, utilizing existing technology, and one we can manage, improve and sustain over time”, he stated.

Nokta said Guyana has been working for several months with the Clinton Climate Initiative on how to proceed with an MRV system and with support from Conservation International and World Wildlife Fund, the GFC has started some of the technical and fieldwork towards developing such a system.

The work done so far has benefitted from this expert review which has provided the guidance for further development of Guyana’s MRV, he said.

Countdown to Copenhagen

September 20th, 2009 | By Guyana Chronicle | Filed Under [News](#)

WORLD leaders, including those in the Caribbean, are preparing for Copenhagen in December to reach consensus on a new global climate change agreement to replace the 1997 Kyoto Protocol which will set targets for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

This will require the political will of all countries, particularly the industrialised nations, to adopt and implement ambitious plans for reducing greenhouse emissions, which are the gases that trap heat in the atmosphere for a long period, leading to a gradual warming of the earth's surface.

Before meeting in the Danish capital, leaders will assemble this week at the United Nations, in New York, to address the issue of global climate change, described as the greatest threat facing humankind today.

The Caribbean plans to be well represented at the New York meeting and in Copenhagen, as the adverse impact of climate change has already begun manifesting itself on sectors of the economy and on our natural habitat.

Even though the Caribbean and other Small Island Developing Nations (SIDS) are low emitters of greenhouse gases, they are the areas that face the greatest risk of climate change impact, according to scientists.

Based on current realities and some horrific future modelling of climate change impact, Caribbean countries are pressing world leaders in Copenhagen to agree on reduction targets.

These include long-term stabilisation of atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations at levels which will ensure that global average surface temperature increases be limited to well below 1.5° C of pre-industrial levels; that global greenhouse gas emissions peak by 2015; that global CO₂ reductions of at least 45 per cent by 2020 and greenhouse gas emissions be cut by more than 95 per cent of 1990 CO₂ levels by 2050.

The World Bank estimates that annual economic damage from climate change in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member countries will be around US\$11 billion by 2080, or 11 per cent of the grouping's gross domestic product.

Nearly a fifth of the losses is likely to be linked to the specific effects of sea-level rise, loss of land, and damage to tourism infrastructure, housing, buildings and other infrastructure.

The loss of tourism expenditure -- the lifeblood of the vast majority of island states -- is projected at US\$4 billion, and climate change-related disasters, such as hurricanes and floods, at US\$5 billion.

Based on this possible scenario for the Caribbean and those of us who live here, it is vital that our leaders are resolute in their position at the December high-level conference, and not allow the industrialised nations to shirk their collective responsibility to planet Earth.

It is heartening, though, that leaders of the Major Economies Forum (MEF), collectively responsible for more than 75% of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions, agreed at their recent meeting in L'Aquila, Italy, that the increase in the global average temperature should not exceed pre-industrial levels by more than two degrees Celsius -- although their general commitments fell short of what was required by science.

According to Rajendra Pachauri, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the outcome of the meeting was a bit of a dichotomy, as the leaders of the largest emitters had agreed to a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80% up to 2050, and that the temperature increase should be limited to 2° C.

However, they did not take into account the IPCC's recommendation that in order to achieve the 2° C goal, emissions should peak by 2015.

Given the urgency of establishing consensus, Grenada's Prime Minister, Tillman Thomas, who was invited by UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon to address this week's UN Conference, called on all small states to stand together to confront the issues that have the potential to damage its ecosystems, limit land-based agricultural production, and significantly deplete marine resources and fishing stock.

Prior to attending the UN Conference and a meeting of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), chaired by Grenada, Mr. Thomas said the situation facing small-island states is a matter of survival, given the impact of sea level rise and temperature increases.

Grenada, incidentally, hosted the Executive Board of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) on the island in July for its 48th Session.

Executive Board Chair, Lex de Jonge noted that by holding the Board's meeting on the island, some light was shed on the CDM in the region.

The CDM is one of the financial mechanisms established under the Kyoto Protocol, and has the dual objectives of facilitating developed countries with meeting their emission reduction targets whilst promoting sustainable development.

Since the first Board meeting in 2001, over 1,100 projects have been registered, with a further 4,000 projects in the CDM pipeline. The English-speaking Caribbean, however, has only one CDM registered project -- unlike Brazil, China and India, where the vast majority of the projects are concentrated.

It is anticipated that the CDM will generate over 2.7 billion certified emission reductions (CERs), equivalent to the removal of 2.7 billion tonnes of Carbon Dioxide from the atmosphere by the end of the first commitment period in 2012.

In 2007, the primary and secondary markets for CERs were worth US\$13 billion. Currently, 2% of the proceeds of the CDM are used to finance the Adaptation Fund.

Whatever the outcome of the Copenhagen conference, our countries must continue to embark on sustainable development and environmental protection initiatives.

Guyana, for instance, recently unveiled a draft Low-Carbon Development Strategy, which ambitiously sets out a pathway to a new economy which builds future prosperity that is low-deforestation, low-carbon and climate resilient.

Set within the country's response to climate change, the strategy is broadly hinged on Guyana deploying its vast forests to mitigate global climate change.

The key focus areas of the strategy are investments in low carbon economic infrastructure, investments in high potential low carbon sectors, expanding access to services and new economic opportunities for indigenous and forest communities, and transforming the village economy as well as improving social services and economic opportunities for the wider Guyanese population, and investments in climate change adaptation infrastructure.

Island nations in the Caribbean should also not see their size, or the fact that they are small emitters of greenhouse gases, as reason for not considering a broad strategy for sustainable development and have this issue on their political agenda.

The Maldives, a chain of low-lying islets in the Indian Ocean threatened by sea level rise, is aiming to become the first carbon-neutral nation by fully switching to the use of renewable energy within a decade.

The plan includes more than 150 wind turbines, hundreds of thousands of square meters of rooftop solar panels, and a power plant burning coconut husks. Batteries would provide power when energy from the wind and sun are unavailable. Fossil-fuel-powered vehicles and boats would be replaced over time by electric models.

Discussions on climate change have also opened up another raging debate on whether an economic cost should be imposed on imported products from countries that don't curb their emissions.

In an OP-ED last week, Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), said there is already strong evidence of how new “climatic-economic” standards tend to include unilateral trade regulations, based on the carbon footprint of traded goods and services.

In June, the United States House of Representatives approved the ‘Clean Energy and Security Act’, which seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 17% in 2020 with regard to 2005.

To protect the U.S. economy, according to Ms. Bárcena, this law -- which is still pending approval in the Senate -- establishes compensatory tariffs on carbon-intensive goods, such as steel, cement, paper and glass imported from countries the United States considers are not doing enough to reduce their emissions.

In France, the information on the carbon footprint of products and their packaging, as well as their consumption or potential environmental impact, will be mandatory, as of January 1, 2011.

In October 2008, the United Kingdom created the ‘Publicly Available Standard’ to estimate greenhouse gas emissions (GGE) associated with the life cycle of products and services, and drafted the Code of Good Practices for the emission and reduction of GGE.

Ms. Bárcena said these unilateral measures could mean that the efforts and responsibility for mitigating the effects of climate change may shift from north to south, and could turn into a new obstacle to the economic growth of developing countries.

Although awareness about the trade relevance of the carbon footprint is just now emerging, the ECLAC official said the region should take it very seriously in designing its public policies and long-term economic planning.

If addressed in a timely and comprehensive manner, climate change may become a window of opportunity to begin de-carbonising the energy matrix, renew infrastructure, improve productive processes, and gradually move towards a development model with less carbon content. Some advice well worth pondering upon.

Universal participation for ozone preservation

September 18th, 2009 | By Guyana Times | Filed Under [News](#)

Guyana joined other countries around the world to observe International Ozone Day Wednesday under the theme, “ Universal Participation: Ozone Protection Unifies the World” Guyana is party to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, probably the most widely ratified multilateral environmental agreements to date. Guyana, classified as an Article 5 country under the protocol, became party to the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol on August 12, 1993 and subsequently ratified the London, Copenhagen and Montreal amendments on July 23, 1999.

Guyana does not produce any ozone depleting substances (ODS), the bulk of which is imported in the form of CFCs and HCFCs that are used in the refrigeration and air conditioning sector. In 1995, Guyana consumed a total of 39.16 tonnes of CFCs; 21.12 tonnes of this were used in local refrigeration equipment and assembly operations, while the remainder was used to service refrigeration equipment.

Halons, bromine- containing chemicals used for fire fighting, also have high ozone depleting potential and are targeted for phasing- out in all countries.

Phasing- out ODS

The Hydrometeorological Service in the Agriculture Ministry is the designated focal point for the Montreal Protocol in Guyana. The National Ozone Action Unit, housed within the Hydrometeorological Service, is tasked with carrying activities to ensure the smooth phasing- out of ODS in Guyana.

The Guyana Country Programme for phasing out ODS is now in its 11th year of implementation. Projects implemented and ongoing under this programme include Institutional Strengthening (IS), Refrigerant Management Plan (RMP), Halon Bank Management Plan (HBMP) and the Terminal Phase out Management Plan (TPMP), which is the most recent.

What prompted action for the ozone?

In the mid- 1970s it was discovered that some manmade products destroy ozone molecules in the stratosphere.

This destruction can result in damage to ecosystems and materials such as plastics as well as cause an increase in human diseases such as skin cancers and cataracts.

The discovery of the role of synthetic ozone- depleting chemicals, such as chloro- fluorocarbons (CFCs), stimulated increased research and monitoring in this field.

Computer models predicted a disaster if no action was taken to protect the ozone layer. Based on this research and monitoring, the nations of the world took action in 1985 with the Vienna Convention followed by the Montreal Protocol in 1987.

On March 22, 1985 the Vienna Convention which outlines states' responsibilities for protecting human health and the environment against the adverse effects of ozone depletion, established the framework under which the Montreal Protocol was negotiated. The convention was adopted by 28 countries at the Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Protection of the Ozone Layer. Parties to the convention agreed among other things, to take appropriate measures " to protect human health and the environment against adverse effects resulting or likely to result from human activities, which modify or are likely to modify the ozone layer". Additionally, parties acceded " to adopt appropriate legislative or administrative measures and cooperate in harmonising appropriate policies to control, limit, reduce or prevent human activities under their jurisdiction should it be found that these activities have or are likely to have adverse effects resulting from modification or likely modification of the ozone layer". The Montreal Protocol was originally signed by 24 parties on September 16, 1987 at the headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organisation in Montreal. This treaty represents a landmark international agreement designed to protect the stratospheric ozone layer. It stipulates that the production and consumption of compounds that deplete ozone in the stratosphere – chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons, carbon tetrachloride, and methyl chloroform – were to be phased out by 2000 (2005 for methyl chloroform).

The Montreal Protocol is one of the first international environmental agreements that include trade sanctions to achieve the stated goals of a treaty. It also offers major incentives for non- signatory nations to sign the agreement. The treaty negotiators justified the sanctions because depletion of the ozone layer is an environmental problem most effectively addressed on the global level. Furthermore, without the trade sanctions, there would be economic incentives for non- signatories to increase production, damaging the competitiveness of the industries in the signatory nations as well as decreasing the search for less damaging CFC alternatives.

How Much Do You Know?

Test your knowledge about the ozone layer.

Answers to the questions are provided below.

1. The ozone layer is low in the sky and we can see it

* True * False

2. What does the ozone layer protect us from?

3. The ozone layer is made of:

* Oxygen * Hydrogen * Ozone

4. How many oxygen atoms are contained in one ozone molecule?

* One * Two * Three

5. What is the meaning of 'UV' in 'UV rays'?

6. Why are UV rays dangerous for us?

7. Why is the ozone layer being depleted?

8. Which products contain ozone depleting substances? (several correct answers)

* Refrigerators * Motorbikes * Cars * Sprays * Ovens * Fire Extinguishers * Pesticides

9. What do we call the main ozone depleting chemical

* FFCs * CCFs * CFCs

10. When was the first ozone hole discovered?

* 1985 * 1998 * 2005 Answers

1. False. The ozone layer is high in the sky, located in the stratosphere. We cannot see it, ozone is an invisible gas.

2. The ozone layer protects us from the dangerous UV radiation of the sun.

3. The ozone layer is made of ozone that is a kind of oxygen (three oxygen atoms bound together, written O₃).

4. Three oxygen atoms bound together are needed to form an ozone molecule.
5. ' UV' is a short way to say ' ultraviolet'
6. UV rays are dangerous for our health. They can hurt and penetrate deep inside our skin and our eyes; they can also affect our immune system. Exposure to UV radiation can cause health problems today (sunburns, eye irritation) and later in life (skin cancer, cataract).
7. The ozone layer is depleted because chemicals such as CFCs, halons and methyl bromide that are dangerous to ozone molecules are released in the atmosphere.
8. Refrigerators, sprays, fire extinguishers, pesticides and cars with air conditioning systems can contain ozone depleting substances.
9. The main ozone depleting chemicals are CFCs.
10. A first ozone hole was discovered in 1985 over Antarctica. Since then, it has been forming each year during spring time when ozone layer depletion is at its highest.

Another ozone hole, over the Northern Pole, has also formed recently.

Compliments of The National Ozone Action Unit, Hydrometeorological Services, Ministry of Agriculture, You can share your ideas and questions by sending your letters to: " The Earth Our Environment", C/ O EIT Division. Environmental Protection Agency, 7 Broad & Charles Streets, Charlestown, GEORGETOWN or email us at eit. epaguyana@ gmail. com with questions and comments

Govt to strengthen monitoring, reporting and verification system

September 15th, 2009 | By Guyana Times | Filed Under [News](#)

The Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) is advancing the process of designing a Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System (MRVS), that would be both Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) compliant and can easily be replicated for countries that have a high forest cover, but low rates deforestation and forest degradation.

The GFC today held a workshop that was attended by representatives from the government of Norway, Marte Nordseth and Inger Naess; IPCC experts; Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), World Bank and Centre for Cultural Interchange (CCI) Representatives. Other invitees were specialists and country

representatives in the field of MRV; organisers from the Meridian Institute and Government of Guyana representatives including Minister of Agriculture, Robert Persaud.

Minster Persaud said that Guyana is firmly committed to maintaining its policy that access to and use of the forest resources must meet environmental and societal best practices and never compromise Guyana's national and international obligations while providing economic opportunities for everyone.

Minister Persaud explained that Guyana can now use the guidance provided by the MRVS to complement and upgrade various aspects of its land use policies and operational guidelines.

“ We recognised too that our monitoring and enforcement will need to be reviewed to guarantee the required greater level of compliance, leading ultimately to improved management of the forest resources, and even more reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation when compared to the business as usual scenario,” Minister Persaud stated.

Guyana is in the process of finalising the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) and Readiness Preparation Proposal (RPP) based on the feedback from the national consultations and is at a point where several aspects of work on climate change have commenced both at the strategic and operational levels.

On June 8, the draft LCDS was launched, a strategy that outlines Guyana's views on meaningful partnership, a platform for reconciling economic growth and climate change mitigation.

Over the past three months, Guyana has engaged in a thorough, transparent process of stakeholder consultation on the LCDS and has since consulted with 141 communities and also coordinated and participated in a number of sectoral stakeholder awareness sessions.

Caribbean Ministers meet to shore up position for Copenhagen

September 15th, 2009 | By Chronicle News | Filed Under [News](#)

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has stepped up its meetings as it continues its negotiations process in the run up to the 15th Meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP15) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) set for December 7-18 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The series of meetings forms part of the Community's strategy to highlight its priorities and position itself to ensure that the Region's issues are fully addressed at Copenhagen.

Small Island Developing States (SIDs), including the Caribbean Region, are among the most vulnerable to the threats and challenges of Climate Change and although they contribute less than one percent of global Green House Gas Emissions, they are already experiencing the adverse effects of Climate Change, including sea level rise and natural disasters. The outcomes of this land mark Conference therefore is of

vital importance to CARICOM as the Community will need to ensure that the targets in the new Agreement at COP15 are favourable to its Member States.

Against this backdrop, the CARICOM Secretariat and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) are hosting another slate of meetings, this time at the Ministerial Level, for the Region's Foreign Affairs Practitioners and Technocrats yesterday, and a Ministerial Meeting today in Saint Lucia, to further define the Region's Climate Change priorities for the negotiations leading up to, and at Copenhagen.

One of the strong calls that the Community had been making since the start of preparatory activities for negotiations is that the Caribbean should go into the negotiations with a common position on Climate Change, particularly in relation to six critical building blocks that the Community feels must be addressed in the negotiations: a shared vision on Climate Change; the reduction of Green House Gas (GHG) emissions; mitigation and adaptation; the transfer of technology; capacity building and Finance.

The ministerial Conference in Saint Lucia therefore is a significant step in the journey to Copenhagen as it provides a platform on which the political directorate and other policy makers within the Region can become intimately involved in the negotiations processes; appreciate a better understanding of the key issues at stake and be able to give strong support to the positions of the negotiating teams.

Not only that, but the input of the Region's major policy movers will prove invaluable as the Caribbean prepares itself for the much anticipated High Level Meeting on Climate Change with the United Nations Secretary-General on 22 September in New York, where they will seek to build the political will and momentum for the political discussions at the Copenhagen Conference.

Leading this charge is the Alliance of Small Island Developing States (AOSIS) comprising forty-three small island and low-lying coastal developing countries which is the main body representing the concerns of Small Island Developing States at the UNFCCC meetings, and as such, this Ministerial Meeting will provide for the AOSIS, further recommendations for its upcoming Consultations in New York on 21 September.

The Ministerial meeting at Bay Gardens Hotel in Saint Lucia on Tuesday will also clarify, among other issues, the Region's strategic and policy issues in the Negotiations and will examine carefully, the challenges facing the region in the negotiations process. An analytical review of the positions of developed countries such as the United States, European Union, Japan; and major developing countries such as China, India and South Africa will be done to get a feel of the synergies as well as disparities between those countries' and the Region's positions. This will give the region a distinct advantage in fine-tuning its negotiation strategies.

The Ministerial Meeting will be addressed by Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, the Hon. Stephenson King, who has lead responsibility for Sustainable Development in the Quasi-Cabinet of the CARICOM Conference of Heads of Government and the CARICOM Secretary-General, HE Edwin W Carrington.

It is expected that all stakeholders will come away from this meeting with more clarity, stronger resolve and a more unified approach to the Region's position for Copenhagen.

At COP15, Heads of State and Government from the 191 Member States of the United Nations will try to reach a new global climate change agreement to replace the 1997 Kyoto Protocol which sets targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

During the first round of the negotiations held in Bonn, Germany in June of this year, Caribbean negotiators emerged quite optimistic that based on the UNFCCC Text of the Draft Declaration for the New Agreement, significant common understanding had been built to facilitate the negotiations, when the UN Conference of Parties (COP15) meet in Copenhagen.

Since then, the Caribbean has been working assiduously to build and sustain momentum even while advancing the dialogue for consensus around the six key issues. (CARICOM Secretariat)

Many climate change costs seen avoidable

September 15th, 2009 | By Chronicle News | Filed Under [News](#)

LONDON (Reuters) - Climate change could cost some countries, including Guyana, up to 19 percent of their gross domestic product by 2030, a panel including major insurance, banking and consulting companies as well as the European Commission said yesterday.

Developing nations will be most vulnerable to the effects of climate change but a lot of their economic loss could be avoided, a report by the Economics of Climate Adaptation (ECA) Working Group said.

Together with prevention and mitigation measures, risk transfer like insurance or catastrophe bonds can play an important role by capping losses from catastrophic events, increasing willingness to invest and providing price signals to financial markets, the working group said.

The ECA working group is a partnership between reinsurance group Swiss Re, consulting firm McKinsey & Co., the Global Environment Facility, ClimateWorks, the European Commission, the Rockefeller Foundation and Standard Chartered Bank.

Current adaptation measures like sea barriers, improved drainage and building regulations could prevent 40 to 100 percent of risk to 2030, from current and future climate conditions, the working group said.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has estimated that the world will spend an extra \$36 billion to \$135 billion each year by 2030 to address the impact of climate change.

"If current development trends continue to 2030, the locations studied will lose between 1-12 percent of GDP as a result of existing climate patterns," the report said.

When future threats and the effects of economic growth are taken into account, the total potential loss rises to as much as 19 percent of GDP.

The group's research focused on vulnerable areas in northern China, Georgetown in Guyana, Maharashtra in India, Mopti in Mali, the island of Samoa, Tanzania's central region, Hull in Britain and South Florida in the United States.

The group calculated that Maharashtra alone could lose between \$370 million and \$570 million a year from drought by 2030, but climate resilience measures could reduce that by 80 percent.

Hull could suffer an annual loss of over \$50 million from flooding, storms and rising sea levels. This could be partially avoided by new engineering and policy measures, as well as insurance.

AFC says re-work National Development Strategy and combine with low carbon

September 10th, 2009 | By Stabroek News | Filed Under [News](#)

The Alliance For Change says now is the time to update the National Development Strategy and combine it with the National Competitiveness Strategy as well as the Low Carbon Development Strategy to formulate a 2010-2019 national development plan.

The AFC in a press release yesterday said "Now is the time to update that Strategy (the National Development Strategy), combine it with the National Competitiveness Strategy, work in the low-carbon elements from the LCDS shopping list, and produce a phased action plan for national development 2010-2019."

And to avoid what the party called "mistakes over the last three months in the LCDS process", the AFC proposes that a neutral forum be convened for a multi-stakeholder planning process for national development.

Action process

The AFC also suggests that a neutral secretariat should be appointed to service the forum, coordinate activities and keep the timetable, create and service a website and ensure unbiased communications with the Press and other media as well as respond to all written or recorded questions.

The party says further that it is necessary to ensure that all base data sources, maps, satellite imagery and geographic information systems are in the public domain and accessible to all stakeholders, while protecting confidentiality of genuine commercial data.

Moreover, an independent chairperson or moderator (as in the NDS process) should be appointed; and professional rapporteurs should be engaged to record all the sessions, produce and circulate true verbatim records of the discussions as well as action-point summaries.

The AFC is recommending too that technical working groups should be engaged to deal with specific issues identified in plenary sessions; and overseas expertise could be utilized if there is a lack of in-country skills and knowledge.

The Government of Norway and other donors could also be requested to provide financial aid, in the context of climate change negotiations, particularly to allow stakeholders who live outside Georgetown to be supported, the party added.

In the AFC's view, this proposed action process would not duplicate the efforts of the Guyana Forestry Commission to prepare a Readiness Preparation Plan to secure funding from the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, which involves detailed planning to reduce Guyana's current net emissions of forest carbon from poorly controlled logging and mineral mining.

The party further suggests what it called an initial list of topics that could build on the shopping list in the draft LCDS.

In that light, the AFC pointed out that building hydropower dams is itself a carbon-emitting process. "We need a formal comparison of the costs and benefits of building small dams at Amaila Falls and in the Middle Mazaruni compared with buying power from the giant dams on the Caroni River in Venezuela," the AFC said.

It noted that no political party disputes that Guyana's sea defences, drainage system and irrigation canals are in disrepair.

In that light, the AFC noted that whatever is done, the infrastructure will be overwhelmed by the rise in sea level during this century. Thermal expansion of the oceans and melting of the ice caps and glaciers make this inevitable, even if the increase in atmospheric carbon stops today.

"So we need a formal study of the short, medium and long-term costs and benefits of temporary repairs compared with costs and benefits of moving the bulk of our economy from the floodable coastal lowlands to non-floodable land further south," the AFC recommends.

Regarding interior roads, the party observed that the Intermediate Savannahs are mainly without permanent roads for the good reason that the soils are too poor and topographically unsuitable for Guyana's normal kind of irrigated agriculture.

According to the AFC, "opening the Canje Basin and expanding our interior road network would be hugely expensive, so land capability surveys are essential preliminary stages, then pre-commercial trials of ecological sustainability of agricultural production. Only after showing that production is technically worthwhile should we begin cost/benefit analyses of roading into such areas."

The continued export of unprocessed timber logs, raw gold and rough diamonds, the AFC contended, "is against long-standing national policies and effectively means we are exporting jobs and skills."

The party then queried that “if we can profitably process sea foods and some agricultural products for export, what are the real obstacles to adding value to timber and minerals? We have the excellent market surveys for agricultural products under the New Guyana Marketing Corporation; why don’t we have and act upon similar surveys for forest products and gold?”

While the draft LCDS focuses on construction projects, it pays only brief attention to investment in human capital development and to reform of institutions, the party said. It declared too that the country’s commercial banking system, indeed the whole economy, is grossly distorted by money laundering.

“Although the banks are flooded with liquidity, it is expensive to obtain a commercial loan and this cripples legitimate business expansion while Go-Invest is subject to Cabinet interference and this is a good case for reform,” the AFC concluded.

In the realm of jobs, the AFC noted that Guyana has one of the highest rates in the world for emigration of educated people – 85 per cent or more of the graduates of the University of Guyana leave the country within five years from graduation, and the party observed that this is a terrible drain which is not at all compensated by a small rate of re-migration in later years.

The AFC also noted that the three months consultation period (early June – early September) had now ended for the President’s draft Low Carbon Development Strategy.

However, the AFC said that sadly the President’s Office of Climate Change had been unable to respond to many of the technical questions posed during the hinterland consultations and urban awareness sessions where presidential or ministerial teams made their pitch for the brief shopping list of development projects.

According to the President’s statements early in this process, there will now be a revision of the LCDS in time for the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change at Copenhagen in December 2009, the AFC acknowledged.

UK renews support for Guyana’s LCDS

September 10th, 2009 | By Stabroek News | Filed Under [News](#)

The British Government has renewed its support for Guyana’s Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) through several initiatives including supporting the Programme Management Unit of the Office of the President which was set up to attract outside investment in specific low carbon sectors.

Fraser Wheeler

This was disclosed by British High Commissioner to Guyana Fraser Wheeler during a simple ceremony held yesterday at his residence in which University of Guyana (UG) lecturer Donna Ramdial was formally presented with the British Chevening Scholarship to pursue studies in Environmental Forestry in the United Kingdom.

Wheeler stated that the British authorities support the initiative as a progressive model which seeks to combine national economic development with the international effort to mitigate climate change. Recounting the efforts initiated so far by his government towards the LCDS initiative, Wheeler said that in March 2008 a function was held in London with the aim of realising methods to develop the LCDS vision of President Bharrat Jagdeo. Attendees at the forum, he stated, included a representative of the Government of Guyana, international development experts and financiers from the City of London.

Wheeler recounted that after the ideas raised at the forum were developed by the President and his advisers, the British government funded communication materials to assist the Government of Guyana to sell its ideas to other potential partners and stakeholders. He said that through the Department for International Development (DFID), Britain funded two phases of in-depth research into the LCDS by international consultants, McKinsey.

He went on to state that at the moment, Britain has made strategic interventions in the low carbon sectors. Among the initiatives undertaken as part of those interventions listed by the British High Commissioner are;

- funding of research on the potential of call centres in Guyana, which he noted produced positive results;

- support and funding for aquaculture, as well as,

- a range of support for eco-tourism, building on Britain's long-term support for Iwokrama.

Wheeler stated that the latest venture being considered by Britain as it supports the LCDS is to carry out research on Guyana's chances of becoming a world centre of excellence on research in bio-diversity. He said the British government is working closely with the European Commission (EU) and the World Bank in assisting Guyana to adapt to climate change, an example being through the strengthening of the sea wall as well as reducing flood risk from the conservancy dam through improvements to the Cunha Canal which boosts drainage from the flood-inducing East Demerara Water Conservancy.

As regards policy, Wheeler said Britain supports the concept of 'avoided de-forestation', which underlies the LCDS, in the context of that country's wider efforts on climate change, an example being British Prime Minister Gordon Brown's "bold initiative on climate change", which he stated, President Jagdeo recently supported.

In addition, Wheeler stated that the British High Commission is working collaboratively with the University of Guyana on developing a lecture series aimed at stimulating debate on the future challenges and opportunities presented by climate change in Guyana.

Regionally, Wheeler stated, through the DFID, the British government is actively providing support to the Climate Change Centre and to the Disaster Emergency Management Agency. He said such interventions include providing assistance in developing a regional strategy, support for the climate

change regional task force, an economic review of climate change impacts, disaster management implementation, such as safer buildings for the vulnerable, as well as strengthening the voice of Caricom in the run up to December's meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Britain has been a consistent supporter of Guyana's LCDS and at the last G20 Summit in London, Guyana was one of only three non-G20 countries that Prince Charles had invited to meet the leaders of the most powerful countries in the world to examine possible solutions to deforestation.

At yesterday's forum, while accepting the Chevening Scholarship, Ramdial said she was happy to be awarded the opportunity to undertake a one year Masters of Science degree in Environmental Forestry at the School of Environment and Natural Resources at Bangor University in the UK.

Wheeler stated that the opportunity afforded to Ramdial would not only be to her benefit, but also for UG and the country as a whole. He also used the opportunity to welcome back Mohammed Khan, who recently completed studies in International Conflict Analysis at the University of Kent in the UK.

Private Sector hails President's frank, open style

September 08th, 2009 | By Chronicle News | Filed Under [News](#)

President Bharrat Jagdeo and Minister Manniram Prashad with Private Sector officials Captain Gerry Gouveia, Mr. Kit Nascimento and Mr. Eddie Boyer at the recent Private Sector dinner at the Pegasus Hotel in Georgetown. (Carl Croker photo)

THE Private Sector Commission (PSC) has hailed President Bharrat Jagdeo's readiness to discuss a wide range of issues of concern to the business sector in a statement it released yesterday.

While it welcomed the media coverage given to its gala dinner on August 28 at the Pegasus Hotel at which Mr. Jagdeo was the main speaker, the association said it was disappointed that the "very frank and open exchange" between the President and his audience on matters of concern to the private sector was not reported on.

"It was, the private sector believes, an unprecedented occasion and unique in its democratic character, when a Head of State places himself completely at the disposal of the captains of industry and commerce in a dialogue which was refreshing and often revealing, conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect, deserving acknowledgement", the PSC said.

The association said that with its constituent members, including the Tourism and Hospitality Association of Guyana (THAG), the Guyana Manufacturing and Services Association (GMSA), the Forest

Products Association (FPA) and the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCl), it invited a wide cross section of the private sector to attend the dinner.

This was for them to get together in a relaxed and social atmosphere, and to provide an opportunity for the President to brief the sector on the Low Carbon Development Strategy, it said.

It reported that at the urgings of the speakers preceding the President, he was asked to broaden his address to include other national issues and to field questions and answers from the floor.

“The President readily agreed to do so. While both the print and broadcast media gave extensive coverage to much of what the President said, the PSC is disappointed that the media did not capture in its reporting, the fact of the very frank and open exchange of views between the President and his audience on matters of concern to the private sector, at which the President emphasised that nothing should be considered taboo”, the statement said.

The PSC said he responded for more than two hours to “an exceedingly wide range of questions and observations from his audience.”

President Jagdeo has been earning plaudits from several stakeholders for his open and frank approach in discussing national issues.

The latest Cabinet outreach which kicked off last month at the International Convention Centre at Liliendaal, Greater Georgetown is themed ‘Conversations on the Future’.

President Jagdeo gave the main address and then fielded questions from a cross section of society, including students, labour and business leaders, and representatives of Amerindian and women’s organizations.

At the end of the session, Mr. Jagdeo pledged that the ‘conversations’ will continue, saying these are aimed at refining the pathway for the country’s future.

He explained that the government has a clear vision of national development and the event launched was intended to help get and convey the big picture.

Chairperson of the proceedings and Presidential Adviser on Governance, Ms. Gail Teixeira, said the ‘Conversations on the Future’ are an addition to the Cabinet outreach which continues in Region Four following recent sessions in Regions Three and Six.

She said the series allows the government to share its vision and the developmental agenda with Guyanese across the country, cutting across political confines and negativism.

Guyana's draft Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), which was also addressed at intervals during that meeting, is a component of the National Development Strategy forged several years ago, Teixeira said.

President Jagdeo noted that while Guyana has progressed in several crucial sectors, too many Guyanese are still too poor and said that entrepreneurial behaviour must flourish to help build a stronger private sector.

"We need foreign investors but we need a strong indigenous private sector", he said.

"We have to commit to achieve much more and faster", he said, noting the country has to move to a second wave of development.

The Norwegians are coming...to fund Low Carbon Development?

September 08th, 2009 | By [Stabroek](#) News | Filed Under News

A delegation from Norway is expected in the country within a few weeks for discussions on Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS). This column summarizes a paper prepared by the AFC LCDS working group and seeks to pull together the issues that need to be considered if we are to implement a LCDS that is sustainable and in the long term interest of all Guyanese. A key component is that this LCDS should not be held hostage to the global climate negotiation process nor the policy decisions of any particular donor country or international financial institution. This column would not go into all the details of a development blueprint for Guyana. Indeed the LCDS needs to be put in the context of a revised National Development Strategy (NDS) for Guyana which comes out of a broad multi-stakeholder process. In such a consultative process the Guyana 21 road map for development of Guyana's infrastructure also needs to be considered. The government has not presented a comprehensive economic plan and only touts certain projects as their plan.

Minimize the role of Government:

The LCDS really needs to be seen as making explicit that as a responsible member of the global community Guyana acknowledges that as it seeks to pursue a sustainable development path it understands that such a path should take a low carbon trajectory. In critiquing the LCDS offered by the Office of the President (OP) some of the issues that need to be considered in a non pie-in-the-sky development agenda for Guyana should become clear. Such a development agenda would be a low carbon development model because that is in Guyana's and the world's best long term interest. A sustainable LCDS for Guyana needs to be driven by a governance process that is inclusive, transparent,

incorporates a lead role for private sector investment, and a government that acts as a facilitator of entrepreneurship and investment. Guyana is a nation that needs to come together and focus on creating opportunity for all its people. Historically Governments of Guyana have used the resources available to them to divide the country. This is why a comprehensive LCDS must minimize the role of government in those essential functions which only government can provide and allow the private sector, NGOs, and the wider civil society within a framework of the effective rule of law to maximize employment and economic activity.

Poor PPP track record

There are 30+ REDD schemes underway globally and in a serious deliberative process these all need to be considered within a best case development framework for Guyana. However based on the track record of the PPP government this is not going to be the case. The PPP government over the sixteen plus years that it has been in power has not shown a willingness to entertain viewpoints which differ from those it supports and proposes. Opposition to its agenda is commonly characterised as obstructionist, anti-national, subversive. In addition PPP government policy is often widely seen as designed to further a divisive agenda designed to garner votes for the PPP based on entrenching racial discord in Guyana. In summary the PPP is not known for working with other stakeholders in Guyana in a cooperative manner.

The Norwegian financial commitments to Guyana's LCDS to date that we know of are for capacity building, and training, not for major capital projects like the Amaila Falls hydro-electricity scheme or repair/strengthening of Guyana's coastal Drainage & Irrigation (D&I) works. If Norway is not committed to funding the OP-proposed LCDS on the scale envisioned therein what is the appetite of the rest of the world to get out of free rider mode and pay countries like Guyana to do what they are already doing, i.e. in Guyana's case, maintaining relatively low deforestation and forest degradation levels? A caveat on this last point is that Guyana's monitoring of activities in its rainforests is not a process which has a high level of confidence for the relevant stakeholders.

A better approach:

Guyana is going to be better off pursuing a LCDS in its own self-interest. Two immediate reasons are that Guyana is a net importer of fossil fuel and its coast line is vulnerable to sea level rise occasioned by global warming. However Guyana pursuing a LCDS in the absence of contributions/payments from the rest of the world (ROW) on the scale envisaged in the LCDS circulated by the OP depends on the quality of governance in Guyana. Transparent, inclusive, consultative governance in Guyana would lead to a framework where investment flows from all sources would be at a level which facilitates rapid sustainable development of Guyana.

The Norwegian government authorities, who at this point seem most likely ready to spend significant funds on some sort of forest preservation scheme in Guyana should not have any problems with Guyanese political and civil society groups insisting on inclusiveness and transparency with regard to the expenditure by the Guyanese authorities of any funds received from Norway to help Guyana protect its rainforest while advancing sustainable development. The Guyanese stakeholders only have to insist that the Norwegians apply the same standards to this potential funding as they do to how they invest unspent revenues from their oil and gas industry.

Another consideration that should go into the management of any funds received by Guyana for the territorial carbon in its rainforest is that a portion be paid directly to each Guyanese taxpayer. This is a suggestion made because the Guyanese rainforest does not belong to the Executive branch of the GOG. The rainforest belongs to the people of Guyana which includes the Amerindians. Thus it is only right and fair that the people should get direct benefits from their patrimony. This is not an exotic arrangement. These types of payments already happen in other national and sub national jurisdictions. Such an arrangement for direct payments to the Guyanese taxpayers would indicate a radical break from the democratic centrist governing style of the current government as well as expressing confidence in the ability of the Guyanese taxpayer to make rational choices within the context of the sustainable development framework which the Government of Guyana should be fostering.

Conclusion:

Guyana needs to retool its LCDS to fit within a national consensus on a development strategy constructed with the involvement of all stakeholders, which is represented by the National Development Strategy (NDS), and incorporating additional input such as the Guyana framework. In this way Guyanese would make a real contribution to reducing global carbon emissions rather than just serving as a tool for third party symbolism on global warming. Look for further discussions on this topic in future columns as we get the attention of those funding the current consultations.

Until next time, “Roop”

Send comments to peter.ramsaroop@gmail.com

Manufactures Association Endorses LCDS

September 07th, 2009 | By Chronicle News | Filed Under [News](#)

(OFFICE OF CLIMATE CHANGE) -- The Guyana Manufacturers and Services Association Ltd (GMSA) has endorsed the draft Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), saying it shows an overall appreciation of the development thrust of the manufacturing sub sector in the forest industry.

The association, in a position paper drawn up by Mr. Rustum Bulkan, Chairman of its Wood sub-sector group, says the strategy is in accordance with the focal areas pinpointed over the years as essential for the future advancement of this sub sector.

Bulkan is also joint Managing Director of Precision Woodworking Limited with his brother Ronald, and the two in an interview also fully backed the LCDS and what it holds for Guyana’s development.

He said the strategy is “very comprehensive” and covers all aspects of the forestry sector.

“Overall, the LCDS represents a new and visionary way of approaching the social and economic development of Guyana”, he states in the paper.

He adds: "It will transform the way in which business is done and the approach to economic activities. It is felt that the impact on the economy and society will be one that is indeed transformational: in terms of creating more gainful employment, income generation, social services production, and livelihoods, whilst maintaining the forest resources."

Ronald noted that climate change is accepted as one of the current defining issues and said it's a credit to the Guyana Government and President Bharrat Jagdeo that they have recognized that this offers an opportunity for countries like Guyana.

He noted that enforcement of regulations will be critical for confirming to sustainable forest management (SFM) practices and what Guyana is seeking is a trade for its services in the carbon capture market and not a handout.

The position paper notes that one of Guyana's most valuable assets is its forest resources that cover almost 80% of its land surface and says the contribution to Guyana's economy can be significantly improved if key sectors are strengthened along a low carbon growth path.

The draft LCDS, it says, outlines an approach that addresses both the mitigation and adaptation aspects of climate change, adding that the identification of low carbon economic opportunities potentially offers significant benefits to the manufacturing sub sector in the form of a cheaper and more reliable source of power (hydro), improvements in the information and communication technology and infrastructure in critical areas targeted for development.

"Specifically, the draft LCDS recognizes the importance of moving up the lumber value chain and has outlined key requirements of this proposal...The LCDS recognizes that globally, the export of secondary processed wood products is high and the prices that are gained are significantly higher than that for primary products", it states.

It adds that the LCDS shows good foresight in identifying that new investment in processing activities would facilitate even greater production of higher value wood products. "These would meet international standards for export and would bring new capabilities in waste minimization and recovery, as well as establish important market linkages to enhance export value of processed products."

CRITICAL QUESTION

It says that accompanying such investments will be the critical question of training in industrial wood-machining techniques which will create a larger pool of skilled persons, thereby benefitting the entire sector.

It points out that the LCDS includes a clear emphasis on SFM a@

LCDS to be plugged at World Climate Conference

September 2, 2009 | By [KNews](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

Guyana is to be represented at the high-level segment of the World Climate Conference at the Geneva International Conference Centre (GICC) in Geneva, Switzerland, tomorrow and Thursday. The Conference is organised by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) of the United Nations. Minister of Agriculture, Robert Persaud, will deliver an address to the conference as well as co-chair one of the high-level plenary sessions with Mr Paavo Vayrynen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development of Finland. Scores of Heads of State and hundreds of Government Ministers are expected to participate in the Conference which is anticipated to attract the attendance of more than 2,000 participants. It is expected that Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) and its potential impact on the global climate change agenda will feature prominently.

Under the theme of "Climate prediction and information for decision-making," the World Climate Conference (WCC) will bring together Heads of State and Government, and Ministers and Heads of UN and other international organisations as well as climate scientists, world experts in the provision and

CLINTON PRAISE

August 30th, 2009 | By Chronicle News | Filed Under [News](#)

In her recent letter to President Jagdeo, Clinton said: "As you rightly note, forests represent an important opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase sustainable development. Your Low Carbon Development Strategy establishes a path to achieving those twin goals for Guyana."

She also commended Guyana for its participation in the World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), adding: "We look forward to your progress under this facility, and see this as another example of how Guyana is becoming a leader on climate change."

Guyana is leading a group of 37 countries around the world that stand to benefit from the FCPF, a Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) administered by the World Bank, according to the Bank's Guyana Country Representative, Mr. Giorgio Valentini.

The participation in the FCPF is an initiative of the Guyana Government, following President Jagdeo's approach to the international community for Guyana to get compensation from its forest value to future carbon markets.

As this is an initiative driven and owned by Guyana, the country is also likely to be the first to benefit from the FCPF's Readiness Mechanism Phase grant of US\$3.6M to help prepare the necessary environment to participate in the Carbon Finance Mechanism (or Carbon Fund) of the FCPF, Valentini told the Sunday Chronicle in an interview.

At the FCPF Participants' Committee (PC) meeting on June 16-18, 2009 in Montreux, Switzerland, the PC cleared the proposals for Guyana, Panama and Indonesia for funding under the Readiness phase (i.e. Total Grant, \$3.6M), subject to compliance with safeguards and other Bank due diligence.

The FCPF was launched at the 13th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Bali, and became operational in June 2008.

As of April 2009, 37 countries from Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America are participating in the FCPF, and 13 donors or contributors from both the public and private sectors are supporting the FCPF financially.

Valentini said the initial three-month period for consultation was a positive move by the government, and that it appears to follow a good consultation framework that includes good documentation of the activities and information through, amongst others, the LCDS's website.

"The consultation process, compared to other countries, is much better (and) more informed...it could be improved like everything else."

Guyana has also earned praise from Britain's Prince Charles' Rainforests Project for its leadership and its model of how tropical forests might be conserved.

WIDER SUPPORT

Looking towards the September 22 summit, Mr. Shyam Nokta, Chairman of the National Climate Change Committee, said it is aimed at "engaging world leaders in interactive dialogue on climate change as we move towards Copenhagen."

"Guyana continues to garner support nationally and internationally for its climate change thrust, and we are building on that support for the Copenhagen conference," Nokta said.

Guyana, he said, is looking to build on the work it has done during the just-ended three months of intensive national consultations and continuing awareness programmes on the LCDS and its advocacy on the issue of forests as part of the solution to the climate change agenda.

And, ahead of the September 22 summit, President Jagdeo, current Chairman of the 15-member Caribbean Community (CARICOM), is to meet St Lucia Prime Minister, Stephenson King on that island to refine the region's position on climate change.

Mr. King has lead responsibility in CARICOM for climate change.

Guyana wins more climate change recognition

August 30th, 2009 | By Chronicle News | Filed Under [News](#)

HIGH PROFILE: Guyana's President Bharrat Jagdeo and U.S. President Barack Obama at the Summit of the Americas in Trinidad earlier this year.

GUYANA'S leadership role in climate change is gaining more international recognition, and the momentum is building with President Bharrat Jagdeo's participation in high-level meetings next month.

The country's standing was further buoyed last week with United States Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton hailing the work by Mr. Jagdeo and the country to combat climate change.

"I appreciate all of the work that you and your country are doing to combat climate change," she told the President in a letter.

Mr. Jagdeo is due to attend an all-day summit on climate change in New York for Heads of State and Government on September 22, organised by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

This will be a day before the opening of the general debate of the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly.

The summit is being convened by Mr. Ban -- who has deemed 2009 the 'Year of Climate Change' -- ahead of the UN conference in the Danish capital of Copenhagen, during which countries will seek to agree on a successor pact to the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions, whose commitment period ends in 2012.

September's high-level summit is a time for political leaders "to be forced into the crunch issues" of climate change, namely financing for adaptation and mitigation strategies, Connie Hedegaard, Minister for Climate and Energy of Denmark, recently told a news conference in New York.

Ban must ensure that the summit sends a "very clear and strong signal" to negotiators aiming to reach a new UN climate change deal in Copenhagen this December, the Danish minister said.

The meeting is the "last chance" for political leaders to push for unity in Copenhagen, thus setting the cue for negotiators in December, she added.

The summit follows one held on September 24, 2007, when a group of countries, including Guyana, which share about half of the world's tropical rainforests urged measures to combat climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

President Jagdeo, Mr. Shyam Nokta, Chairman of the National Climate Committee, and Environmental Adviser, Mr. Navin Chandarpal were at that summit. Other leaders were from Brazil, Cameroon, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Gabon, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and Peru, and they adopted a joint statement on their shared concerns.

They resolved “to enhance cooperation among countries blessed with a wealth of tropical rainforests.”

President Jagdeo welcomed the initiative by Ban to promote dialogue and mobilise support at the highest political level for action on climate change, noting that Guyana’s vast, intact forest resources represent a critical asset base for global climate change mitigation.

Addressing the meeting, he called for urgent change to the “current perverse arrangement, which provides a disincentive for forest conservation and protection.”

He said the global agenda also needed to consider opportunity costs and develop financial models to provide adequate compensation and incentives for maintaining standing forests, through conservation and sustainable use.

At the 2007 summit, the countries pledged to promote sustained economic growth, sustainable development, and eradication of poverty while intensifying collective efforts for the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

Understanding the LCDS A GINA Feature Part Two

August 29th, 2009 | By Chronicle News | Filed Under [News](#)

Guyana has over 15 million hectares of pristine rainforests that can be committed to the climate change fight.

How can Guyana help fight climate change?

Trees and plants are critical factors in stabilizing climate. They help remove heat-trapping carbon dioxide gas from the air by storing it in their leaves, trunk and, roots and also in the soil.

However when trees and plants are destroyed, this stored carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere, where it contributes to global warming and climate change. In fact, deforestation and land use change contribute approximately 20 to 25 percent of the carbon emissions that cause climate change.

Every year, 20 million hectares of rainforest (an area the size of England, Wales and Scotland combined) are cut down, releasing millions of tons of carbon emissions into the atmosphere.

Guyana has over 15 million hectares of near pristine rainforests, which if left standing, can contribute significantly to removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing it.

Dedicating Guyana's forests to fighting climate change – what would it cost?

Guyana's pristine forests are its most valuable asset. The majority of the 15 million hectares is suitable for timber extraction. Forest lands can also be used for post-harvest agriculture, and significant mineral deposits also exist below its surface.

The value that can be gained from this asset if it is exploited has been estimated at US\$580M (\$116B) per annum.

Guyana's 2009 National Budget was \$128.9B, therefore, exploiting Guyana's forests can add significantly to the National Budget, which would benefit all Guyanese.

However, while exploiting its forests is the economically rational step for Guyana, it would have significant negative consequences for the world. The deforestation that would accompany this development path would reduce the critical environmental services that Guyana's forests provide to the world – such as bio-diversity, water regulation and carbon sequestration. Do we destroy the forest to get development revenue? Do we preserve the forest and forego development?

It is to overcome this catch-22 situation that the Low-Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) was developed.

The LCDS

Guyana can raise funds for development by cutting down its forests but doing that would exacerbate climate change.

Government believes that Guyana can protect and maintain its forests in the effort to reduce global carbon emissions, and at the same time, attract resources for the country to grow and develop. In order to do this effectively in the long-term, Guyana needs a clear vision and a plan as to how to get there. This vision and plan is called the Low-Carbon Development Strategy that encapsulates three main components:

1. Investment in low carbon economic infrastructure – This will include the development of hydropower to reduce reliance on petroleum-based fuels, the upgrading of our sea defences to protect against current and future impacts of sea level rise, improved roads, drainage and irrigation to unused, non-

forested lands such as the Canje River lands and the intermediate savannahs, and improved hi-tech telecommunication facilities to generate development of low-carbon businesses such as call centers.

2. Investment and employment in low carbon economic sectors – This will target investment in commercial production of fruits and vegetables, particularly in non-forested areas such as the intermediate savannahs; aquaculture and the export of fresh and frozen seafood; sustainable forestry utilizing the high internationally accepted standards of sustainable yield harvesting; and wood processing to produce high value products.

3. Investment in communities and human capital – This will ensure that the indigenous and other hinterland communities, as well as other citizens including the urban poor, will have expanded access to improved social services such as health, education/vocational training, low carbon electricity and clean water, and employment that does not threaten the sustainability of the forest resources.

Funding for the LCDS

Inside a hydro-power plant - one of the investment opportunities that would be pursued under the LCDS.

The service that Guyana's standing forests provide, while valuable, does not earn the country any revenue.

Guyana, along with other forest countries, is working within the United Nations Climate Change Convention to create a new global agreement to allow the sale of forest carbon credits.

The current climate change agreement which was signed in 1997, the Kyoto Protocol, does not offer any incentives for avoided deforestation and forest degradation. However, this Protocol ends in 2012 and a new agreement is expected in Copenhagen in December.

Under the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) initiative, Guyana has been working assiduously to ensure that avoided deforestation is included in this new agreement, which will lead to the establishment of a forest carbon trading market from which the country can generate funds for leaving its forests standing.

However, this would not come into place until 2012 or after. Between now and 2012, Guyana and Norway are working to demonstrate how this strategy can work. This can serve as an example for other countries to follow.

When the forest carbon market is fully functional, it is expected that large companies would be injecting finances into the emissions trading schemes.

In the initial phase, it can be expected that financing would be bilateral and fund based, and in the full REDD phase, payments would be made through the forest carbon market.

Benefits for Guyanese

Guyana is working within the United National Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to develop a market from forest carbon credits.

The revenue that comes from carbon credits is expected to exceed what Guyana currently derives from logging and other extractive uses of the forest. Such increased revenue can be used for providing better hospitals and health care, schools, and education standards. Electricity from hydro-power (the Amaila Falls project) will be much cheaper to consumers, and will allow for more industries, jobs and an overall better quality of life for all.

The anticipated revenue will also allow Government to improve the sea defences and drainage and irrigation systems and build better roads to new areas of agriculture production such as the intermediate savannahs and the Rupununi area and will ensure greater food security.

The investment in agriculture will focus on the development of the fruits and vegetables sector, aquaculture, the export of fresh and frozen seafood, and other low-carbon agriculture alternatives.

Investment will also be made to upgrade Guyana's information communication technology infrastructure to spawn industries in e-business, software development, call centre facilities and data management, which would provide high-paying jobs for thousands of young Guyanese. (GINA)

Developing human capacity a crucial issue

August 23rd, 2009 | By [Stabroek](#) News | Filed Under [News](#)

—Dr Watkins

Developing human capacity was highlighted as a crucial issue as two conservation organizations began the first of a three-part public discussion series on Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS). Building capacity at the individual, organizational and institutional level is critical, said Dr Graham Watkins of the Karanambu Trust. He recommended that capacity building be inserted into the strategy while noting that currently the LCDS needs a lot of work in terms of implementation. Another critical factor identified by presenters and participants was the need for education, particularly for youths on the LCDS.

Thursday's forum at the Pegasus Hotel was focused on building human capacity to respond to and support a low carbon economy and representatives of several organizations as well as Head of the

Presidential Secretariat, Dr Roger Luncheon made presentations. It was organized by Conservation International and the Iwokrama International Centre in collaboration with the government.

Dr Luncheon in his presentation said that certain mindsets must be changed. He noted that a big issue is funding for the implementation of the strategy.

He asserted that a low carbon economy is all about re-ordering the economy, improving capacity to develop new thinking, financing to implement the results of the new thinking and marketing products of the new thinking. "The low carbon development strategy is the answer to what we face from climate change," said Dr Luncheon.

Several representatives of organizations also made presentations while participants were allowed an opportunity to raise issues and make contributions. Vincent Henry, Principal of the Bina Hill Institute in the Rupununi, while relating an encounter, asserted that without education the LCDS will fail.

He highlighted too the issue of large-scale farming in the Rupununi, recommending that this not be done. He alluded to the large-scale use of chemicals and noted that he had visited a large rice farm in Brazil and it only had five workers as everything was done by machinery. Such farms here would not benefit the local people, he argued.

The issue of getting youths involved so as to instil in them the importance of the environment was also highlighted, while many praised the strategy.

The second forum will be held tomorrow at the Regency Hotel

LCDS and mining in Guyana

August 23, 2009 | By [KNews](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

Despite the many fears that miners have expressed about the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), it will not adversely affect the mining industry.

As a matter of fact, should President Bharrat Jagdeo succeed at Copenhagen come December, then the money the country will receive will actually benefit the mining community, given that most of the complaints from the miners such as inferior roads and huge duties on equipment, could be addressed.

President Bharrat Jagdeo during consultations with miners on the LCDS had acknowledged the importance of mining in Guyana.

He committed that nothing will be done to affect the development prospects of the people or harm the interests of the mining sector.

"The LCDS is not a bio-diversity protection or environmental strategy but a developmental one," the President said.

According to the Head of State, the impact of mining is limited compared to the size of the forest. But he observed in the future some of the methods (used in mining) would have to be changed whether or not there is the LCDS.

This was reiterated by Commissioner of the GGMC, William Woolford, at a recent press briefing when asked about the impact of LCDS on mining in Guyana.

According to Woolford, the LCDS will enhance the mining industry.

"It will only make us sharper and better at what we do," Woolford said. He is of the opinion that the

LCDS is a process which will allow all in the mining industry to stop and think of others.

Woolford made it clear that the LCDS is not in place to stop mining, but to ensure mining activities are carried out in accordance with the existing regulations. He further stated that the regulations in place are sufficient to satisfy international standards.

Under the LCDS, Guyana will receive increased payments from partners (starting with Norway, but the scale of funding to re-orient the economy onto a low carbon path will require the participation of other global partners) to align all land-use policies with the LCDS most importantly, forestry and mining policies among others.

Under the LCDS there is still the sustainable use of Guyana's forest which brings into play post-harvest uses such as commercial agriculture; plantation forestry, ranching, and mining that can generate attractive ongoing cash flow after trees are cleared from the land.

Through investments in gold mining equipment, local experts suggest that Guyana could extract at least 9.2 million ounces of identified gold deposits within 30 years.

With LCDS returns it is also projected that the capital investment made by miners to extract to coveted minerals will also substantially decline in the coming years making mining a more lucrative industry.

Under the executive summary of LCDS that is being piloted by Guyana for implementation, it states that the country is reaching a new stage in its national development and over the past two decades, the country has re-established a market-led economy within a multi-party democratic system. (Andrunie Harris)

Conversations on the Future' kick off

August 23, 2009 | By [Guyana Chronicle](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

THE latest Cabinet outreach kicked off yesterday at the Guyana International Conference Centre at Liliendaal, Greater Georgetown in an interactive three-hour session themed 'Conversations on the Future'.

President Bharrat Jagdeo gave the main address and then fielded questions from a cross section of society, including students, labour and business leaders, and representatives of Amerindian and women's organisations.

At the end of the session, Mr. Jagdeo pledged that the 'conversations' will continue, saying these are aimed at refining the pathway for the country's future.

He explained that the government has a clear vision of national development and the event launched yesterday was intended to help get and convey the big picture.

Chairperson of the proceedings and Presidential Adviser on Governance, Ms. Gail Teixeira, said the 'Conversations on the Future' are an addition to the Cabinet outreach which continues in Region Four following recent sessions in Regions Three and Six.

She said the series allows the government to share its vision and the developmental agenda with Guyanese across the country, cutting across political confines and negativism.

Guyana's draft Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), which was also addressed at intervals during yesterday's meeting, is a component of the National Development Strategy forged several years ago, Teixeira said.

President Jagdeo noted that while Guyana has progressed in several crucial sectors, many Guyanese are still too poor and said that entrepreneurial behaviour must flourish to help build a stronger private sector.

"We need foreign investors but we need a strong indigenous private sector", he said.

"We have to commit to achieve much more and faster", he said, noting the country has to move to a second wave of development.

Mr. Jagdeo referred to the road and bridge links with Brazil and plans for a deep water harbour in the Berbice River saying these are vital to further development.

He also announced that discussions are in train with an overseas company to put down a fibre optic backbone to boost the Information Technology Communications network across the country for Guyanese to buy into the growing IT services economy.

He also reiterated that plans for a hydro-power station are still on the cards and a decision from the company involved in the proposed Amalia Falls project has until the end of next month to make a decision on continuing.

The President said that in the meantime, Guyana is also negotiating with the EXIM Bank of China for a loan to build a new power grid to link electricity supply stations along the coast.

Conservation International supportive of LCDS

August 22, 2009 | By [Guyana](#) Chronicle | Filed Under [News](#)

A team from Conservation International, led by Dr David Singh, Executive Director, Guyana, South American Field Division, visited Head of State Bharrat Jagdeo yesterday at the Office of the President to express their support for Government's efforts to develop a low-carbon economy and to discuss areas where they can work together.

The other members of the Conservation International team were Lisa Famolare, Vice President – Strategic Projects, Guyana and Suriname, South American Field Division; Dr Johan Busch, Post-Doctoral Fellow on the economics of climate change and biodiversity; and Rob McNeil, International Media Director.

After the meeting, Dr Singh stressed the inter-related nature of Government efforts with that of Conservation International.

"We realise how important, at present, the whole Low-Carbon Development Strategy is and we realise that this is a very important part of the work of Conservation International as well," he stated.

"We see a strong relationship between the work we have done historically and the work we're seeing unfolding in front of us."

Conservation International and the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development have joined forces to register their input to the ongoing multi-stakeholder consultation on the Low Carbon Development Strategy. The first of a series of dialogues was held Thursday.

According to Dr Singh, the objectives of the dialogue series are:

1. To provide focused and informed contributions to support the refinement of the LCDS;
2. To support and complement Government's national consultation process on the LCDS; and
3. To contribute to a deeper understanding of the content and implications of the LCDS in specific areas.

Conservation International, which was established in 1987, seeks to build upon a strong foundation of science, partnership and field demonstration, to empower societies to responsibly and sustainably care for nature for the well-being of humanity.

It has over 900 employees and more than 30 offices around the world, and is partnered by more than 1,000 other organisations. (GINA)

LCDS to feature in Cabinet outreach – Guyana Chronicle August 21, 2009

August 21st, 2009 | By [Guyana](#) Chronicle | Filed Under [News](#)

GUYANA'S draft Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) will feature during the Region Four Cabinet outreach due to kick off tomorrow at the International Convention Centre in Liliendaal, Greater Georgetown.

The launch themed 'Conservations on the Future', will feature presentations by President Bharrat Jagdeo, Prime Minister Sam Hinds and several Cabinet ministers.

Cabinet Secretary Dr. Roger Luncheon yesterday said the launch will include interactive sessions with participants.

He noted that previous outreaches were in Regions Three and Six and said Cabinet had earlier agreed that these consultations with Guyanese at the grassroots and community level would remain a priority of the government.

He said the Region Four outreach would continue simultaneously with ongoing consultations specifically on the LCDS and focus on the coastal regions, keeping in mind that a considerable amount of consultative effort on the strategy, with the exception of the target groups, was in Regions One, Seven, Eight, Nine and Ten.

Engagements in Region Four will include community and target group meetings, civil society engagements and the use of the media, Luncheon said.

There have been widespread national consultations on the draft LCDS which the government wants to refine and table at the December United Nations summit in Copenhagen, Denmark for inclusion in a new climate change regime.

Guyana's strategy is based on avoiding deforestation and preserving its standing forests in exchange for payment for this service in the cause of climate change from the international community.

President Jagdeo has said that the current debate for countries like Guyana is about, among other key issues, getting payment for helping to save the planet by preserving standing forests.

This, he said, calls for a “serious lobbying effort” to get deforestation included in the agreement from the summit in Copenhagen.

He said Guyana and its partners also have to argue for sufficient funds to address deforestation, including adaptation, mitigation and technology transfer.

The President has stressed that Guyana is not seeking compensation from the developed world for preserving its forests but wants payment for its services to the international climate change cause through its model.

St Lucia PM for Friday visit

August 19th, 2009 | By Guyana Times | Filed Under News

St Lucian Prime Minister Stephenson King is due here on Friday to hold talks with President Bharrat Jagdeo on climate change issues, reports out of Castries said.

King is also Caricom's lead minister on the environment.

According to reports, the purpose of King's visit is to hold climate change talks with Guyanese authorities as part of the Caricom's position on the post Kyoto framework.

The St Lucian leader will meet with Head of State and Caricom Chairman President Bharrat Jagdeo and the local climate change unit on Friday. The visit follows a decision taken at the July 1-4 Caricom heads of conference summit here on climate change.

King will also participate in a mini conference on climate change at the International Conference Centre. He will also hold talks with Jagdeo on how Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy can fit into the regional climate change position to be taken to the United Nations framework convention on climate change in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December.

Guyana's strategy has been cited by many Caricom leaders as a critical tool in helping to fight climate change in the region. During the 30th heads of government conference here, King called for a common position on climate change for the Caribbean.

He highlighted that reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, mitigation and adaptation, the transfer of technology and renewable energy are the areas that must be addressed at Copenhagen. Annual economic damage from climate change in Caribbean will be about US\$ 11 billion by 2080, or 11 percent of the grouping's gross domestic product.

Nearly a fifth of the losses are likely to be linked to the specific effects of sealevel rise – loss of land and damage to tourism infrastructure, housing, buildings, and other infrastructure.

A report last year said the top 10 countries, in terms of population affected, that could experience the most serious damage include Suriname, Guyana and the Bahamas.

August 18th, 2009 | By Stabroek News | Filed Under News

(This is the final piece in a 10-part series intended to look at some of the issues surrounding Guyana's bid for funds from the World Bank-administered Forest Carbon Partnership Fund (FCPF) and from Norway, and for the President's Low Carbon Development Strategy.)

By Janette Bulkan

In my last article I estimated carbon emissions due to logging and from natural decay and decomposition in Guyana's forests. These losses from forests are the equivalent of emissions from factory exhaust stacks. The losses must be assessed alongside the gains in carbon and the standing stock of carbon in the trees, if Guyana is to participate in carbon trading schemes under the rubric of REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation). REDD is one of the approaches being negotiated internationally towards a replacement for the Kyoto Protocol 1997.

| Components of the national forest carbon balance sheet | Source | National total in million tonnes of above-ground carbon on 18.5 million hectares of forest |
|---|---|--|
| Standing stock of forest carbon | | |
| 5000 MtCO ₂ e for all Guyana | GFC's R-PLAN, page 2 | 1362 MtC |
| 340 tCO ₂ e/ha = 93 tC/ha | GFC's R-PLAN, page 2 | 1720 MtC |
| Tree stems and branches | from ter Steege and FAO | |
| 408 tCO ₂ e/ha = 111 tC/ha | GFC's R-PLAN, page 2 | 2053 MtC |
| Tree stems, branches + 20% for Roots | | |
| <i>Current gross primary production</i> 12.1 tC/ha/yr | <i>My estimate as above (in article 10)</i> | 224 MtC/yr |
| <i>Normal gross primary production</i> 11.6 tC/ha/yr | <i>Excludes the unexpected forest growth of 0.45 tC/ha/yr</i> | 215 MtC/yr |
| <i>Normal net primary production – wood and leaves</i> 3.88 tC/ha/yr | <i>My estimate as above (in article 10)</i> | +72 MtC/yr |
| <i>Unexpected forest growth</i> 0.45 tC/ha/yr | RAINFOR 1998 | +8 MtC/yr |
| <i>Tree respiration</i> 7.76 tC/ha/yr | <i>My estimate as above (in article 10)</i> | -143 MtC/yr |
| <i>Note that the normal balance is zero</i> | <i>Forest in equilibrium</i> | 215 – (72 + 143) = 0 |
| <i>Normal net primary production is balanced by decomposition</i> | | 72 MtC/yr |
| Leaves and small branches | ter Steege 2001 | -65 MtC/yr |

| | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| 3.50 tC/ha/yr | ter Steege 2001 | -7 MtC/year |
| Deadwood / coarse woody debris | | |
| 0.38 tC/ha/yr | Forest in equilibrium | 72 – (65 + 7) = 0 |
| Note that the balance is zero | | |
| Deforestation | Mining (from GFC) | -3.6 MtC in 2007-8 |
| - Ditto - | Agriculture (from GFC) | -3.2 MtC in 2007-8 |
| - Ditto - | Forest roads (from GFC) | -1.4 MtC in 2007-8 |
| Degradation | Logging damage (area-based) | -3.0 MtC using GFC 2008 data* |
| - Ditto - | Logging damage (volume-based) | -0.4 to -0.7 MtC using GFC 2008 data |
| - Ditto - | Logs harvested | -0.2 MtC using GFC 2008 data |
| Loss of forest-based carbon (emissions) in 2007-8 from deforestation and degradation | *using this higher value for logging damage | -11.4 MtC |
| Net loss of forest-based carbon in 2007-8 | 11.4 MtC deforestation and degradation – 8.0 unexpected gain | -3.4 MtC |

In this

article I will summarise the forest carbon budget. It is important to recognize, which the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) does not clearly emphasise in its proposals to the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Fund, that the as-yet un-logged and un-mined rainforests of Guyana are essentially in equilibrium. Natural growth is almost exactly balanced by natural death and decay. The Japanese tree physiologist Tatu Kira, summarizing work in South East Asia in 1978, commented – "The very small net production / gross production ratio is not inherent in tropical rain forests, but is a common property of forest communities in general, in particular of mature climax forests dominated by a number of big, old trees".

Our dynamically stable forests, like those of most of the Amazon Basin, are thus unlike those forests in the Caribbean Islands which are subject to severe damage by hurricanes at irregular intervals. These recovering forests in the Islands are therefore more dynamic than our unlogged forest, in the sense of partitioning a greater proportion of carbon to creating new wood (timber) and less to respiration to maintain big old trees.

Because of the extreme infertility of most of our forest-covered hinterland soils, gross production is limited by shortage of soil nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus. Our standing biomass (and thus the standing stock of forest carbon) is much less than in forests on more fertile soils, including most of the Amazon Basin. This makes our forests much less likely to be convertible to financially-profitable ecologically-sustainable agriculture than in neighbouring Brazil.

Gross and net primary forest production

There does not seem to have been research on gross and net primary production of tropical rain forest in Guyana as there has been in Africa and Asia. I have therefore used the ratio from the Japanese studies in South East Asia of net primary production = 1/3 of gross primary production. That is, 2/3 of the carbon absorbed by the forest through photosynthesis (article 2 in this series) soon returns back to the atmosphere as carbon dioxide from respiration. Gross primary production is estimated at 12.1 tonnes of carbon per hectare per year (tC/ha/yr), normal net primary production (leaves and wood) as 3.9 tC/ha/yr and respiration loss of carbon as 7.8 tC/ha/yr, together with the 0.45 tC/ha/yr of "unexpected gain" in wood which I mentioned in article 7 of this series.

The normal net primary production (3.88 tC/ha/yr) can be partitioned into 3.50 tC/ha/yr of leaves and 0.38 tC/ha/yr of normal growth of branches and stem wood.

The reader may wonder at this point how the forest accumulates its standing stock of carbon, if gain and loss are almost exactly balanced in mature climax rainforest. The answer is that over perhaps 99 per cent of the forest the wood does accumulate slowly year by year (trees get bigger) but natural mortality occurs over about 1 per cent of the forest annually, mostly by the death of single trees, and the whole of the in-wood carbon of that 1 per cent is lost rapidly back to the atmosphere through natural decay and decomposition.

I now provide a tabular summary of the estimates made in articles 7-10 in this series. A plus in the last column means carbon gain, a minus in the last column means carbon loss (emission):

It is obvious that these are very rough estimates, and the GFC has laid out a scheme for greatly improving our knowledge, in the R-PLAN proposed to the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Fund. However, collecting that information from scratch will be a lengthy process and would require a government dedication to forestry field work and data analysis not seen since the 1960s during the FAO-assisted Forest Industries Development Surveys. In the meantime, Guyana needs some figures to put on the negotiating tables for carbon trading and for the 15th Conference of Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Copenhagen in December 2009.

At this point, it is worth noting the differences in orders of magnitude. Although we take in 224 MtC annually through forest photosynthesis, the trees promptly respire 143 MtC back to the atmosphere. What is controllable, and negotiable, is the 11.4 MtC emitted as a result of deforestation and degradation

Review of the LCDS Conclusion

August 16th, 2009 | By Stabroek News | Filed Under News

Introduction

Today we conclude our review of the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) announced by President Jagdeo to the international community and now the subject of consultations taking place across

Guyana. The first two parts of this series appeared in these columns on July 19 and July 26 and both before and since that time the reading public have had the benefit of a series of letters on the strategy both supportive and critical of it. More significantly, the Stabroek News has been carrying a ten-part review by Ms Janette Bulkan in which she addresses some of the more technical questions about forest carbon and our own forests about which she is extremely knowledgeable.

Not surprisingly, Ms Bulkan has drawn from a representative of the Guyana Forestry Commission and from the Office of Climate Change set up in the Office of the President strong criticisms, some of which have crossed the line into personal attacks. Ms Bulkan's contribution has stood out for its scholarship and her responses to the criticisms have been measured and responsible. She and other critics have also been attacked for pointing out the serious weaknesses in the document and for not offering recommendations to improve it. That is regrettable for a number of reasons.

Confusion

One would expect those who are now employed as full-time specialists to recognise from the identified weaknesses the implicit recommendations for improvements. They cannot expect those from the outside to do their work for them. For all the money that is being spent on the LCDS, there seems to be no official voice and the structure of the website hardly fills the breach. As a result one is confused by the ambiguity created by the government's assurance to the domestic audience that the country will not cede our sovereignty while the highly respected international weekly Economist informs the world that the Guyana President has committed the country to ceding to the world the stewardship of the country's entire forests by outsiders.

Second, it is often easier to re-write than try to improve a document containing fundamental flaws; third, the government has refused to publish important information relevant to the strategy such as the McKinsey Study on which so much seems to hang, as well as the agreement the President signed with the Prime Minister of Norway which it seems will constitute some kind of model for developed countries to pay rainforest countries for drastically restricting forest operations. And there should be no valid reason for the government's spokespersons being unwilling to concede the very valid points being made by others, and offering a commitment that these would be incorporated into the final document. Indeed no one is sure – and that seems to extend to the members of the LCDS Steering Committee – of the process for accepting and rejecting the submissions made by others.

Extravagant assumptions

In Part One of this series we said that the success of the LCDS would not be determined in Guyana but by what happens in Copenhagen in December this year, and in the more powerful countries of the world who the strategy expects to pay Guyana as much as US\$580M per year for keeping our forests intact as our contribution to fight global warming. This column believes that there will be some money available but nothing on the transformative scale worked out by McKinsey. One has only to look at Exhibit 4 of the strategy which places the projections of expected government revenues for fruits and vegetables within a spread of US\$40M–US\$110M in 2013, an investment of US\$80M–US\$100M in 2009 and net exports of US\$250M–US\$350M after 2011. The estimate for aquaculture products seems even more exotic with a projection of 2013 government revenue of US\$150M–US\$200M, an investment of between US\$135M and US\$175M in 2009 and net exports after 2011 of US\$500M–US\$1,000M after 2011! It borders on the reckless to estimate government revenue in the form of taxation to be 30% of gross revenue, ie before expenses. Whoever did those numbers clearly does not understand our tax

culture or the range of tax allowances including export allowances that are available for particular businesses.

I fail to see why anyone would not want to question seriously these projections, and inevitably the value arrived at by McKinsey of US\$580M as the value debt owed to Guyana for keeping its forests intact. With Guyana having just 0.5% of the world's standing forests, that figure which translates to a value of \$116,000M, for all the rainforests is a huge sum indeed. No wonder even persons supportive of the LCDS do not believe that Guyana would receive anything like the sums quoted in the document. And it is that kind of doubt that makes the proposed spending sound a mere wish list. There is nothing in the strategy that indicates how the government will adjust its proposed spending programme if the sums received are less than McKinsey tells us our forests are worth intact. And does the expenditure mean that the government will be engaging in these businesses or giving to particular businesses the money which should be for the country as a whole?

Poor accounting and accountability

As a columnist who has witnessed the bad accounting, misspending and unlawful spending which has become a defining trait of the Jagdeo administration, I shudder at the thought that this or a government with similar tendencies would have control of huge sums of money extracted from international donors to spend as they please. Our under-resourced Audit Office, minimal accountability, gross wastage, unprecedented extravagance, increasing corruption, widespread non-compliance with the financial regulations and poor accountability will hardly impress the international community, and it seems unjust and immoral to ask Norway or any other country to give us money to spend in a manner which their own taxpayers would find completely unacceptable. It is ironic that the LCDS may itself be an example of the absence of accountability. The 2009 Budget had no provision for all the structures, the huge consultancy fees, the costs of travel both locally and abroad being spent on the LCDS, and one has to wonder where the money is coming from (Lotto?) and who is controlling the spending. What we need to accompany any strategy is an accountability strategy that finds favour with our population.

Another reason for doubts about the strategy is that it is not rooted in the culture and habits of this government or in any strong commitment to the environment. For nearly two decades, Asian and Chinese logging companies and local chainsaw operators have been allowed to do almost as they wished with the forests, and efforts to reverse those practices will take time to produce results. The government imports for itself and allows the importation, often duty free, of large numbers of gas-guzzling vehicles; we have unlimited numbers of ministries and departments, no policy on recycling; we tolerate mining practices that are detrimental to the environment and dangerous to some communities and practise not big, but huge government. President Jagdeo most eloquently demonstrated that lack of commitment when he threatened to continue cutting down our forests if the rich countries do not pay up. Blackmail as Plan B can hardly be described as a strategy.

What if the money does not flow?

President Jagdeo is right that we need to protect the environment, but for the wrong reasons. By protecting our forests and our environment we are also protecting our present and future interests. He is also right that we need a strategy to lift the economy from its sub-par performance of below 2% since he became President to a level where the economy provides valuable jobs so that our artisans do not go knocking at the doors of our less-endowed neighbours only to be used and humiliated. He is wrong to

believe that such a limited document can provide the blueprint for the economic growth and development of the country.

Guyana does not need a Development Strategy – it has one. Millions of real dollars was spent on versions 1 and 2 of the National Development Strategy (NDS) financed by the Carter Center during the last decade. It brought together the best that Guyana could offer in terms of time and talent and remains a sound document that could drive national development while caring for the environment. It recognised the value of the country’s forests, flora and fauna to eco-tourism which warrant mainly footnotes in the LCDS. It advocated a national forest policy with “guidelines for environmental protection and sustainable resource utilization.” President Jagdeo is half-right when he states that our forests are our most valuable resource – in truth it is the people – but the greatest value of that wealth can be derived if we sustainably manage them. It is not as the President seems to think, all or nothing. The NDS which President Jagdeo praised for its inclusiveness and comprehensiveness has languished largely unimplemented because of his own lack of commitment and attention span.

On the other hand, the LCDS is mainly a document for raising money. As such, it comes with too many shortcomings.

Low Carbon Development Strategy not about politics

August 16th, 2009 | By [Stabroek](#) News | Filed Under [News](#)

The low carbon development strategy (LCDS) is not about political mileage, President Bharrat Jagdeo has declared, saying that it maps out measures that would have to be implemented in the long run as a result of the climate change threat.

He was at the time addressing an auditorium packed with youths at the Guyana International Conference Centre during an awareness youth forum Friday on the LCDS, organized by the Office of Climate Change in conjunction with the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport.

His assertion followed a question from one of the youths of the President's Youth Award Programme, who in the light of the opposition boycott of parliament the day a motion was passed in support of the strategy, wanted the president to clear the air on the perception that the government was taking this step to gain political mileage.

In his response Jagdeo noted that whether the government and the opposition agreed on the strategy or not the main issue is climate change, "and this is a reality."

He said regardless of whatever political rambling there is, it would not be the right thing to lose sight of the real issue at hand since non-action could mean that everyone would suffer.

He added that the strategy would have to be implemented in the long run and would have to continue even if the government changes. "Politicians will have to follow once the people support this," Jagdeo assured, adding that "there is not politics in all of this."

The youths, who were attentive throughout the president's interactive presentation, seemed already knowledgeable about the strategy and the reasons behind it.

They questioned the apparent inability to control littering in the society and Jagdeo acknowledged that the problem was with enforcement although fines have been substantially increased.

He noted that this was a matter which would have to be addressed.

The president also restated that the strategy was Guyana's approach to promoting economic development in an environmentally sustainable way and a key part of the strategy involves the deployment of the country's rainforest towards addressing global climate change.

He declared too that Guyana is at a key point in national development and there is need for development options to be considered such as opening up new lands for agriculture and expanding into new economic sectors.

Jagdeo noted that the increase in global temperatures could have catastrophic effects, resulting in extreme weather patterns.

Some Amerindian Communities still unclear on LCDS

August 16, 2009 | By [KNews](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

By Gary Eleazar

"Wha' Carbon dem a talk about...me in know what de saying...all I know is that de tell me they gun pay me if I stop burn de bush fuh plant me farm."

This was the reaction according to one of the resident/farmers in the Kachikamo on the Waini River in Region One when asked about the Low Carbon Development Strategy, clearly demonstrating an unawareness of what the strategy entails.

This was even after the Consultations held with the Amerindian Toshias who later related what was learnt with their respective communities.

According to one of the Toshias interviewed, Bony Boyer, who is the leader for the Three Brothers communities (St John, Lower Waini and Katchikamo) said that he was at the consultation but needs to know more about LCDS, given that he was still unclear and was not in a position to say whether the communities under his jurisdiction should opt in.

“At this time we are on a stand still...We don’t fully understand...We need more time to make a suggestion on it.” He did point out however that there has been more consultations promised between now and December but said ever since the commitment he has not been notified of any such meeting but was still optimistic.

“They say that they would come in and do some visits and explain to the people,” said Boyer.

Under the executive summary of the Low Carbon Development Strategy that is being piloted by Guyana for implementation, it states that the country is reaching a new stage in its national development and over the past two decades, the country has re-established a market-led economy within a multi-party democratic system.

It states that the economy has been restructured to support progressively increasing levels of social sector and infrastructural investment alongside private sector-driven economic growth.

“As this first generation of reforms and infrastructural development nears completion, the Government is embarking on a new wave of reforms, coupled with further expansion of the country’s strategic economic infrastructure.”

It is also pointed out that these aim to build on previous reforms to further stimulate investment, economic growth and job creation as well as to improve security and social services, protect vulnerable sections of society, and deal with increased climate change-induced flooding.

It is also pointed out that Guyana’s pristine forests are its most valuable asset in that the majority of the 15 million hectare rainforest is suitable for timber extraction and post-harvest agriculture, and significant mineral deposits exist below its surface.

The value of this forest - known as Economic Value to the Nation or EVN - is estimated to be the equivalent of an annual annuity payment of US\$580 million.

However, generating this EVN, while economically rational for Guyana, would have significant negative consequences for the world.

Guyana’s forests suggest that, left standing, can contribute US\$40 billion to the global economy each year.

However, no trading markets exist for these environmental services and as a consequence, individuals and companies in rainforest countries face powerful incentives to deforest.

It also states that there is increasing global recognition of the fact that protecting forests is essential to the fight against climate change

Low-Carbon Development Strategy seeks to provide insights on how to stimulate the creation of a low-deforestation, low-carbon, climate-resilient economy.

President Jagdeo: 10 Years of Leadership

By Dr Randy Persaud

August 16, 2009 | By [Guyana](#) Chronicle | Filed Under [News](#)

ANYONE who puts aside the impulse of indulging in personal-attack-journalism for just a day will recognise that President Bharrat Jagdeo has made an enormous contribution to the development of this country. It is quite obvious that this is asking too much of the shock journalists and paid detractors, but thankfully, most Guyanese remain open-minded. Balanced political discourse, therefore, is still very much possible.

This is not a dissertation on President Jagdeo. That will come in time, and like most great leaders, history will absolve him. For now, the task is simply to point to some basic facts about the President's record. Let us examine some of the notable accomplishments over the past decade.

Firstly, President Jagdeo came to office at a time when opposition forces for all practical purposes had successfully hounded Janet Jagan out of office. The trick of valorised ethnic politics was employed with deadly effect against Mrs. Jagan. The young President stepped up to the plate, unafraid of the enormous challenges that lay before him. In the face of considerable uncertainty, he took the oath of office and set about the task of governing this nation that a small bunch of political operatives have sworn to destroy. We should never forget that the same bunch now singing 'We shall overcome' were indeed the ones who pelted Jimmy Carter and attacked the Elections Commission building just a few years before Jagdeo became President.

Secondly, President Jagdeo has had to navigate through some of the most extraordinary security conditions in the history of the Caribbean. No leader, I repeat, no leader in the history of the Caribbean has ever faced the concatenation of security challenges this President has had to deal with. An unusual configuration of development produced massive insecurity in the country. These include, but are not restricted to: (1) A step level increase in small-arms and light-weapons proliferation in the region. The problem was also compounded because of Guyana's vast unprotected borders, and the fact that we are next to Brazil, one of the largest small-arms proliferators in the world; (2) the effect of Plan Colombia had the effect of sealing off much of the traditional drug smuggling routes. The drug cartels had to shift away from the Panamanian region of Darien all the way through Northern Santander because a fairly tight security perimeter was established. Guyana became one small-state target, and the cartels found willing partners in this vast, forested country, something that the President would have to contend with from day one; (3) the merchants of ethnic politics decided that if they pushed Janet Jagan out of office through a politics of racialisation, why not try it with President Jagdeo. It proved to be a much steeper climb, not least because the Guyanese people liked the young President. We know what happened after that. For those of you who do not, I urge you to read the writings of my friend, Frederick Kissoon. Kissoon has thoroughly documented developments in Buxton and what happened after the jail break.

The point should not be lost here. President Jagdeo, very early in his tenure, faced a determined enemy that knew no limits. These challenges to the security of Guyana would make governing any other country in the Caribbean, perhaps with the exception of Haiti (and Grenada for a short period), child's play.

Thirdly, since Jagdeo's tenure, Guyana had continued to make steady economic progress, and this, despite the enormous challenges facing not only the rest of the Caribbean, but even the economic superpowers of the world. Dr Prem Misir and Marissa Lowden have already provided hard statistics about economic development in Guyana. Detractors nonetheless say that you can do anything with stats. So, instead, let us just look around.

You see a modernised airport; the Berbice Bridge; a much improved Demerara River Bridge (that does not float away in pieces); a magnificent stadium situated next to a fine hotel; large housing schemes where thousands of people are laying the foundations of long-term economic security; sports facilities sprouting up all across the country; the completion of the four-lane divided highway on the East Bank; more and more street lights -- Vreed-en-Hoop to Parika is now on track, something I never thought I would see in my lifetime; traffic lights; great developments in health care, including complicated surgeries that few Guyanese ever thought would happen in Guyana in their lifetime; spanking new medical facilities in places like Linden, Diamond, Leonora, New Amsterdam; an all-weather road from Georgetown to Lethem; significant developments in sea defence and agricultural infrastructure -- including an ultra-modern sugar factory at Skeldon; measurable improvements in the lives of Amerindians who live in the interior regions. And this is just what you can see with the naked eye.

Fourthly, President Jagdeo has developed a far-reaching vision about economic and social development based on a Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS). Many commentators have attempted to knock this strategy down, but they are missing the point. They want empirical evidence of the success of the strategy, although the institutional capacities at the level of world order have not yet been put in place. Visionary leadership means having the courage to advance new ideas. President Jagdeo has gone beyond that. He has offered a new PARADIGM. The critics are rather more like old Aristotle and his followers, who, for nearly a thousand years, insisted that the earth is at the centre of the universe. You may recall Copernicus had to recant because the normal science of the day placed religious ideology ahead of science. Copernicus was eventually vindicated. Copenhagen is not the last stop in the world. The President has been rightfully recognised all over the world for his bold vision of simultaneously dealing with climate change and economic development.

Development is first and foremost about the Guyanese people. It is not just about macro-economic fundamentals, or about bridges and stadiums. The President himself will tell you about the sanctity of a people first, human security oriented development. This is why nothing moves him more than when he sees young people from all across this land moving ahead. This came through just recently, when the President addressed one hundred and twenty-two students graduating from overseas institutions at the National Cultural Centre. The students were urged to be bold in vision; to put aside the daily clatter and din of partisan politics; to serve with distinction, knowing that their efforts will not only advance their own careers, but also the greater good of this country. He called on them to serve, knowing that their efforts will help heal the sick, educate the children, support the elderly, nurture the infirm, build the roads and bridges, increase our food production and, above all, give our children the hope to keep on striving.

This President recognises that, indeed, a mind is a terrible thing to waste.

No single article can do justice to the accomplishments of President Jagdeo. It must also be noted that the President himself has set an ambitious set of goals for himself and his administration. He is not content to sit around and worry about his legacy. Rather, he goes to work every day, working late into the night to deliver to this country. He is of the conviction that leadership goes beyond big declarations

and grand ideological narratives. He is convinced that leadership is not about speeches, squares, and monuments. Rather, leadership is, above all, about vision and hard work.

The President is hard at work as I write this article. His work is not yet fully done. And of course, he has years more to go.

(This is the ninth in a 10-part series intended to look at some of the issues surrounding Guyana's bid for funds from the World Bank-administered Forest Carbon Partnership Fund (FCPF) and from Norway, and for the President's Low Carbon Development Strategy.)

August 15th, 2009 | By Stabroek News | Filed Under News

By Janette Bulkan

In my last article I examined the losses of carbon from mining, agriculture and roads in Guyana's forests. These losses from forests are the equivalent of emissions from factory exhaust stacks. The losses must be assessed alongside the gains in carbon and the standing stock of carbon in the trees, if Guyana is to participate in carbon trading schemes under the rubric of REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation). REDD is one of the approaches being negotiated internationally towards a replacement for the Kyoto Protocol 1997.

In this article I will discuss estimation of carbon emissions due to logging. Logging damage is forest degradation, including biomass and carbon density change, rather than deforestation because the forest biomass can usually recover from logging damage, unless the damage is severe. Estimation of biomass/carbon loss says nothing about degradation due to damage to species biodiversity or forest structure.

The forests of Guyana contain 1000 or more species of woody plants, almost all of them trees. Because of traditional market preferences, a near-absence of conventional marketing of technically adequate timbers, and a Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) which does not insist that loggers follow best international practices, only around 60 of this 1000 are commercialized and only a half-dozen are really favoured. Consequently, harvesting in the natural forest is highly selective. Some of the most preferred timbers grow in small areas of particular combinations of soil type, topography and water availability.

These areas – known as “reefs” – are especially liable to be over-harvested because the GFC does not insist on observance of its own between-tree distance rule: that there should be 10 metres between stumps of felled trees. This distance rule has a sound basis in research by the Tropenbos-Guyana programme in the 1990s.

Hence in the forest where GFC supervision is poor we see intensive and highly damaging harvesting in reefs, and considerable areas where the preferred timbers do not grow and no harvesting has been done, and areas of harvesting of scattered trees. This patchiness greatly complicates estimation of damage from logging and hence of carbon emissions. Here I give a range of estimates.

Area-based estimate of carbon emissions from logging damage

For this estimate I turn again to the biomass study by Hans ter Steege for Iwokrama in 2001. By reference to the experimental studies of the Tropenbos-Guyana programme at Pibiri near Mabura, he summarized average extraction rates as 1.5-2.5 tonnes of carbon per hectare (tC/ha) but rising to 35-50 tC/ha in reefs. In the reduced impact logging studies by Tropenbos, the conventional (uncontrolled) logging damage was 1.5 times the amount of timber extracted. So here I am using 2 tC/ha extracted x 1.5 damage factor = 3 tC/ha mortally damaged on average. This may be too low, because one figure for Barama is 5.5 tC/ha of mortal damage but there associated with a higher intensity of timber extraction. I multiply this 3 tC/ha by the areas of annual harvests.

Long-term (15-25 years) Timber Sales Agreements (TSAs) covered 4.2 million hectares (Mha) in 2008 (GFC data), thus an annual coupe of 170,000 ha/year for a 25-year licence period. This does not take account of areas inoperable because of being too steep or too swampy because the GFC does not provide such data. What is in the public domain, from the summaries of FSC certification evaluations for Barama, shows great variation between compartments of forest. Barama’s current compartment 4 is considered to be 92 per cent operable, but compartments 1-3 were on average only 33 per cent operable.

This would mean a degradation emission from logging damage in TSAs of 170,000 ha x 3tC/ha = 0.5 million tonnes of carbon (MtC).

Short-term (2-year) State Forest Permissions (SFPs) and SFP conversions areas (intended for conversion at some time to long-term TSAs but GFC has not progressed in the conversion) covered 1.6 Mha in 2008 (GFC data), thus an annual coupe of 823,000 ha/year for a 2-year licence period. Again neglecting operability factors because of non-disclosure by the GFC, I estimate a degradation emission from logging damage in SFPs of 823,000 ha x 3tC/ha = 2.5 MtC.

Volume-based estimate of carbon emissions from logging damage

Another way of estimating carbon emissions is based on the volumes of logs extracted. As recorded by the GFC for 2008, 275,000 cubic metres (m³) were harvested as logs and 67,000 m³ as chainsawn lumber (the equivalent of 223,000 m³ of logs at 30 per cent conversion from log to lumber), a total harvest of 498,000 m³ of roundwood equivalent volume and thus 249,257 tC in 2008 (2 m³ of biomass = 1 tonne of carbon is a reasonable approximation for the dense timbers of Guyana). This time, I test three estimates of logging damage as ratios to volume of logs extracted:

From ter Steege (2001), 1.5 damaged : 1 extracted, so 249,257 tC x 1.5 = 0.4 MtC.

From a study by Laporte et al. (2007) in the Congo Basin, 8.5 damaged : 3 extracted, so 249,257 tC x

$8.5/3 = 0.7 \text{ MtC}$.

From studies by the Edinburgh Centre for Tropical Forestry for Barama in the 1990s, 3 damaged : 1 extracted, so $249,257 \text{ tC} \times 3 = 0.7 \text{ MtC}$.

Clearly there is a great difference between the area-based (3 MtC) and volume-based (0.4 – 0.7 MtC) estimates of logging damage. This may be attributed to loggers harvesting much less than half of the area of their SFPs in each of their 2-year concessions. It is one of the lines of evidence which suggest that the SFP system is being incorrectly operated by the GFC, which is allocating too many SFPs and too large areas per SFP for systematic salvage cutting. According to the 1993 GFC policy on logging concessions the SFPs are intended for small-scale and low-capital operators. Surveys during 1999-2002 showed that the majority of the SFPs were too degraded from years of uncontrolled logging, or from naturally low stocking of good timber trees. These areas should be systematically salvaged and then placed under long-term protection for natural recovery. The GFC's failure to take appropriate action from these conclusive surveys frustrates the small-scale operators and degrades the forests still further. Here is a clear opportunity for reducing forest carbon emissions.

Carbon emissions from timber extracted

The carbon balance sheet also requires that the extracted timber be accounted, as the longevity of the timber in use cannot be estimated. This is reasonable because the recovery rate in fixed sawmills in Guyana is poor, and at least half of each log is likely to be burned or discarded as waste at the mill. So those emissions are derived as above from the declared volumes harvested, = 0.2 MtC.

Carbon emissions from natural decay
and decomposition in the forest

Again we return to ter Steege's forest on loam soil in his study for Iwokrama in 2001. 3.5 tC/ha/yr of leaves and twigs and small branches fall, decay and are naturally re-cycled within a year. Standing deadwood and fallen tree boles and large branches (collectively known as coarse woody debris) amount to 7.5 tC/ha and decay over a period of about 20 years. About half of this coarse woody debris decomposes back into carbon dioxide and returned to the atmosphere, while the other half is incorporated into soil organic matter. However, over a period of perhaps 65 years, that organic matter itself decomposes and returns carbon dioxide to the air. As this is a continuous process, and as the International Panel on Climate Change advises against trying to factor soil respiration and soil organic matter dynamics into carbon balance estimates, we can treat that coarse woody debris as emitting 0.4 tC/ha/yr (7.5 tC/ha divided by 20 years). Applying this figure to the 18.5 Mha of forests gives an annual rate of 6.9 MtC.

In my next article I will summarise my estimates for our forest-based above-ground carbon from articles 7, 8 and 9 in this series.

Awareness critical in climate fight – UG’s Paulette Bynoe

August 15th, 2009 | By [Guyana Times](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

Public awareness in the fight against climate change cannot be ignored, and the role of the media is integral to this. Media has to play a role in educating persons to change their attitudes and as a result, their actions, said Dr Paulette Bynoe, who was the main presenter at a consultation held Friday at the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre.

She said that education is the cornerstone of sustain able development, adding that both formal and informal education are essential in changing attitudes.

She further added that the media should do more by informing readers about the role they can play, instead of just giving the bad news of climate change. She said that it is important for people to

understand the science of climate change. This is important if they have to understand the details of Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy and lend their full support to it.

Dr. Bynoe stressed that there must be collaboration and focus among the various agencies, and she advised that persons should think "local" while acting "global" to solve climate change, since whatever they do will impact the world. She said that local institutions have to be strengthened so that they would be able to carry out the requisite research, and there must be effective collaboration to avoid duplication among agencies.

Dr. Bynoe said that the focus on adaptation and mitigation of climate change must be based on reliable and balanced information.

She said that the University of Guyana must play a key role in taking the message, and this must not be left just to the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences (SEES) but all faculties of the institution. She believes that just like the way television can transmit negative images and information to young people, the same medium can be used to educate on the importance of issues surrounding climate change. Dr. Bynoe was disappointed that many persons surveyed during studies in formulating the strategy expressed a reluctance to devote a part of their personal income to the fight against climate change. She said that these same persons expressed concern about the causes and effects of climate change.

Dr. Bynoe is the author of a Draft Public Education Strategy for Climate Change as one of the enabling activities in preparation of Guyana's Second National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The Ministry of Agriculture, on behalf of the Government of Guyana, entered into an agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/ Global Environment Facility (GEF) on June 10, 2007 for the enabling activity to be performed. This activity is the public education, information and capacity building component, through which an analysis of regional and international policy information on climate change, a survey of the level of awareness of climate change issues, an assessment of capacity building in the area of climate change, and the preparation of a public education strategy on climate change.

The development of a public education strategy for climate change was recommended for the long term promotion of climate change awareness and education.

The implementation strategy identifies the target group, objectives, activities and time frame for medium and long term.

The study said that households can be one target group whereby the objectives would be to disseminate climate change information through feature articles, bill boards, signs, television documentaries, live radio and television programmes, radio announcements, jingles and through the observance of international days such as Earth Day and World Environment Day.

Facilitators identified for this sub-component are the National Climate Committee, the World Wildlife Fund, Iwokrama and the local media association.

According to the strategy, young children and youth will be targeted through in fusion and integration of climate change issues in the existing curriculum using pilot subjects initially - for example, Integrated Science, Geography, Social Studies, Agricultural Science and English. In addition, teachers and teacher trainers will be targeted through curriculum audits and development of training curricula/ teacher

manuals for colleges, with a view to training and retraining teachers so that they can deliver environmental education at the nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

The strategy envisages targeting of policy and decision makers through short training programmes, research and partnership demonstration programmes so as to promote an understanding of climate change among them.

Consumers, religious groups and indigenous people will also be targeted through workshops on the causes and consequences of climate change and how they can take further action towards mitigation and adaptation.

Jagdeo raps with youths on LCDS

August 15th, 2009 | By [Guyana Times](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

President Bharrat Jagdeo sought more understanding of the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) when he met youths on Friday as part of a countrywide awareness campaign on the government's latest economic development plan.

In an interactive session at the Guyana International Conference Centre targeting youths between the ages of 16 and 24 years, the president outlined the strategy and provided clarifications on particular aspects of the LCDS, while employing the use of teaching aids.

Questions and answers

Among the questions fielded was one on the future of the LCDS should Guyana fail to secure funds for its standing forest - a question that may well be on the minds of many Guyanese.

In response the president noted that the strategy was not based wholly on Guyana acquiring the projected income of some US\$ 580 million annually, so whether or not Guyana gets forests included in the Copenhagen Agreement, it would be pursuing the LCDS. " We still have to fix our sea defences because we're going to have global warming; we still have to build the hydropower because we need cheaper, more reliable power for private sector development and for our people; we need more fibre optic cables, we need to tackle ICT and if you note, we're working on these already."

Another youth wanted to know how the Guyanese public could see the LCDS as a national strategy from which everyone could benefit and not as a PPP/ C plan, given the existing political situation. To this, the president replied that climate change was a reality, and its possible effects on all Guyanese must always be kept in mind.

It's not whether you're PPP or PNC, it doesn't matter; everybody is going to suffer the consequences. So we all need to ensure that in the political wrangling, which from time to time takes place, we don't lose sight of the things affecting our people, and this is why I feel we can have differences, but we have to work together on many issues where our people's well being is affected ..." He added that the majority of any money to be realised from Guyana's proposal would not happen until after 2012 when the new climate deal is put in place, and it was not impossible that there could be change in government given that there will be general elections in 2011.

Jagdeo stated that it is his government's intention to take the strategy to the people, and once the people are behind the strategy, the politicians will have to follow.

" In fact people should be writing their political leaders across the spectrum, from all the parties, and say ' we want you to get involved at the national level because this is our future because if you don't get involved now, everyone may be affected', " he suggested.

One young participant was curious about Guyana's pursuit of oil while preaching a low carbon growth path, asking if the country should not be going pushing biofuels instead.

In responding, the president affirmed that biofuels would figure in the development strategy since oil production is likely to run into problems.

" If we start producing oil we will not close off the oil fields; but oil in future will face a lot of problems. We may have a tax on oil, and we would have to export that and probably pay the taxes, one based on consumption globally. But we're not excluding biofuels from part of our strategy because the infrastructure that we build will make the production of biofuels more feasible." Jagdeo told the youths that the strategy was a plan for the future which would ensure that despite the effects of climate change, Guyanese could enjoy healthy and productive lives while generating less greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

" It's a plan for your future, so that's why it was so important that all of you come here today to be part of this process, to understand at least in a basic way what we're trying to do, because we can't wait for 10 years when we have the negative consequences to then start planning." He said that securing money for the forest would ensure a faster implementation of the strategy with the assured flow of finances.

Alternative energy

The pursuit of alternative energy sources is one of the features of the LCDS, with hydropower as the

primary focus. This led to one participant asking why more focus was not being placed on other renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power.

The president said these were all being explored, and looked at, but there were several hurdles.

“ We looked at it (wind) in great detail. We have limitations in that area, severe limitations based on wind flow patterns that we recognise now; the cost, very high too. Solar... the technology has been reduced, the price of the panels is coming down so I don't doubt that in the future that will become a major contender, but right now, to deploy it right across the country and to integrate them into one national grid is beyond our capacity ...” He noted though that they have already deployed solar panels in the interior communities which do not have access to the national power grid, and they would be looking to source more to ensure that all of those residents receive some amount of power so they can at least have lights in their homes.

Hundreds of youths interact with President Jagdeo on...

REVOLUTIONARY 'LCD' STRATEGY

By Priya Nauth

August 15, 2009 | By [KNews](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

HUNDREDS of youths from across the administrative regions were yesterday given an opportunity to understand Guyana's historic and ambitious Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), as well as to recognise the important role of young people who “are the future leaders”.

The awareness session, which draws a full house of youths packed inside the Guyana International Conference Centre at Liliendaal, East Coast Demerara, was more of an interactive engagement between President Bharrat Jagdeo - who launched the strategy in June - and the participants.

Guyana's LCDS under the theme 'Transforming the Economy Whilst Combating Climate Change' has been engaged in widespread national consultations over a three months period.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is moving to forge a successor to the current Kyoto Protocol that is to be endorsed in Copenhagen and President Bharrat Jagdeo has been leading the Guyana lobby for forest preservation to be a central plank of that new convention.

The Government aims to table the plan at the December summit for inclusion in the new climate change regime.

Guyana's strategy is based on avoiding deforestation and preserving its standing forests in exchange for payment for this service in the cause of climate change from the international community.

President Jagdeo, during his interaction with the young participants, said climate change will "affect our societies, the way we live and even our prospect for prosperity" and insisted that "we have to be a part of a global solution".

Touching on the increase of green-house gases which has resulted in global warming, he alluded to the Copenhagen agreement and explained, "We are trying to get a global agreement that will commit each country in the world but particularly the countries that are the biggest polluters, the ones that are putting out the most gases, to reduce the amount of gases they put into the atmosphere and also to provide help for the poorer countries in the world in their quest to put out less gases into the atmosphere."

He said, "If we get this agreement, there are going to be some resources but whether we get this agreement at the global level or not, we are going to have to deal with the consequences of climate change and global warming.

He pointed out that the strategy is about a set of investment opportunities and also investments that will do several things including "protect us as far as it is possible in the future against the impact of climate change."

Also, President Jagdeo noted that efficient use of energy and deforestation are important.

Noting that there is a market for carbon services, he said, "Countries like ours must be paid for the carbon stored here...it is a payment for the service that we provide to the rest of the world."

He said resources generated from trading carbon services will be invested in various developments such as infrastructure, renewable energy like moving to hydropower for the generation of electricity, Information Communication Technology, education and health.

The Head of State insisted, "In the future, knowledge will be the most important asset."

Chairman of the Climate Change Unit in the Office of the President, Mr. Shyam Nokta

Maintaining that climate change is a reality, he said the LCDS can also be used to raise awareness on other things of “how we live” such as attitude and behaviour and the strategy “is about planning for the future”.

He also insisted that youth involvement is important in the process, and the strategy can only work if it is implemented in the long term and by all of the people of Guyana.

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Dr Frank Anthony reiterated that it is a vision to transform the Guyanese economy while at the same time combating climate change.

To achieve this, he said the strategy recommends “keeping our existing standing forests to provide eco-services to the world.”

In this way, instead of cutting the trees down and selling its by-products, we can keep the trees to sequestered atmospheric carbon dioxide for a fee,” he noted.

He added, “So in this way, we will be able to do what appears at first glance to be something quite contradictory - that is saving our forests while getting paid for doing so.”

The strategy is also quite revolutionary. We are one of the very few countries in the Western Hemisphere that have taken this bold step,” he observed.

But it is this type of visionary leadership that is required if we are going to stabilise and ultimately reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere,” he stated.

Participants at the awareness session for youths

Noting that it is because of the President’s advocacy, leadership and actions on mitigating climate change that the international community is now developing a “new posture” to standing forests around the world.

“The government feels that this strategy can become a model that can help guide other countries into developing their own strategies,” the minister stressed.

He said that the LCDS strategy has been widely consulted with people in communities all across Guyana and thousands of persons participated in these discussions and the positive feedback that “received is an endorsement of the correctness of this strategy”.

However, he stated, “But while there was overwhelming support from Guyanese across various communities, it was very disappointing to note that the Opposition parties choose to walk out of parliament when the motion was up for debate.”

It is sad that they have failed to take their jobs seriously. When the history of this issue is going to be written, the Hansards will show that they ‘stand down’ when they should have ‘stand up’ and be counted on this important issue of mitigating climate (change) not only for Guyana but around the world,” he stated.

Young people in our country are natural leaders; you do not shy away from responsibilities,” he noted. He noted that with many competing activities that are happening during these school holidays, the young people have been able to prioritize and participate in these discussions that “will help make the future”.

I want to thank you for your maturity, and I am sure with your unflinching support that the LCDS will pave the way for a new wave of long term sustainable economic development,” he anticipated.

He said the strategy will open a gateway of opportunities with new career paths in science, economics and national development.

I am confident that with your support and participation that this strategy will not only be a promise about what is possible but that you, the young people of our country, can ensure that it becomes an reality," he exhorted.

He said to achieve this; climate change mitigation and the LCDS in particular will have to be an integral part of the youth agenda.

He said the awareness session is just one of many such encounters that the government will have to engage young people on this important national and international issue.

The minister encouraged the young participants to take the discussion on climate change into their schools, communities and "play their part in embracing a low carbon lifestyle".

There is often a cliché that is used: youths are the leaders of tomorrow. You do not have to wait for tomorrow, you can start leading now by embracing the LCDS," he insisted.

The green gold of our forest is one of our collective riches, let us harness it sustainably so that we may all prosper in this country," minister Anthony encouraged.

Chairman of the Climate Change Unit in the Office of the President, Mr. Shyam Nokta in his presentation also outlining some of the growing impact of climate change, stated the changes that are seen around the world is due to the effects of global warming.

Clearly as a global community, we need to take action and we need to take urgent action," he maintained and this can be done through mitigation and adaptation.

Agreeing too that climate change is a reality, he said the forest is a very important aspect of how climate change is addressed underscoring the importance of the Copenhagen meeting.

Reminding that the strategy is based on a model of avoided deforestation, he said Guyana has an expectedly low deforestation rate and "that Guyana can be apart of this global solution."

"We recognise that the world is in need of a model to address this issue of deforestation and we feel that working with a number of global partners Guyana can provide this model," he said.

"We feel that Guyana, by deploying our forests to combat climate change without slowing our own national development or giving up our forests, we can play a very important part in addressing this issue of climate change," he reiterated.

Noting that there is a role for all, Nokta said, "Especially for you, the young people who are the next generation...you are the ones that have to be the agents of change and attitudes and interest."

"We all have to act soon, we have to think big and we have to work together in our own way, but as a collective, to play our part in addressing this issue of climate change," he posited.

The youths also participated in the painting of mural on climate change on the Kitty seawall in the city and digital photo demonstration.

A review of the Low Carbon Development Strategy

August 15th, 2009 | By Stabroek News | Filed Under News

(conclusion) Business Page

Conclusion

Introduction

Today we conclude our review of the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) announced by President Jagdeo to the international community and now the subject of consultations taking place across Guyana. The first two parts of this series appeared in these columns on July 19 and July 26 and both before and since that time the reading public have had the benefit of a series of letters on the strategy both supportive and critical of it. More significantly, the Stabroek News has been carrying a ten-part review by Ms Janette Bulkan in which she addresses some of the more technical questions about forest carbon and our own forests about which she is extremely knowledgeable.

Not surprisingly, Ms Bulkan has drawn from a representative of the Guyana Forestry Commission and from the Office of Climate Change set up in the Office of the President strong criticisms, some of which have crossed the line into personal attacks. Ms Bulkan's contribution has stood out for its scholarship and her responses to the criticisms have been measured and responsible. She and other critics have also been attacked for pointing out the serious weaknesses in the document and for not offering recommendations to improve it. That is regrettable for a number of reasons.

Confusion

One would expect those who are now employed as full-time specialists to recognise from the identified weaknesses the implicit recommendations for improvements. They cannot expect those from the outside to do their work for them. For all the money that is being spent on the LCDS, there seems to be no official voice and the structure of the website hardly fills the breach. As a result one is confused by the ambiguity created by the government's assurance to the domestic audience that the country will not cede our sovereignty while the highly respected international weekly Economist informs the world that the Guyana President has committed the country to ceding to the world the stewardship of the country's entire forests by outsiders.

Second, it is often easier to re-write than try to improve a document containing fundamental flaws; third, the government has refused to publish important information relevant to the strategy such as the McKinsey Study on which so much seems to hang, as well as the agreement the President signed with the Prime Minister of Norway which it seems will constitute some kind of model for developed countries to pay rainforest countries for drastically restricting forest operations. And there should be no valid reason for the government's spokespersons being unwilling to concede the very valid points being made by others, and offering a commitment that these would be incorporated into the final document. Indeed no one is sure – and that seems to extend to the members of the LCDS Steering Committee – of the process for accepting and rejecting the submissions made by others.

Extravagant assumptions

In Part One of this series we said that the success of the LCDS would not be determined in Guyana but by what happens in Copenhagen in December this year, and in the more powerful countries of the world who the strategy expects to pay Guyana as much as US\$580M per year for keeping our forests intact as our contribution to fight global warming. This column believes that there will be some money available but nothing on the transformative scale worked out by McKinsey. One has only to look at Exhibit 4 of the strategy which places the projections of expected government revenues for fruits and vegetables within a spread of US\$40M–US\$110M in 2013, an investment of US\$80M–US\$100M in 2009 and net exports of US\$250M–US\$350M after 2011. The estimate for aquaculture products seems even more exotic with a projection of 2013 government revenue of US\$150M–US\$200M, an investment of

between US\$135M and US\$175M in 2009 and net exports after 2011 of US\$500M–US\$1,000M after 2011! It borders on the reckless to estimate government revenue in the form of taxation to be 30% of gross revenue, ie before expenses. Whoever did those numbers clearly does not understand our tax culture or the range of tax allowances including export allowances that are available for particular businesses.

I fail to see why anyone would not want to question seriously these projections, and inevitably the value arrived at by McKinsey of US\$580M as the value debt owed to Guyana for keeping its forests intact. With Guyana having just 0.5% of the world's standing forests, that figure which translates to a value of \$116,000M, for all the rainforests is a huge sum indeed. No wonder even persons supportive of the LCDS do not believe that Guyana would receive anything like the sums quoted in the document. And it is that kind of doubt that makes the proposed spending sound a mere wish list. There is nothing in the strategy that indicates how the government will adjust its proposed spending programme if the sums received are less than McKinsey tells us our forests are worth intact. And does the expenditure mean that the government will be engaging in these businesses or giving to particular businesses the money which should be for the country as a whole?

Poor accounting and
accountability

As a columnist who has witnessed the bad accounting, misspending and unlawful spending which has become a defining trait of the Jagdeo administration, I shudder at the thought that this or a government with similar tendencies would have control of huge sums of money extracted from international donors to spend as they please. Our under-resourced Audit Office, minimal accountability, gross wastage, unprecedented extravagance, increasing corruption, widespread non-compliance with the financial regulations and poor accountability will hardly impress the international community, and it seems unjust and immoral to ask Norway or any other country to give us money to spend in a manner which their own taxpayers would find completely unacceptable. It is ironic that the LCDS may itself be an example of the absence of accountability. The 2009 Budget had no provision for all the structures, the huge consultancy fees, the costs of travel both locally and abroad being spent on the LCDS, and one has to wonder where the money is coming from (Lotto?) and who is controlling the spending. What we need to accompany any strategy is an accountability strategy that finds favour with our population.

Another reason for doubts about the strategy is that it is not rooted in the culture and habits of this government or in any strong commitment to the environment. For nearly two decades, Asian and Chinese logging companies and local chainsaw operators have been allowed to do almost as they wished with the forests, and efforts to reverse those practices will take time to produce results. The government imports for itself and allows the importation, often duty free, of large numbers of gas-guzzling vehicles; we have unlimited numbers of ministries and departments, no policy on recycling; we tolerate mining practices that are detrimental to the environment and dangerous to some communities and practise not big, but huge government. President Jagdeo most eloquently demonstrated that lack of commitment when he threatened to continue cutting down our forests if the rich countries do not pay up. Blackmail as Plan B can hardly be described as a strategy.

What if the money does not flow?

President Jagdeo is right that we need to protect the environment, but for the wrong reasons. By protecting our forests and our environment we are also protecting our present and future interests. He

is also right that we need a strategy to lift the economy from its sub-par performance of below 2% since he became President to a level where the economy provides valuable jobs so that our artisans do not go knocking at the doors of our less-endowed neighbours only to be used and humiliated. He is wrong to believe that such a limited document can provide the blueprint for the economic growth and development of the country.

Guyana does not need a Development Strategy – it has one. Millions of real dollars was spent on versions 1 and 2 of the National Development Strategy (NDS) financed by the Carter Center during the last decade. It brought together the best that Guyana could offer in terms of time and talent and remains a sound document that could drive national development while caring for the environment. It recognised the value of the country’s forests, flora and fauna to eco-tourism which warrant mainly footnotes in the LCDS. It advocated a national forest policy with “guidelines for environmental protection and sustainable resource utilization.” President Jagdeo is half-right when he states that our forests are our most valuable resource – in truth it is the people – but the greatest value of that wealth can be derived if we sustainably manage them. It is not as the President seems to think, all or nothing. The NDS which President Jagdeo praised for its inclusiveness and comprehensiveness has languished largely unimplemented because of his own lack of commitment and attention span. On the other hand, the LCDS is mainly a document for raising money. As such, it comes with too many shortcomings.

President, scouts interface on LCDS

By Vanessa Narine

August 15, 2009 | By [Guyana](#) Chronicle | Filed Under [News](#)

Consultations are about listening to the people and sharing ideas, and the process is a learning one for all involved.

This was the sentiment expressed by President Bharrat Jagdeo as he met with teenaged scouts from Guyana and the Caribbean here for the 14th Caribbean Jamboree.

The interaction took place at the Sophia Exhibition Centre Thursday when the Head of state discussed Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS).

"We came here to listen to you," the President asserted.

He added that while the voices of policymakers and others with vested interests in an issue are the common voices that are heard, it is important for the youth to speak and to contribute.

With that, the Head of State launched into his explanation "in a nutshell," of what the LCDS is, in an effort to enlighten the cross section of teens on transforming Guyana's economy while combating climate change.

Jagdeo pointed out that Guyana's Low Carbon Development sets out a new development path for the country that is based on deploying the forests to mitigate Global Climate Change while fostering greater economic development by investing in a low carbon development.

Scout leaders from across the Caribbean with President Bharrat Jagdeo.

The President emphasised that the world is changing and the issue at hand is a global one that has come about as a result of an increased concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

In this light, the effects have been many, foremost among which is a vast change in weather patterns.

"There is a need to slow down the polluting greenhouse gases," Jagdeo posited.

And this could be done through:

- * The reduction of fossil fuel use;
- * The exploration of alternatives to reduce fuel consumption; and
- * The reduction of deforestation.

He said, "Here in Guyana we are looking at the Low Carbon Development Strategy."

The President pointed out that 86 percent of Guyana is forested, 76 percent of which is tropical forest areas.

With the LCDS, Jagdeo explained that Guyana will be able to help with climate change and earn money which can be used for adaptation (to climate change) and for creation of opportunities for the Guyanese people.

'Your views count too', the President seemingly says to this youngster. Photos by Cullen Bess-Nelson)

As the President ended his nutshell presentation, he invited questions from the scouts, who exhibited an awareness of climate change and an interest in Guyana's steps to combat the global problem. His invitation and the eagerness of the scouts began an interesting exchange where the teens wasted no time in asking direct questions.

One of the scouts asked, "What happens if LCDS fails?"

In response, the President explained that failure is a very relative term as the development outlined for Guyana in the LCDS will still have to be done.

However, he pointed out that alternative means of financing will have to be found if the carbon development avenue falls through.

“When will the LCDS be implemented?” another scout queried.

The President pointed out that the process is an ongoing one and added that similar consultations have been held across the country.

Another teen from Trinidad and Tobago requested that the President explain the breakdown in economies that depend heavily on the oil and gas market.

The Head of State proposed the idea of diversification in other sectors, apart from the oil and gas sector.

“What will be the effect on our animals?” another asked.

The President responded that among the other positives of the LCDS, there will be a preservation of biodiversity. Besides the trees, he stated, the environment would be preserved. He posited that forests have multifunctional uses.

A scout from Guyana posed the question as to whether the LCDS would somehow impede Guyana’s progress.

To this, the President responded with a firm no.

Can Guyana feed us (The Caribbean)?” was another of the questions posed.

The President was optimistic in his response, and pointed out that this was a “big possibility of the future.” He stated that Guyana can grow a lot of food here cheaply, with the use of much less chemicals.

An enthusiastic scout made it his job to ask about the role of youths in the fight against climate change.

President Jagdeo explained that the scouts can use their network for awareness. Among other initiatives, he urged the youths to become involved in the writing of letters and getting active initiatives going.

Throughout the session, the President made it a point to ask what was the scouts’ understanding of climate change and how they viewed its effects.

One youth from the British Virgin Islands said that climate change was a “scary” concept to grasp.

Others ventured to say that measures can be taken to counteract this.

Some of the measures highlighted were adaptation through better construction and through development of sea defenses.

At the end of the interactive session, the youths concurred that they now had a clearer understanding of Guyana’s initiative to transform the economy while combating climate change.

The LCDS initiative was launched on June 8, 2009, and since then there have been 15 sub-national consultations across the country involving some 222 coastal and Amerindian communities.

A series of awareness activities are ongoing, including responding to requests for presentations by interest groups, organisations and the public at large.

August 14th, 2009 | By Stabroek News | Filed Under News

(This is the eighth in a 10-part series intended to look at some of the issues surrounding Guyana’s bid for funds from the World Bank-administered Forest Carbon Partnership Fund (FCPF) and from Norway, and for the President’s Low Carbon Development Strategy.)

By Janette Bulkan

In my last article I began to examine the losses of carbon from Guyana's forests. These losses from forests are the equivalent of emissions from factory exhaust stacks. The losses must be assessed alongside the gains in carbon and the standing stock of carbon in the trees, if Guyana is to participate in carbon trading schemes under the rubric of REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation). REDD is one of the approaches being negotiated internationally towards a replacement for the Kyoto Protocol 1997. This negotiation process should conclude with a new treaty to be signed at the 15th Conference of Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Copenhagen in December 2009.

The Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) has made provision for new assessment of emissions from forests in its proposal to the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Fund (FCPF). The version of the proposal (the R-PLAN) dated June 1, 2009, was approved along with the R-PLAN of Panama and approval pending for the more complex plan of Indonesia. I will draw attention to some inconsistencies and inaccuracies in Guyana's R-PLAN later in this series but here I will note the GFC's prudent comment, "for many carbon trading schemes, only above ground bole and crown biomass are normally considered . . . but the ultimate standards REDD will adopt are as yet unknown, and all carbon pools need to be allowed for" (pages 85 and 91 in the R-PLAN). The GFC scheme thus proposes to assess as major biomass pools "tree boles, crowns and roots, lianas and epiphytes, understory shrubs and herbaceous plants, standing and fallen deadwood, litter and soil carbon" (pages 86 and 93).

This is a huge and expensive task, but if carried out correctly would put Guyana in a sound technical position for REDD trading. What the R-PLAN does not estimate is whether the cost of this assessment, which has to be repeated at intervals although not always with the same level of detail, would be commensurate with the value of the forest carbon which would be available for trading with emitting countries or enterprises. In part 5 of this series, I commented on uncertainties about forest area, in part 6 about the carbon in the standing forest, and in part 7 I noted that we have possibly an unexpected natural accumulation or net gain of 0.45 tonnes of carbon per hectare per year (tC/ha/yr). I noted also in part 7 that the GFC could reduce fire damage by making obligatory the implementation of the Code of Practice for Timber Harvesting; it is now voluntary and so not generally observed. The GFC says that fire damage "has not been officially recorded at a given percentage level" (R-PLAN page 6).

We should now look at carbon losses (emissions in REDD terms) using the GFC's area figures quoted in the R-PLAN. The GFC gives only three sources – mining, agriculture and forest roads – but without definitions. Interpretation is further confused because the GFC very often refers to "deforestation and degradation" together, although the distinction is important. In terms of REDD and other climate change discussions, deforestation means replacement of forest by another land use with no likelihood of return to forest in the foreseeable future. Degradation means a reduction in one or more components of the forest, including biomass and carbon density change, but with the possibility of recovery.

The LCDS multistakeholder consultation steering committee agreed on June 23, 2009, that Amerindian traditional rotational agriculture, which may involve small-scale annual clearing and burning of secondary forest, is not deforestation or degradation; see <http://www.lcds.gov.gy/images/stories/Documents/minutes3.pdf>. So such areas would not come within the scope of a carbon trading scheme.

Mining

On page 100 of the R-PLAN, the GFC estimated degraded forest area from mapping in 2007-8 as 54,210 ha. Presumably this was from LANDSAT satellite imagery, and presumably this was an area affected just in that one-year period, although the R-PLAN was not specific. Of this area, mining occupied 24,428 ha and agriculture 21,903 ha. As the mining is a change in land use and as there is hardly any post-mining site restoration, it is deforestation, not degradation. For the purpose of argument, I assume that the forest cleared by mining carried the largest amount of above ground tree biomass estimated by Hans ter Steege for Iwokrama in 2001: 147 tC/ha on loam soils. This would mean a deforestation emission from mining in 2007-8 of 24428 ha x 147 tC/ha = 3.6 million tonnes of carbon (MtC).

Agriculture

Likewise, deforestation for “agriculture” would mean an emission of 21903 ha x 147 tC/ha = 3.2 MtC. Exactly what is this agriculture is not explained in the R-PLAN.

Forest roads

The balance of “degraded” area mapped in 2007-8 is 7879 ha, which presumably is the estimate for the 2626 km of forest roads, apparently assumed to have an average forest clearing width 30m; although the GFC Code of Practice for Timber Harvesting specifies a maximum width of 25m for main haul roads (section 4.1.43 on page 25, November 2002). Presumably the 30m was used for estimation as it relates to LANDSAT resolution, but the GFC is not specific. The deforestation emission from forest roads is thus 7879 ha x 147 tC/ha = 1.2 MtC. This would be an underestimate because for main haul forest roads there would be clearance also of the main roots of the felled trees, so adding 20 per cent for those main roots (as the GFC does) would mean a deforestation emission from forest roads in 2007-8 of 1.4 MtC. Although the GFC refers to the three categories above as “degradation”, they are “deforestation” by the definition used by the GFC (page 83 in the R-PLAN).

Log markets, forest camps and logging base camps

The GFC did not apparently try to estimate the deforestation in 2007-8 due to clearance of log markets, forest camps or base camps; perhaps because the resolution of the satellite imagery was not good enough. It should be noted that in the R-PLAN the GFC proposes to move to more advanced satellite imagery with higher resolution, but the GFC sensibly notes that this monitoring would be more costly. In the next article, I will continue to assess the carbon losses from Guyana’s forests, dealing with the difficult estimation of losses due to logging.

This is the seventh in a 10-part series intended to look at some of the issues surrounding Guyana’s bid for funds from the World Bank-administered Forest Carbon Partnership Fund (FCPF) and from Norway, and for the President’s Low Carbon Development Strategy.)

August 11th, 2009 | By Stabroek News | Filed Under News

By Janette Bulkan

In the last article I looked at uncertainties in the weight of carbon in the standing forest of Guyana. In this article I will look at the more difficult estimation of the gains and losses in carbon sequestered in our

forests. Apart from the obvious physical difficulties in estimating changes in biomass from one time period to the next in remote, muddy, wet forests, there are mathematical problems in estimating relatively small changes when the standing stock (or “carbon capital” in money terms) is itself not easy to estimate with accuracy or precision – accuracy being a measure of how closely we approximate to the true value, and precision being our ability to repeat measurements and obtain the same or nearly the same answer each time.

David Hammond, former director of research at Iwokrama, said “With only small quantities of nutrients to be gained through atmospheric deposition, rock weathering, fluvial deposition and biological fixation, conservation through adept internal cycling appears to be the only plausible mechanism sustaining standing forest biomass across most parts of the Guiana Shield” (Tropical Forests of the Guiana Shield: ancient forests in a modern world, 2005, page 355). In other words, with so little plant nutrients available, the scope is very limited for growing trees faster or growing more trees per hectare. Without inputs of nitrogen, phosphorus, calcium and other elements needed for plant growth, having abundant sunshine and a good supply of water does not lead to denser forest or more carbon per hectare. Experiments in other tropical rain forests have shown that they can respond positively to inorganic farm-type fertilizer applied “from the bag” but this is not financially worthwhile outside a plantation context. Simple observation shows that trees do not continue to grow in size for ever, nor do forests become denser and denser without limit. There are natural limits determined by the genetic potential of the trees and by the restricted supplies of plant nutrients and water which the tree roots can access. In a natural forest, undisturbed by human activity or natural disasters such as windstorms or accidental fires, a steady state is reached in which the natural gains in carbon fixed by photosynthesis and net of respiration are balanced by natural decay and death of trees.

A multi-country study – the Amazon Forest Inventory Network (RAINFOR) – has since the mid-1970s shown that catastrophe affects intact Amazonian forests only very rarely and apparently at very long intervals. However, rainforests which have been logged, and especially those which have been repeatedly logged at short intervals, become much drier at ground level and much more susceptible to fire damage. In Guyana, this is exemplified by the poorly managed and much burned wallaba (*Eperua falcata*) forests on the white sand soils in the Intermediate Savannas of Berbice.

Gains in forest carbon

Mostly, in intact Amazonian rainforests, trees die and decay singly or in small clumps, and annual growth balances annual death and decay. But RAINFOR now shows that Amazonian forest growth has apparently increased in the last three decades, giving us an extra 0.45 tonnes of carbon per hectare per year (tC/ha/yr). Exhaustive checks across this network have shown that this is not an artifact of measurements or calculations but a real increase found on $\frac{3}{4}$ of the study sites, including the four sample plots in Guyana which contribute to RAINFOR. The severe drought in 2005 which affected much of Amazonia caused a sharp reduction in this extra growth and a sharp increase in tree mortality, especially of the trees with lower wood density.

The Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) well recognizes the difficulties of estimating standing stocks of carbon and dynamic rates of change. In its R-PLAN proposals to the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Fund, the GFC is requesting funding for a great increase in its forest monitoring capability. This would include the establishment of 900 sample plots distributed across Guyana, to be repeatedly measured. Unfortunately, the GFC has proved incapable of taking over, using and protecting the 52

plots established by the Edinburgh Centre for Tropical Forestry on contract to Barama in the early 1990s (plots now allegedly lost because of illegal logging or mining damage) or the Pibiri observational and experimental plots at Mabura established during the University of Utrecht and Tropenbos exercises over 15 years from the mid-1980s. It is thus unclear how the GFC would cope with such a large new programme.

This is not to doubt the potential value of such a sample plot programme to evaluate forest-based carbon emissions, among many other objectives, or the technical soundness of the sample plot plan devised by consultant Denis Alder.

Apart from this unexpected natural increase in sequestered forest carbon, what carbon-stimulating activities have been undertaken by the GFC?

- ▶ afforestation (new forests where forests have not grown naturally in the past)? – No.
- ▶ reforestation (replacement of previous forest)? – No.
- ▶ silviculture (making trees grow faster, or survive longer)? – No.

Losses in forest carbon

What does the GFC do to reduce loss and wastage of carbon?

▶ increasing the wind resistance of forests? – not relevant. Guyana is south of the paths of Caribbean hurricanes.

▶ decreasing susceptibility of forests to fire? – the main way is to reduce tree damage during felling and logging and consequent piles of drying wood which could catch fire during lightning strikes or arson in the forest. The GFC's Code of Practice for Timber Harvesting (second edition, November 2002, and available on the GFC website) is not obligatory because the GFC failed to amend the Forest Regulations 1953 to make it so. Nor, in spite of Ministerial promises since December 2006 about recruiting 50-60 new Forest Rangers (see Guyana Chronicle, February 28, 2009), has there been any public evidence of improved logging practices or less wastage by concession holders and their contractors. This is not surprising as Guyana's forest taxes continue to be among the world's lowest, in spite of over 15 years of external recommendations for increases at least to cover devaluation by inflation. So the GFC, responsible for administering the State Forest on behalf of the citizens, is almost giving away the public property, including the forest carbon, free of charge; the best timbers are forest-taxed at c.US\$ 4 per cubic metre, when the CIF landed price for logs of equivalent timbers in Asia is US\$ 750 per cubic metre. In my next article I will continue to explore the carbon losses from Guyana's forests.

Climate change crusader

August 11th, 2009 | By Stabroek News | Filed Under News

Should the global financial meltdown offer a pretext for governments and businesses to scrap and or sideline environmental promises post-Kyoto, President's Jagdeo's rallying cry for tropical forest conservation could easily be reduced to a whimper.

Certainly, his recent legacy is being largely shaped-or rescued as some have argued-by his eco-activism, which thrives on an unrelenting call for stewardship of the environment, especially the tropical forest.

The Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012, a year after his presidency ends, but there remains a symbolic coincidence. International agreements to shape an ambitious and effective international response to climate change at Copenhagen later this year with a focus on the protection of standing forests spells victory for the Guyanese head of state and would be a successful addition in the replacement agreement to Kyoto. Equally, failure to reach bigger emission goals and reduction targets as well as the lack of robust commitment to the reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) mechanism translates into global environmental injury post-Kyoto, and a clear setback to Jagdeo's active crusade.

In 2006, Jagdeo stunned the international community when he offered Guyana's entire rain forest in the battle against climate change. But he outlined a plan which focused on the creation of market-based incentives in support of the proposal. He reasoned the economics of his idea saying that international donors and investors need to pay for the increasingly tangible benefits of keeping the rain forest intact. He later unveiled the country's avoided deforestation position, arguing that the REDD mechanism must back compensatory economic alternatives which, based on calculations, could be worth US\$580M per annum.

Jagdeo's pitch on deforestation was an important one and will probably rank among his more critical contributions to the debate on climate change. Deforestation is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions, and it is escalating and accelerating into the remaining areas of undisturbed forest. Guyana has roughly about 40 million acres of largely untouched rain forest. It is a portion of the remaining standing forests across the globe that is threatened in the face of millions of disappearing hectares annually.

The President has plugged his environmental campaign while emphasizing the need for sustainable development here and across the board. His ideas were not essentially new, but his aggressive and spirited approach certainly was. Indeed, it is in Guyana's interest that the administration secures a proportionate response to tropical deforestation in light of emerging carbon market as the world's main mechanism to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Admirers have lauded him as a sound voice of reason on environmental issues and one of the take-charge players on the international scene, particularly as it relates to his advocacy for compensation standing forests and the creation of a market-based mechanism. The article in Times Magazine also counts as due recognition of Jagdeo's crusade for effective solutions to the current problems facing the environment.

But critics have raised questions about whether preservation of the forest had been on Jagdeo's agenda prior to the unprecedented interest being paid to the environment, pointing to destructive timber harvesting and mining operations here that had gone unnoticed for sometime.

The questions of whether loggers and miners have been allowed to run amok here without adequate supervision has been put to Jagdeo and he has charged that Guyana has highly sustainable harvesting practices. Still, the issue remains an issue and suggestions have been made that the administration must pay greater attention to what is happening in the territories at risk.

Jagdeo has also been challenged on his perception of what the global economy deems critical.

Observers have noted that many countries simply do not value the services that forests provide when trees are kept alive, including the avoidance of greenhouse gas emissions.

But the President persists, and his aim to will global powers into acting in the interest of the environment by protecting standing forests and to an extent the developing world peaked this year with the release of Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS).

He touted the LCDS as Guyana promoting a low carbon economy saying that "we are campaigning for the rest of the world to recognise the need to pay for standing forests as a mitigation measure against climate change."

The strategy provides the broad framework of Guyana's response to climate change focusing on investments in low carbon economic infrastructure and in high-potential low-carbon sectors; expanding access to services and new economic opportunities for indigenous and forest communities and transforming the village economy. It also targets improvements in social services and economic opportunities for the wider Guyanese population and investments in climate change adaptation infrastructure.

But while Jagdeo has trumpeted the strategy as the defining framework in Guyana's contribution to the climate change debate at Copenhagen later this year questions have been raised about its proposed development path.

Observers have pointed to its formula being purely simplistic in that it projects the idea of compensation for standing forests translating into development. But the more critical questions have pointed to how the ordinary man will benefit from the monetary proceeds of the proposal.

Jagdeo has stated that protecting the environment cuts to the core of the nation's development and it is on this premise that he trumpets the LCDS, and he has pointed to proceeds being used prudently while pointing to the need for better schools and hospitals, more jobs and economic opportunities, and also to meet all the other economic and social demands of Guyana's people.

Still, observers have noted that the LCDS is not people-centred and that it ignores the value of citizens except for those in government- one writer said that it is likely to enlarge the role of government.

There have been a string of questions as it relates to the funds and whether proceeds will translate into more effective government policies including whether reduce the Valued Added Tax and introduce a more reasonable income tax etc.

And even as the LCDS consultations continue across the country there are concerns about whether Jagdeo will likely end his much touted crusade and green-light further exploitation of the country's forests given that poor countries such as Guyana often find it more valuable to cut forests down than to leave them standing.

Understanding the LCDS (Part One)

August 10, 2009 | By [Guyana](#) Chronicle | Filed Under [News](#)

A GINA Feature

The Low-Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), which seeks to find solutions to the two major challenges that the Government of Guyana must address in the future-- climate change and economic development-- was launched on June 8, 2009. Widespread debate and consultations have already occurred. This series of articles seeks to provide answers to some of the questions that Guyanese may have.

Deforestation contributes as much as 20% of greenhouse gas emissions.

What is climate change?

Climate is described as the long term average of a region's weather. Climate includes patterns of temperature, precipitation, humidity, wind and seasons. These climate patterns play a fundamental role in shaping natural eco-systems, and affect also the human economies and cultures that depend on them. In fact, because so many systems are tied to climate, a change in climate can affect many related aspects of where and how people, plants and animals live, food production, availability and use of water, and health risks. Climate change represents a change in these long-term weather patterns. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines climate change as "a change of climate which is attributable directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods".

An aerial view of part of Guyana's pristine forest.

What causes climate change?

The world's climate undergoes changes over time naturally; but over the years many scientific studies have indicated that we have experienced abnormal changes since the industrial revolution began. There is new and stronger evidence to suggest that the Earth has warmed by approximately 0.75 °C since pre-industrial times. Eleven of the last 12 years (1995-2006) rank among the twelve warmest years in the instrumental record of global surface temperature.

Ice cores taken from deep in ancient ice of Antarctica show that carbon dioxide levels are higher now than at any time in the past 650,000 years. In its 2007 report to the United Nations, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that it is more than 90 percent likely that the accelerated warming of the past 50-60 years is due to human contributions.

Industrial activity - one of the major contributors of greenhouse gases.

These contributions include increased levels of "heat-trapping" gases (a.k.a. "greenhouse gases") such as carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere. In fact, the Earth's atmosphere acts like a blanket draped around the Earth. It contains certain gases, such as carbon dioxide, which absorb heat from the sun, reducing the amount that escapes back into space. In this way, they act very much like a greenhouse which traps heat within an enclosed glass building. Without these gases, the Earth's temperature would be very much colder, and life as we know it would be impossible on the Earth.

One of the biggest ways people contribute to greenhouse gases is by burning fossil fuels. We use coal, oil, and natural gas to generate electricity, heat our homes, power our factories, and run our cars. Changing land use patterns contribute, too. Trees and other plants use carbon dioxide and release oxygen in exchange. When trees are cut down for development, agriculture, and other purposes, they are no longer available to take carbon dioxide out of the air, but release carbon dioxide as they decay or burn.

Our world in peril.

As the levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases increase, more heat is “trapped” and global temperatures rise. This then causes the climate to change.

Why is climate change a concern?

Over the past 100 years, global temperatures have risen by 0.7°C. If the world does not act, by 2050, global temperatures will rise by more than 5°C above today’s temperature. Glaciers will melt and large areas of the world will be flooded by the rising of the sea levels, while in other areas, more severe droughts will occur. Extreme weather events and changes in the natural system will also take place. Hundreds of millions of people will starve, hundreds of millions more will become displaced, diseases will spread, agriculture will collapse in many parts of the world leading to a decrease in food security, and scarcity of water and other resources will lead to conflict and war.

Combating climate change

Scientists have concluded that temperature increases of about 1.3°C above today’s global average will be virtually impossible to prevent. But if increases are limited to this amount, the worst extremes of climate change may be avoided.

There are two main ways to combat climate change. The first way is by reducing the man-made causes of climate change and is known as ‘mitigating’ climate change. The release into the atmosphere of greenhouse gases such as methane and carbon dioxide should therefore decrease. These gases are emitted by the use of fossil fuels to generate power and energy for transportation, by agricultural activity and by the destruction of tropical forests.

The world needs to emit 80% less greenhouse gases by 2050 on a 1990 baseline. Achieving these deep reductions will require today’s biggest polluters to cut emissions sharply.

The other way is by combating the effects of climate change once it is already taking place and is known as ‘adapting’ to climate change. Actions that have this aim are for example: construction and maintenance of sea walls to keep out the sea; development of hydro-power or solar power to reduce the dependence on gas and diesel and diversification of agriculture away from the low-lying coast.

Why should Guyana get involved in the climate change fight?

Even though Guyana is not among the countries, like the developed countries, that are required to decrease its greenhouse gas emissions, nonetheless, over the last century, significant changes in Guyana’s climate have been observed. Two major changes observed over the years include changes in temperature and rainfall. One key effect of climate change observed in Guyana is sea-level rise.

The country is very vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Hundreds of thousands of Guyanese live below the sea level and to the south of the East Coast of Demerara, a dense population centre; billions of gallons of water which irrigate much of our country’s productive land are held back by a 130-year old

earthen dam. Changing weather patterns mean that the physical infrastructure which offers protection against these two threats is being put under ever increasing strain.

Nobody needs to tell the citizens of Guyana that climate change is occurring: in 2005, the worst flood in the history of the country caused damage equivalent to 60% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and studies indicate that the rains were not associated with the usual weather systems affecting Guyana. Every year, flood-related damage is experienced in parts of the country. In other parts of the country, drought-like conditions are being experienced.

It is therefore evident that addressing climate change is a necessity: climate change must not be seen uniquely as an environmental issue, but must be treated in relation to the effects it has on development and economic growth, and therefore must have a fundamental role in policy decisions.

(This is the sixth in a 10-part series intended to look at some of the issues surrounding Guyana's bid for funds from the World Bank-administered Forest Carbon Partnership Fund (FCPF) and from Norway, and for the President's Low Carbon Development Strategy.)

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By Janette Bulkan

In my last article in this series I mentioned three considerable uncertainties about the areas of Guyana's forest and who administers them. Reliable knowledge about forest areas is essential in schemes for trading the carbon sequestered in forests for carbon emitted as a result of human activities. This is because the trades are formal contracts and so subject to business contract law. If Guyana sequesters less carbon or emits more carbon than the amounts for which it makes claims, then the government (or a community engaged in carbon trading) could be subject to legal action by the business partner. It may not be apparent how the 15 million hectares (Mha) of forest mentioned in connection with the President's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) relate to the 18.5 Mha generally used in the Guyana Forestry Commission's (GFC) proposals for the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Fund (FCPF). The GFC does not explain how it estimates 18.5 Mha as the national forest cover. The figure used in the National Development Strategy 1996 was 16.9 Mha and the GFC has not been planting or regenerating 1.6 Mha since then.

The LCDS subtracts an estimated 1.7 Mha of forest on titled Amerindian Village Land from the 18.5 Mha, and then subtracts 10 per cent (another 1.7 Mha) from the remainder for biodiversity and habitat conservation, leaving 15.1 Mha. This LCDS base area was valued by McKinsey for the timber harvested by destructive logging, for the minerals obtained by destructive mining, and the whole area cleared progressively over 25 years and replaced by commercial agricultural crops. The combined value of that timber, minerals and crops is McKinsey's Economic Value to the Nation, a fund from which derives the ten per cent annual annuity referred to by the President as US\$580 million. It is not clear how the President's LCDS can seek donor finance for retaining forest against an improbable destruction scenario, and simultaneously continue the destructive logging and mining which are contrary to long-standing national policies, laws and land management procedures.

Coming back to the FCPF proposal; in terms of biomass or weights of carbon, we need to know the standing stock (I drew an analogy with the stock of tins of sardines in the kitchen cupboard in my first article in this series), the annual increase through natural or assisted tree growth, and the annual loss through natural and human causes. We need all three main components because the institutional

architecture of the climate change treaty to succeed the Kyoto Protocol 1997 has not yet been fixed; this treaty to be negotiated at the 15th Conference of Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change at Copenhagen in December 2009. The GFC would be prudent, therefore, to estimate increases and decreases of carbon as well as the standing stock.

Standing stock of forest carbon

The GFC has claimed a standing stock of 5,000 million tonnes of CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent) for the 18.5 Mha of Guyana's forest cover. Using the standard conversion of 3.67 tonnes of CO₂ to 1 tonne of carbon, this means an average standing stock of 74 tonnes of carbon per hectare (tC/ha). However, this does not match the 93 tC/ha of above-ground carbon plus an assumed 20 per cent of below-ground carbon (mainly in roots), a total of 111 tC/ha which can be derived from the GFC's CO₂e figures in the R-PLAN proposal to the FCPF (page 2 of the June 01, 2009, version). It is also not clear why the GFC is adding carbon in roots, as this is more difficult to measure and monitor than carbon in standing trees. The GFC says that it is using an average derived from two sources: FAO Forestry Paper 134 "Estimating biomass and biomass change of tropical forests: a primer" by Sandra Brown in 1997, and the desk study by Hans ter Steege (ex-Tropenbos-Guyana programme) for Iwokrama in 2001. Importantly, ter Steege made estimates for the ten forest inventory zones into which Guyana was divided by the FAO Forest Industries Development Survey in the mid-1960s, excluding the Barima-Cuyuni-Kaituma mining areas, the main part of the Pakaraima Mountains and the New River triangle.

High biomass (that is, dense forests) was estimated in the northwestern quadrant of Guyana and the upper Essequibo. However, the GFC notes that the North West is where the bulk of the deforestation by mining has occurred.

| FAO forest Inventory zone | Zone location | Above-ground average tree biomass (tC/ha) |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| 3 | Lower Mazaruni-Cuyuni | 103 |
| 7 | Southern Pakaraima Mountains | 115 |
| 10 | Upper Essequibo | 109 |

Low biomass was estimated in the northeastern quadrant, the Rupununi savannas (as you would expect) and the mountainous south in the Wai Wai titled Amerindian Village Lands.

| FAO forest Inventory zone | Zone location | Above-ground tree biomass (tC/ha) |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 4 | Upper Berbice | 61 |
| 6 | Middle Essequibo | 70 |
| 9 | Rupununi / Rewa River / Wai Wai | 86 |

Note: although estimated by ter Steege, the Iwokrama report does not provide the data for the other four forest inventory zones.

The northeastern quadrant includes the intermediate savannas whose forest areas have been repeatedly harvested for wallaba (*Eperua falcata*) posts and piles, firewood and charcoal, and burned over accidentally and deliberately for many decades. The National Development Strategy (1996, chapter 18 Environmental Policy, section I.E Watersheds) said "As much as 200,000 hectares are believed to be unable to regenerate spontaneously" because of this long mis-management.

Why is this natural variation in standing stock of forest carbon important? Firstly because it reflects the variety of natural productivity due to the heterogeneity of Guyana's very ancient and infertile hinterland soils. This variety is further compounded by influence of topography and the depth of the water table on the distribution of tree species and forest types within the inventory zones. So such average data are not much help for forest management. And secondly because the forests in the titled and claimed Amerindian areas have considerably less carbon than the denser forests in the middle of Guyana. Although the titled Amerindian Village Lands were excluded from the President's draft LCDS, the Ministerial teams from the Office of the President are canvassing the Amerindian communities and arousing understandable concern though this unprecedented attention. It is not clear what any community, Amerindian or other ethnic group, would have to do or not do to fit the LCDS scenario, and which would be different from what national laws and regulations now prescribe.

In summary, the GFC is not explicit enough about the source or calculation of its various figures or which one or ones it wishes to be considered for carbon trading or as contributions towards mitigation of climate change.

In the next article I will look at uncertainties in the estimates of gains and losses of forest carbon.

Area components of the forest carbon budget

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By Janette Bulkan

(This is the fifth in a 10-part series intended to look at some of the issues surrounding Guyana's bid for funds from the World Bank-administered Forest Carbon Partnership Fund (FCPF) and from Norway, and for the President's Low Carbon Development Strategy.)

The last few articles in this series have covered some of the international processes for carbon trading in the context of managing climate change. The processes range from the tightly regulated Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) to Brazil's Amazon Fund. The CDM rules, devised essentially for industrial contexts where assessment and monitoring is relatively simple, have been almost insurmountable barriers for forest situations. Carbon trading with forests being managed to provide additional sequestration of carbon has been more successful under the voluntary schemes, because rules are less demanding and more flexible. Guyana could have participated in voluntary projects from some years ago. At one time it appeared that Iwokrama might become involved but low potential for extra carbon sequestration, above that provided by natural forest growth, plus the lack of baseline data, discouraged the traders.

Brazil's Amazon Fund is a voluntary scheme for Avoided Deforestation (AD) outside the scope of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), whereby donors can compensate communities which have lived by cutting and burning trees at the forest frontier, farming for a year or two and then moving on as the forest frontier recedes.

The Fund would pay these farmers to change to a different livelihood, not based on annual forest burning. The Fund has no explicit link to changes in carbon stocks. This situation is not comparable with the rotational agriculture of the Amerindians in southern Guyana, where farming takes place in the

secondary forest on the edge of the savanna. Here the farmers return to the same patches after a fallow period of several years but do not generally fell primary forest.

The Amazon Fund is not the same as Brazil's REDD proposal of February 2007 which does involve assessment of emissions from deforestation, during a reference period (historical) and during the crediting period. REDD is the acronym for Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation, one of several approaches to be negotiated at the 15th Conference of Parties of the UNFCCC at Copenhagen in December 2009.

All the schemes, even Brazil's Avoided Deforestation (AD), require countries to assess their standing stocks and their losses of forest. In its present state of development, Brazil's AD seems to require only measures of forest area, not carbon content. With high resolution satellite-based sensors, detection of recent clearance of tropical rainforest is not difficult, even if the area is covered by cloud. In spite of having frequent cloud cover, Guyana has (or had) images from aerial photographs dating back to 1950 and since 1972 it has had satellite-based imagery, of which Landsat is the best known, with cloud-penetrating radar more recently.

National forest area

The Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) has estimated the national forest cover in versions of proposals made to the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Fund (FCPF). The GFC has given four estimates so far, related to our total surface area (land and water) of 21.5 million hectares (Mha), of which 19.7 million ha are on land –

75 per cent of 21.5 Mha land = 16.1Mha of forest (Quick Assessment Paper for FCPF, revised May 2009, page 4);

80 per cent of land = c.16 Mha of forest (R-PLAN for FCPF, component 4, revised June 1, 2009, page 56);

83.7 per cent of 21.5 Mha land = 18.0Mha of forest (Quick Assessment Paper for FCPF, February 2009, page 4);

85 per cent of the country = 18.5 Mha of forest (R-PLAN for FCPF, all versions, page 2).

No explanation has been given by the GFC for the variety of estimates in less than six months, ranging from 16 to 18.5 Mha. Why is the uncertainty about areas important? Because that 2.5 Mha discrepancy could contain tradable carbon. President Jagdeo's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS – June 2009, footnote 8 on page 8) cautiously says "Guyana's rainforest covers an area in excess of 15 million hectares".

Who owns or administers these forests? The GFC administers the State Forest area on behalf of the citizens of Guyana. The GFC's Forest Sector Information Report for calendar year 2008, the latest data available on the GFC website, totals the State Forests as just under 13.7 Mha but the GFC claims 13.8 Mha in the R-PLANS for the FCPF, a discrepancy equivalent to a medium-sized Timber Sales Agreement logging concession of 130,000 ha.

Amerindian areas

The LCDS estimates (page 43) that forests on titled Amerindian Village Lands cover about 1.7 Mha out of the 2.8 Mha of such lands (14 per cent of Guyana's land area, LCDS page 5). There are now 97 communities with title and demarcated lands, leaving 42 communities still without title out of the current total of 139 communities (Minister of Amerindian Affairs Pauline Sukhai in SN, December 09 2008). That is an increase of 11 Amerindian communities since the 128 recorded by the Amerindian Lands Commission during 1966-69. Successive post-independence governments of Guyana have not yet

complied with the legal obligation in the independence agreement with the UK to provide title to the communities for the lands which they occupied and used at the moment of independence; there are still 128-97 = 31 communities to be titled. How does this lack of official tenure affect the position of these communities in relation to the LCDS?

And what about the extensions to titled Amerindian Village Lands, requests made for extra land for cultivation because of demographic increases? While some of these have been granted, others have not. How do these latter communities stand in relation to the LCDS?

Why is the uncertainty important, about the numbers of Amerindian communities and areas of land claimed by or titled to Amerindian communities? Not only because of the quantification for the Economic Value to the Nation in the LCDS; the McKinsey calculations used in the LCDS excluded titled Amerindian lands, but what about the claimed lands?

Perhaps more important is the ownership of the carbon in the forests. While the Mining Act 1989 (no.20 of 1989) is clear that Amerindians have no intrinsic rights to sub-surface minerals, on titled Amerindian Village Lands the communities own the forests and thus the trees and thus the carbon in the trees.

It would thus be quite legal for any one or several or all titled communities to negotiate voluntary carbon sequestration agreements with carbon emitters, as happens in several tropical countries. Brazil and Indonesia positively encourage communities to participate in such trading. Why not Guyana? The architecture of REDD is still under discussion in the UNFCCC context, and a diversity of trials and pilot projects is encouraged.

There is indeed the precedent of Iwokrama negotiating with Canopy Capital for “Measuring and then placing a value in the market place on eco-services of Iwokrama to humanity such as rainfall and biodiversity; [and] Using income from the ecosystem services to help make Iwokrama financially independent of institutional donors by 2010 in accordance with the IIC Business Plan and Iwokrama’s research obligation” (<http://canopycapital.co.uk/about/index.html>).

If there are 18.5 Mha of forest in Guyana, 13.8 Mha in State Forest and 1.7 Mha in Amerindian Village Lands, who owns or administers the balance of 3.0 Mha?

In the next article, I will look at the volume components of the forest carbon budget for Guyana.

LCDS sub-national consultations completed within 222 communities

August 7th, 2009 | By Stabroek News | Filed Under News

The scheduled sub-national consultations on the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) have been completed, the LCDS Multi-Stakeholder Steering Committee said on Wednesday.

Since the launch of the LCDS on June 8, there have been 15 sub-national consultations across the country at which 222 communities, coastal and Amerindian, were present and 2,939 persons attended, a press release stated.

The consultations were part of the broader national consultation and awareness process which followed the launch of the LCDS on June 8 this year.

The Multi-Stakeholder Steering Committee, which is chaired by President Jagdeo, has been meeting weekly. The committee, the release noted, is broad-based and includes representatives from government, youth, women, the private sector, indigenous NGOs, conservation NGOs, forestry, mining, and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

In response to a request from the Government of Guyana to the Government of Norway for an international monitoring team to assist with the process, IIED was selected to provide oversight for the LCDS, including monitoring of the consultations and other public dissemination and to provide advice for a free, open and transparent procedure, the release stated.

It said further that IIED has since provided a conceptual process framework as a guide which has been accepted by the Steering Committee. The national consultations and awareness process is being implemented in accordance with this framework and is available on the LCDS website.

The full record and report of the discussions and responses at the launch of the LCDS, the sub-national consultations and awareness sessions are presented to the Steering Committee and uploaded to the LCDS website, www.lcds.gov.gy, and are available for public scrutiny and comments.

According to the release, these reports are comprehensive and provide not only questions, comments and suggestions but also responses from the consultation teams.

At each of the LCDS consultation meetings, the consultation team was drawn from representatives from government, Prime Minister Sam Hinds, Ministers Robert Persaud, Dr. Ashni Singh, Dr. Bheri Ramsaran, Dr. Jennifer Westford, Pauline Sukhai, Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett and Jennifer Webster, Shyam Nokta, Andrew Bishop, James Singh, William Woolford, and Nigel Dharamlall; IIED (Jocelyn Dow, Vanda Radzik); TAAMOG (Peter Persaud, Pamela Mendonca); NADF (Romel Simon, Ashton Simon); and David James. In addition, personnel from the Office of Climate Change were also present and performed the functions of rapporteurs. Other members of the Multi-Stakeholder Steering Committee also participated in the consultations.

Meanwhile, a series of awareness activities are ongoing, including responding to requests for presentations by interest groups, organizations and the public at large.

And in order to give effect to the Steering Committee's commitment to transparency, accuracy and timely feedback, the release added, all persons who may have queries, views, advice and any other input on the LCDS, apart from making these public through the numerous available communication channels, are urged to make use of the LCDS website.

Persons who wish to comment on the draft LCDS may also make contact by mail, telephone or email as follows:

Office of Climate Change

Office of the President

Shiv Chanderpaul Drive

Georgetown

Tel. 223 5205 or 223 5231

Email: info@lcds.gov.gy
www.lcds.gov.gy

Low carbon consultations in Region 10 draws second largest crowd

August 7th, 2009 | By Stabroek News | Filed Under News

A Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) consultation which engaged residents from Ituni, Kwakwani and its environs on Wednesday attracted the second largest attendance of the four sessions held jointly by the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) and the Forest Products Association (FPA), bettered only by the one held in Georgetown.

The consultation was held in the small, remote community of Ituni, most of whose residents depend on forestry activities for a living, the Government Information Agency (GINA) reported.

From the launch of the LCDS on June 8, government has sought to foster national awareness of the tenets of the LCDS and sub-national consultations were held in all the hinterland areas and some coastal locations.

According to GINA, the strategy has received widespread support from those who have come to understand what this visionary approach to economic development and climate change seeks to achieve.

Meanwhile, having received its legal character on Tuesday with passage of a motion on it in the National Assembly, the draft LCDS will be amended, taking into account significant contributions secured from stakeholders, and the final position paper will be prepared to be advanced at the critical Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark in December this year.

Assistant Commissioner of Forests, Gavin Agard, in his presentation, explained that the LCDS is Guyana's approach to propel economic development, and at the same time, positively respond to the changing global climate system.

Agard discussed the concepts of climate change and global warming, pointing out Guyana's vulnerability to the effects of the constantly changing climatic reality and the timeliness of such a response, GINA reported.

He stressed the importance of mitigation and adaptation as the two appropriate responses in the face of pending global catastrophe resulting from peculiar manifestations of climate change.

In support of Agard's presentation, Senior Vice President of the FPA, Khellawan, spoke of the necessity to sensitize stakeholders, especially those who operate directly within the framework of forestry. He noted that the forest from which many earn their living is the most important resource in the fight against climate change because of the significant percentage of above-ground terrestrial carbon absorbed by the forest.

And the fact that forest degradation and deforestation contribute a significantly high percentage of global carbon emissions, justifies government's focus on the forest.

The awareness session, GINA noted, was interactive with many suggestions registered and questions fielded and answered. Participants were assured that their concerns will be registered with the Office of Climate Change, and both the GFC and FPA pledged to assist and support stakeholders in their quest to improve conditions.

Among other key figures in attendance were President of the FPA, Hilbertus Cort and President of the Ituni Small Loggers' Association (ISLA), Richard James, GINA added.

GFC, EPA engage Region 10 stakeholders, residents in LCDS consultation – August 6, 2009

August 6th, 2009 | By [Guyana Times](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

Efforts to create critical awareness among citizens of Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) through the collaborative engagement of residents from Ituni, Kwakwani and surrounding environs by the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) and the Forest Products Association (FPA) earlier Wednesday were successful.

Held in the little, remote community of Ituni, most of whose residents depend on forestry activities for a living, this awareness session was a welcome initiative. It attracted the second largest attendance of the four sessions held jointly by GFC and FPA, bettered only by the one held in Georgetown, according to GINA. From the launch of the LCDS on June 8, government embarked on a trailblazing path to national awareness of the tenets of the LCDS. Consultations were held in all the hinterland areas and some coastal locations. The strategy has received widespread support from those who have come to understand what this visionary approach to economic development and climate change seeks to achieve.

Having received its legal character Tuesday with its passage in the National Assembly, the draft LCDS will be amended, taking into account significant contributions secured from stakeholders, and the final position paper will be prepared to be advanced at the critical Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark in December of this year.

Assistant Commissioner of Forest, Gavin Agard, in his presentation, explained that the LCDS is Guyana's approach to propelling economic development, and at the same time, positively responding to the changing global climate system.

In a very pragmatic way, Agard discussed the concepts of climate change and global warming, pointing out Guyana's vulnerability to the effects of the constantly changing climatic reality and the timeliness of such a response.

He stressed the importance of mitigation and adaptation as the two appropriate resorts in the face of pending global catastrophe resulting from peculiar manifestations of climate change.

In support of Agard's presentation, Senior Vice President of the FPA, Khellawan, spoke of the necessity of sensitisation among stakeholders, especially those who operate directly within the framework of forestry. He noted that the forest from which many earn their living is the most important resource in the fight against climate change because of the significant percentage of carbon absorbed by the forest.

The fact that forest degradation and deforestation contribute a significantly high percentage of global carbon emissions, justifies the focus on the forests is justified. There is need for a transition from traditional practices to more prudent, intensive, sustainable management of forest activities.

The awareness session was indeed interactive, with many suggestions registered and questions fielded and answered.

Participants were assured that their noted concerns will be registered with the Office of Climate Change, and both the GFC and FPA pledged to assist and support stakeholders in their quest to improve conditions and commend their economic activities to compliance with set criteria.

Among other key figures in attendance were President of the FPA, Hilbertus Cort and President of the Ituni Small Loggers' Association (ISLA), Richard James. (GINA)

Opposition's absence sends direct message to Guyanese - Persaud

August 6, 2009 | By [KNews](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

By Gary Eleazar

Minister of Agriculture Robert Persaud on Tuesday during the sitting of the National Assembly told the House during the debate on his motion on the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) that the Opposition's absence was sending a direct message to the people of Guyana as to their interest in developing the country.

The Alliance For Change (AFC) had boycotted the sitting, as well as on the previous occasion when Persaud was scheduled to present the motion, but asked for its deferral. AFC Leader Raphael Trotman, while taking part in a protest demonstration, had said that while the LCDS was an important topic, worthy of discussion, the loss of Guyanese lives at this time and alleged drug links to the Government took precedence.

The People's National Congress Reform was also, as on the preceding day, on the outskirts of the Parliament Building taking part in a protest demonstration.

According to Persaud, the LCDS is about the future of Guyana, and humanity as a whole and for the opposition to boycott the debate demonstrates just how little they care about the people of Guyana. He insisted that the Government will not be derailed in their agenda.

Persaud stated that the LCDS is aimed at the economic development of Guyana as well as taking the fight to Climate Change, a phenomenon that can no longer be denied.

The motion was approved by the members in the House at the time called for Parliament to welcome the commitment to public consultations, including the parliamentary parties, to contribute to the finalization of the policy and recognize the pioneering nature of Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy.

The motion also called on the House to endorse Guyana's advocacy in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process for a new post-2012 Agreement that includes REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries), avoided deforestation and sustainable forest management, to be decided in Copenhagen, Denmark in December 2009 and support its use at international fora, including the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen.

Persaud told the House that global warming has led to sea level rise and massive irregularities in weather patterns.

"The net result is increased flooding due to marine inundation and rainfall accumulation....This in turn has led to destruction of crops and infrastructure, as well as water-borne diseases."

He informed the House, too, that forests provide a direct home to 300 million people globally, of which at least one hundred million (100M) are indigenous and another 800 million rural inhabitants live around forests and are heavily dependent on them.

The Agriculture Minister also reported to the House that tropical forests cover just six per cent of the

earth's surface yet they are home to more than half the earth's species.

He added that forest flora accounts for 25 per cent of all pharmaceutical drugs. "Properly managed forests also provide a wide range of environmental services... preserve biodiversity, cultures and traditions."

According to Persaud, the idea of avoided deforestation has long been supported by internationally renowned experts which is illustrated in documents such as the recent Stern review on climate change (2006) which calls for "large scale pilot schemes to explore effective approaches to combining national action and international support" to curb deforestation and degradation.

Persaud told the House that the Stern review further points out that deforestation is the second most important source of carbon dioxide emissions and is estimated to represent more than 18 per cent of global emissions, which is greater than that which is produced by the global transport sector.

"There is also substantial scientific evidence that demonstrates that curbing deforestation is the least costly way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, if the right policies and institutions are put in place...As a plus, any reduction in the rate of deforestation and forest degradation has the additional benefit of reducing other environmental and social problems associated with deforestation and forest degradation."

He added also that the world has accepted the fact that, "these multiple services being provided by forests are extremely vital – this has led to the widespread acceptance now that forests are more important and valuable when sustainably managed, rather than if they are over-harvested and worse, clear felled."

Efforts ongoing to translate LCDS into five Amerindian languages

August 6, 2009 | By [Guyana](#) Chronicle | Filed Under [News](#)

THE Office of Climate Change in collaboration with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs has advanced the

agenda to translate the concepts and objectives of the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) into five Amerindian languages.

Translations will be done in the Patamona, Wai Wai, Wapishana, Akawaio and Macusi languages and the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs is at present awaiting submissions of the completed translations from the various communities except the Patamona language which has already been submitted.

According to the Government Information Agency (GINA), the initiative is aimed at promoting a better understanding of the LCDS among Guyana's Amerindian people who are cited as part of the strategy's main stakeholder group.

It builds on a similar project that was funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) last year to publish dictionaries containing the languages of the various tribes and their accompanying meanings.

In April the dictionaries were presented to the Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology on Main Street for distribution to the Amerindian communities. They are "Short Dictionary of the Warao Language," "Twenty-eight lessons in Loko (Arawak)," "Arawak English Dictionary," "Short Grammar and Dictionary of the Akawio and Arekuna Language," "Short Dictionary of the Warao Language of Guyana," and Scholars Dictionary and Grammar of the Wapishana language.

The multi stakeholder committee team that was responsible for explaining the LCDS in the simplest way possible during the consultations had recognised from the inception that the language barrier would have been one of the limitations to the full comprehension of the strategy.

During the consultation sessions, GINA said one resident of Kamarang, Region Seven had pointed out that after receiving the LCDS document he was unable to analyze the graphs and statistics and thus could not understand the document further.

The campaign to spread awareness about the LCDS to the Amerindian communities commenced on June 19 at Annai and Aishalton in Region Nine and continued on July 15 at Mabaruma, Port Kaituma and Santa Rosa in Region One, Anna Regina, Region Two, Port Mourant Region Six, Kamarang and Bartica, Region Seven, Mahdia and Kato, Region Eight and Hururu, Muritaro and Linden in Region Ten.

The LCDS is an initiative of President Bharrat Jagdeo which seeks to transform Guyana into a low carbon economy providing that the proposal for compensation for forests and the environmental services which they provide to the world, is included in the Copenhagen agreement.

A study on Guyana's forests showed that the revenue gained from preservation, far outweighs the economic value to the nation and the traditional subsistence activities of the Amerindians living in the forests have done miniscule harm.

LCDS to be translated in five languages

August 6th, 2009 | By Stabroek News | Filed Under News

Translations of the concepts and objectives of the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) will be done in five Amerindian languages through the Office of Climate Change in collaboration with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, the Government Information Agency (GINA) reported.

GINA said that translations will be done in the Patamona, Wai Wai, Wapishana, Akawaio and Macusi languages and the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs is at present awaiting submissions of the completed translations from the various communities except the Patamona language which has already been submitted.

This initiative is aimed at promoting a better understanding of the LCDS among Guyana's Amerindian people who are cited as part of the strategy's main stakeholder group.

It builds on a similar project that was funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) last year to publish dictionaries containing the languages of the various tribes and their accompanying meanings. In April the dictionaries were presented to the Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology on Main Street for distribution to the Amerindian communities.

According to GINA, the multi-stakeholder committee team that was responsible for explaining the LCDS in the simplest way possible during the consultations had recognised from the inception that the language barrier would have been one of the limitations to the full comprehension of the strategy.

President reassures Amerindian leaders on LCDS

-- 'We are not museum pieces'

August 6, 2009 | By [Guyana](#) Chronicle | Filed Under [News](#)

ELECTED Amerindian leaders and senior councillors from around the country have been briefed on the draft Low Carbon Development Strategy, with President Bharrat Jagdeo stressing that there's no pressure on them to opt into the plan.

Mr. Jagdeo spent most of Thursday with the leaders and others at the International Convention Centre, Liliendaal, Greater Georgetown, as the government continued consultations on the LCDS with stakeholders and others.

The leaders were in Georgetown last week for the five-day National Toshias Council meeting organised by the Amerindian Affairs Ministry.

During the week, the President and other key officials from the Office of Climate Change met miners, labour leaders and other groups on the strategy.

The consultation process has been commended by World Bank Guyana Country Representative, Mr. Giorgio Valentini.

"The process is very well managed, well designed, very open and transparent," he said during the Toshias Council meeting.

Valentini, who was at the session with a visiting mission from the World Bank, said they have been to some of the consultations with stakeholders and found that everybody was "speaking up their minds, positive or negative."

President Jagdeo told the Amerindian leaders that issues raised in the consultations around the country are most pertinent to their communities.

He said that international organizations involved must work through the elected representatives of the indigenous peoples, adding that while non-governmental organizations are important, elected Amerindian leaders and their councils are the front line and cannot be ignored.

He stressed the true participatory nature of the process, noting that the Steering Committee on climate change meets him once weekly, and that four Amerindian organizations have been invited to sit on it.

Mr. Jagdeo also announced that a representative of the National Toshias Council will be invited to sit on the Steering Committee.

"We are trying to use our forests to assist with climate change," he stressed, noting that forests were excluded from the United Nations Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012, and that countries like Guyana are arguing that these must be included in the successor agreement to be reached in Copenhagen, Denmark in December.

Inclusion of forests in the Copenhagen agreement will add greater value to the resource, he pointed out.

The President said all Amerindian titled lands are excluded from the draft LCDS model, as well as 10 per cent of the landmass that has the largest conservation value.

He recalled that the estimated annual loss to Guyana from preserving its forests in the climate change cause is US\$580M.

NOT MUSEUM PIECES

If the international community responds to Guyana's case for payment for preserving its forests, this is additional money that can be used for national development, he explained.

But he stressed: "We are not museum pieces. We are people with dreams."

"What we are doing is a business, a trade...it's time now that the world pays us for this service."

Reiterating that Guyana's offer is not charity, the President said this country's strategy will have to be adjusted if the expected funds do not come from the Copenhagen accord.

"We have to prepare for the post-Kyoto period," Mr. Jagdeo said, adding that accelerating the demarcation of Amerindian lands and transforming the village economy are two of his major priorities. The President also stressed that the current consultations are more about informing people, and that Amerindian communities are not required to opt in to the draft model.

"There's no pressure for you to do this in the short term," he stated.

During a sustained question-and-answer period, Mr. Jagdeo, among other issues, announced that some documents on the LCDS are being translated into five Amerindian languages so that more people can properly understand and make decisions on the strategy.

Retired Army Chief-of-Staff, Brigadier Joe Singh, CEO of Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Company, during the session also outlined plans by the company to improve its ICT services around the country, including in Amerindian communities.

He said putting down additional facilities is expensive, but the company is not looking for a return on its investment, and sees this more as part of its corporate and social responsibility.

The government, in collaboration with the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana (FITUG), held a consultative workshop at the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre on Thursday.

Mr. Carvil Duncan, President of FITUG, who chaired the session, said the decision of the organisation to become involved evolved out of the need for members to get a chance to understand and become ambassadors of the LCDS.

He said persons should ask questions, including about the importance of the LCDS, why it exists, and why is the President spending so much money and time to explain the strategy to the people.

Advisor to the President on Land and Environment, Andrew Bishop, said the LCDS is a chance to achieve a higher standard-of-living while protecting the environment.

The consultations are being undertaken in an effort to avoid forcing the LCDS on the citizens, he said.

Low carbon motion carried by house -but opposition absent

August 5th, 2009 | By Stabroek News | Filed Under News

With only government MPs – who lamented the opposition’s absence – in attendance, the National Assembly yesterday approved a motion on the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) which “welcomes the commitment to public consultations including the parliamentary parties to the finalization of the strategy”.

To the sound of faint chants and a tolling bell emanating from protesters outside, Agriculture Minister Robert Persaud, who had put forward the motion, led off the debate and he chastised the parliamentary opposition for their absence. Debate on the motion had been postponed twice.

“Recognizing, Mr. Speaker, once again in our history, we should not be surprised by the erratic and anti-national behaviour we see coming from the opposite side of the House, now we see being joined by the AFC”, he said.

The main opposition PNCR continued their call for an Interpol investigation into allegations that government officials had dealings with confessed drug trafficker, Roger Khan and staged a picketing exercise outside Parliament Buildings as the National Assembly was in session. It was the second such action in as many days. In light of the revelations in a US court, the AFC has also refused to participate in the sessions of the National Assembly and were absent for the second time.

However, yesterday, the government proceeded with the motion and according to Persaud; the LCDS is about the future of Guyana and “the future of humanity”. The absence of the opposition, he said, should tell the Guyanese public how those parties care about them and the future of the country. The government will not be distracted nor will its agenda be derailed and wants to build upon and deepen the consensus received from across the country, he said.

Noting that forests provide a wide range of environmental services, Persaud stated that the world has recognized that the multiple services being provided by forests are vital and this had led to the widespread acceptance that forests are more important and valuable when sustainably managed. The idea of avoided deforestation has long been supported by internationally renowned experts, he noted. The Agriculture Minister pointed out that over eighty percent of Guyana is covered with pristine forest and the allocated 46% of total state forests provide direct employment for 26,000 persons and brings in annual export revenue of US\$58M. He said that there is considerable demand for the unallocated state forest by both local and foreign investors.

However, he noted, government is committed to the sustainable utilization of forest resources. In developing, Guyana is committed to a model where economic development and combating climate change are complementary and not competing objectives, he declared. With this in mind, the LCDS was developed, he noted.

Emphasizing the consultations on the LCDS, the Minister declared that the main comments coming out of these indicate overall support for the strategy, the need to have additional time after the consultations to further discuss with communities and the need to address mining and other land use practices in community areas.

Timely and successful implementation of the Strategy, he said, is dependent on the quantity and timelines of financial incentives to Guyana. If this does not work out, Guyana has to keep its options open, he asserted. This will likely result in adjustments having to be made to the LCDS, he said.

Guyana is of the opinion that negotiations for a new climate agreement in Copenhagen in December 2009 must include incentives for avoided deforestation and standing forests, Persaud declared.

Meantime, Foreign Affairs Minister, Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett said that it is time that Guyana is paid for the environmental services it has been providing. "It is also a time for the international community to match their rhetoric with action". The involvement of Amerindians in the strategy should not be underestimated; she declared noting that they have been practising sustainable utilization for a long time and represent the majority of people living in the forested areas. "They possess a wealth of traditional knowledge that can help us in managing Guyana in terms of the LCDS", she asserted. The Minister assured that the government will continue to address land issues.

Finance Minister, Dr. Ashni Singh, hailing the LCDS as "visionary" stated that it is not about asking for donations. "The LCDS is not about development aid. The LCDS makes the point that valuable environmental services are provided by the pristine rainforest that we have...and that these environmental services, should be, indeed, must be valued and must be remunerated", he declared.

Public Works Minister Robeson Benn also spoke on the Strategy.

The motion sought to have the National Assembly welcome the commitment to public consultations including the parliamentary parties to the finalization of the strategy. The second resolve clause called for the National Assembly to recognize the pioneering nature of the LCDS. Finally, it calls upon the Assembly to endorse Guyana's advocacy in the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) process for a new post 2012 Agreement that includes REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation), avoided deforestation and sustainable forest management, to be decided in Copenhagen in December 2009 and support its use at international fora, including the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen.

The stick against deforestation

August 5, 2009 | By [KNews](#) | Filed Under [Editorial](#)

The Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) that was proposed by President Jagdeo as the overarching framework for our nation's future growth and progress is premised, as we have been at pains to point out in our interventions, on the carrot of "carbon credits" to induce countries to reduce (or in our case, not to embark on runaway) deforestation.

Under this "cap and trade" initiative favoured by the US and European governments, their corporate emitters of gases that contribute to global warming would be allowed to purchase "carbon credits" earned by companies and countries that have reduced their emissions; or, as is hoped to be agreed on in Copenhagen this December, not embark on the aforementioned deforestation.

It is universally accepted by now that deforestation is one of the largest contributors to global warming – spewing out some 17 per cent of the increase in greenhouse gases emissions.

Success in reducing deforestation – especially in the Amazon, of which our forests form a part - is seen as key to getting a grip on climate change. Recently the British energy and climate change secretary declared, "We can only get an agreement on climate change if it involves Brazil and it involves forestry. There is no solution to the question of climate change without forestry."

The problem, however, is that there is a strong and organised body of countries, environmentalists and NGOs that believes the carrot of "carbon credits" create a disincentive for the entrenched polluters in the developed countries to literally clean up their act. Deforestation, the opponents of "carbon credits" insist, is a moral question.

They favour the stick of absolute caps on pollution in the developed world based on historical data – since they were the ones that got us into the present pickle – and sanctions on those companies that engage in uncontrolled deforestation.

Even as this is being written, one of the most successful campaigns to use the stick of sanctions is unfolding in the fight against deforestation in the Amazon. The effects of this campaign obviously have serious implications for our LCDS, considering that even Brazil is not in favour of the "carrot" approach. Greenpeace, one of the most visible environmental groups, announced in June that a three-year undercover investigation in Brazil had revealed that some leading suppliers of leather and beef for products sold in Britain had obtained cattle from farms involved in illegal deforestation.

Cattle-farming is now the largest cause of new Amazonian deforestation. The findings unleashed a potent two-prong response on the transgressors: Brazil's Federal Prosecutors have filed a billion-dollar suit against the offending companies while Greenpeace has put pressure on some of the top shoe producers and supermarket chains to stop doing business with the said companies.

The results have been dramatic and swift. Some of the world's top footwear brands, including Clarks, Adidas, Nike and Timberland, have demanded an immediate moratorium on destruction of the Amazon rainforest from their leather suppliers in Brazil.

They have also insisted that suppliers introduce a stringent traceability system within a year, which will "credibly" guarantee the source of all leather. One of Brazil's – and the world's – largest cattle producers immediately agreed to comply.

The pressure is now on supermarkets to fall into line. And they will.

The use of the stick by opponents of deforestation, ironically, will not be limited to their efforts to stymie the use of "carbon credits" but will become even more powerful if the latter scheme is adopted. As outlined in the LCDS, the release of funds to countries committed to deforestation will be contingent on them adhering to specified parameters of forestry use.

These parameters will offer NGOs such as Greenpeace fertile ground for monitoring and holding the stick of sanctions against even possibly legitimate developmental initiatives. There is none as intransigent as the “morally” upright.

August 5th, 2009 | By Guyana Times | Filed Under News

The National Assembly on Tuesday adopted a Motion on the Low Carbon Development Strategy, with the government MPs lamenting that the PNC members should have been there for the debate on the motion since it was former President Desmond Hoyte who made a gift to the international community of the Iwokrama Rainforest.

The motion met with no opposition since the PNC and the other Opposition parties have opted out of participating in the National Assembly sittings because of ongoing allegations against government officials in a U. S. Court.

The motion called for the National Assembly to welcome the commitment to public consultations, including with the parliamentary parties, to contribute to the finalisation of the strategy.

It also called for the National Assembly to recognise the pioneering nature of the LCDS and endorse Guyana's advocacy in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for a new post- 2012 agreement that includes Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), avoided deforestation and sustainable forest management when countries meet at Copenhagen in December 2009 . Speaking on the motion, Finance Minister Dr Ashni Singh said the LCDS is not about development aid, but about valuing Guyana's forests and the services they provide, and receiving remuneration for those services.

Singh said the strategy highlights the need for the rehabilitation of the conservancy, drainage and irrigation infrastructure and the sea defences to address our vulnerability to rising sea levels and changing weather patterns as a result of climate change.

The minister added that he regarded the LCDS as a visionary articulation of Guyana's fight against climate change while advancing development. He further said that the LCDS is a document based on robust and rigorous analyses. He declared that it is the most comprehensive effort ever made to articulate Guyana's rational economic development and the preservation of the environment.

Singh also said that the strategy is strongly linked to other national strategies for the country's development.

He said he believed that the strategy is an extremely timely one which has brought together certain truths and realities about Guyana's disproportionate vulnerability to climate change.

Foreign Affairs Minister Carolyn Rodrigues- Birkett said the involvement of the Amerindians in the process of consultation must not be underestimated. She stated that the indigenous peoples will be important for monitoring the use of the forest, since sustainable use will have to be the order of the day in any incentive scheme.

She added that there is widespread support for the LCDS in principle among the Amerindian communities, but the decision to opt in is entirely theirs.

Rodrigues- Birkett also said it is time for the international community to match their rhetoric with action.

Agriculture Minister Robert Persaud stated that the strategy should not be viewed in a partisan perspective.

“ This is simply about a creative, visionary approach, which if successful, can make Guyana a truly great and prosperous society visited by unprecedented levels of security and opportunities for all.” Persaud further said that if the LCDS is not realised for reasons beyond the control of Guyana “ We will have to accordingly adjust the LCDS.” He added that Guyana has demonstrated to the world as a small,

developing country, “ we are not just contented to sit on the sidelines and do nothing while our planet is in peril and there are many developmental needs.

“ We are sharing with the international community the visionary leadership of President Bharrat Jagdeo who has gotten major players to listen and begin to take action ... mobilising our unique forest assets to transform our economy will not come from London, Oslo, Washington and Brussels.

They’ll come from Guyana, Gabon, and Indonesia etc.

So if the world wants the abatement, it is vital that forest countries are enabled to come up with their own way to do this,” Persaud concluded.

August 4th, 2009 | By Stabroek News | Filed Under News

(This is the fourth in a 10-part series intended to look at some of the issues surrounding Guyana's bid for funds from the World Bank-administered Forest Carbon Partnership Fund (FCPF) and from Norway, and for the President's Low Carbon Development Strategy.)

In this article I outline the background discussions on and major approaches to tropical forest protection. The Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) approach is a newcomer in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations, and its final shape is still in development. Still the REDD train is steaming ahead, and proposed activities can be categorized as projects, policies or sector activities that operate at different scales, multi-country, national and sub-national.

Background

The discussions between developed and developing countries over responsibility for protecting tropical forests, and at whose expense, took shape in the 1970s and have not progressed much since then. In the two decades leading up to the UN Conference on the Environment and Development – UNCED, also referred to as the Earth Summit in 1992 – environmental activist campaigns against rainforest destruction, and its effects on forest-dependent peoples, generally the most marginalized in their own countries, opened up spaces for discussion of global responsibility for the health of the planet. However, the media reports and images from far-off places in the 1970s and 1980s – the Chipko 'tree huggers' of Uttarakhand in India, the indigenous Penan people standing guard at roadblocks in what were ultimately failed efforts to prevent the depredations of large-scale loggers in Sarawak, Malaysia, and the Amazon burning – were mostly broadcast from developed countries, and raised the hackles of developing countries' governments.

Southern governments reacted to the perceived interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign nations, and pushed back. Brazil restated its national sovereignty over the Brazilian Amazon, and other rainforest countries did likewise. Many Southern diplomats suggested that the North first put its own house in order before dictating to the South in tones reminiscent of colonialism. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad famously said that 'If it is in the interests of the rich that we do not cut down our trees then they must compensate us for the loss of income'.

In turn, the Northern countries balked at developing countries' demands for 'compensation for economic costs foregone' and a global forest fund and technology transfers as pre-conditions for a global forests convention. The UNCED in 1992 failed to reach agreement on a legally binding instrument for forests, parallel to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) or the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

In the years since UNCED, there have been a series of ineffective United Nations fora on forests – the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) from 1995, replaced by the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) in 1997, and followed in turn by the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) in 2001. The lack of progress on those fronts has resulted in a global focus on the UNFCCC as a negotiating forum for tropical forests. At the level of governments – the multilateral level – two principal approaches to protecting tropical forests are on the table – on one side, letting the market set a price on forest carbon, and trading that carbon on the open market; on the other side, insisting on Official Development Aid (ODA) from global North to forested global South countries, which would then be used to protect

national forests in the global interest. The Coalition for Rainforest Nations is mostly associated with the first approach, from 2006, and Brazil with the second.

While ultimate power is vested in Governments at the multilateral level, the views of indigenous and forest-dependent peoples and some international environmental, religious and social organizations have also been prominent. Here also there is no single position. Some argue that carbon trading is a form of eco-colonialism; getting the world's poor to forego development so that the rich can continue with their high carbon footprint lifestyles. Other lobbies eschew any talk about windfall cash, arguing that the poor will always lose out in that trade. They argue that the terms of the negotiations are set by powerful institutions located in distant places, and that the poor end up selling cheap. In this view, the end result is that control over priceless assets, like forest homelands, can be ceded for very little. In order to avoid the second scenario, the directly affected stakeholders need to be represented at the negotiating tables, with voice and vote.

Coalition for Rainforest Nations

In the impasse over measures to reduce global carbon emissions, the Coalition for Rainforest Nations'1 proposal of a market-based scheme in tropical forest carbon at the 11th Conference of Parties of the UNFCCC in 2005 — REDD — was given serious consideration by the developed world. REDD was interpreted as a concrete signal by a subset of developing countries of willingness to commit to verifiable reduction measures. In 2006, seven member states of the Coalition (Bolivia, Central African Republic, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands) argued for financial mechanisms and technical support to developing countries 'to effectively and significantly reduce emissions from deforestation.' In other words, developing countries would require ODA before they could enter the carbon trading market. The Coalition takes credit for the establishment of the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), the United Nation's UN-REDD program and the pledges made by various industrialized countries (including Norway, the UK, Germany, France, Japan, Australia, Finland, and others) towards capacity building and incentives to reduce rates of deforestation in participating developing countries (<http://www.rainforestcoalition.org/eng/>).

On the other hand, some of the industrialized developing countries with significant forest resources oppose including a carbon trading mechanism in a post-Kyoto agreement, arguing instead for non-market based initiatives to reduce carbon emissions. Brazil, a major proponent of this view, favours international public funding-based approaches, both bilateral official development assistance (ODA) and a multilateral fund made up of voluntary donations from developed states. Brazil launched its Amazon Fund, in August 2008 to support sustainable development and conservation. Norway pledged US\$1 billion by 2015 to the Amazon Fund, but full payment is contingent upon a demonstrated reduction in deforestation. Brazil is a key player in the global negotiations on reducing emissions. It is a member of the G20 group of countries, and very active in multilateral fora, including the UNFCCC. Brazil is both a holder of the greatest calculated carbon stock of the top 20 developing countries by forest area 2 (one-third of a total of an estimated 177,000 million tones of carbon) and the fourth largest emitter of GHGs after the USA, China and Indonesia. Brazil stands to gain from both market and non-market initiatives. At Bali, the prospect of payment for carbon locked up in tropical forests, whether through market or non-market schemes, opened the possibility of substantial transfers of money from the historical emitters of greenhouse gases, the global North countries, to participating developing countries. Since then, however, a major global recession has set in, and has put a damper on global South hopes. The G8

meeting in Italy in July 2009 failed to reach agreement over firm carbon emissions reductions targets for the global North, and any commitments to following suit from the South. The REDD train may yet be derailed.

1 The Coalition had expanded to 40 member countries, including Guyana, by 2009.

2 Strassburg, Bernardo, R. Kerry Turner, Brendan Fisher, Roberto Schaeffer, and Andrew Lovett. 2009. Reducing emissions from deforestation – The ‘combined incentives’ mechanism and empirical simulations. *Global Environmental Change* 19:265-278.

Mercury in mining will have to go – President

August 2nd, 2009 | By Stabroek News | Filed Under News

Stressing that the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) would not cause the cessation of mining activities, President Bharrat Jagdeo on Wednesday, said that there would be changes in the industry, indicating for the first time, an intention to stop the use of mercury in the sector.

“We’re gonna get rid of the mercury”, the President declared in the midst of an exchange between him and miner, Patrick Pereira. The miner, a committee member of the Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners Association (GGDMA) had moments before asserted that the LCDS would have “disastrous” effects on the financial and social aspect of the small and medium scale mining industry. His remarks prompted the President to strenuously defend the strategy and he said that no rule will be made to shut down the industry.

The improper use of mercury in the mining industry has long been a contentious issue here and the sector has come under increased scrutiny, particularly from those in the environmental sector.

The use of mercury — which is toxic to human health and the environment — in gold mining is governed by strict regulations here but it has been acknowledged by the authorities that some miners do not comply with the rules. Environmentalists have long called for stricter monitoring of its use here.

Jagdeo, on Wednesday, met miners at the Hotel Tower to discuss the LCDS—a plan which outlines Guyana’s approach to promoting economic development in an environmentally sustainable way. A key part of the strategy involves the deployment of Guyana’s rainforest towards addressing global climate change.

The miners raised issues of roads and the high cost of living in the interior, prompting Executive Director of the GGDMA Edward Shields to tell them to speak of their concerns on the LCDS, which they had discussed with the Association.

Pereira said that they have a fear that the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) would want to enforce a regulation that will “put 90% of miners out of business”. According to him, this was a requirement that miners do exploration before they are allowed to start mining. Strongly arguing his point and bolstered by the support of fellow miners, he said that members of the sector would like to work along with the President and assist in achieving the success of his carbon credit initiative but not at the price of their social and financial destruction. He proposed setting aside five to seven percent of forested land for alluvial mining that would not require exploration first. Pereira warned that if this is not done, “thousands would suffer” and there would be a “massive” increase in unemployment, poverty, crime and social degradation.

He was, at this point, cut off by President Jagdeo, who charged that Pereira was painting a “doomsday scenario that is not grounded in any fact”. The President said that if Guyanese persist with the old way of thinking, it will lead to the exact scenario that Pereira set forth. It reflects “static thinking” Jagdeo said.

After their exchange subsided, GGMC Commissioner, William Woolford pointed out that exploration is acknowledged to be important before mining commences. Prime Minister Samuel Hinds, who holds the ministerial portfolio for mining, added that the future would see the development of specialized groups to do prospecting. He noted that the exercise is costly and asserted that it needs to be done with or without the LCDS.

Returning to the point again, Jagdeo put forth the scenario of a “gold shout” occurring outside of the territory that would have been put aside for mining. The whole country should be available for mining, he said, but it must be done in a way that does not affect the environment.

In his feature address, the President had acknowledged the important role of mining to Guyana. He said that nothing will be done to affect the development prospects of the people or harm the interests of the mining sector. The LCDS is not a bio-diversity protection or environmental strategy but a developmental one, he stressed. Throwing out the question of why Guyana cannot move rapidly to the new phase of development that it “so badly needs”, the President said that the past has been focused on fixing up things.

To move the country to the next level, the sectors of the future have to be identified and a process put in place to catalyze growth in those sectors, Jagdeo said. Large sums of money are needed to finance a new wave of development; he stated noting that despite all the contributions of mining and other sectors, such as agriculture, the country is still unable to pay all of its bills.

Directly addressing the impacts the LCDS would have, Jagdeo said that forestry activities will continue. He pointed out that wood production could even be expanded and it would still be compliant with sustainable forestry. The impact of mining is limited compared to the size of the forest, he noted. But he observed, in the future some of the methods (used in mining) would have to be changed whether or not there is the LCDS. The GGMC has to do more enforcement, “they have not done enough in the past”, he declared. The President expressed the view that mining will continue but in the future, Information and Communications Technology will overtake the sector.

While some miners complained about the state of roads and bridges, and the need for more technical advice, others spoke up in support of the LCDS. “Miners have really turned the corner”, was the view expressed by one. Responding to a concern expressed about gold smuggling, Jagdeo revealed that he had spoken with the Surinamese President and they are working on an arrangement on the issue. Smugglers should beware, he added. The President pointed out that the LCDS does not specifically address mining regulations and said that assuming that the Strategy does not go forward, some of the actions spoken about, will still have to be done.

Earlier, GGDMA President Norman McLean had said that miners are conscious of the dangers of mercury. “We are not reckless...it is not production at any cost”. He declared that gold and diamond mining are not and should not be damaging to the LCDS. He said that the Association will commission a socio-economic study, which will determine the “real” impact of the sector and has already contacted the University of Guyana on this issue.

At GGDMA meeting.

President Jagdeo gives miners assurances on LCDS

By Clifford Stanley

August 1st, 2009 | By [Guyana](#) Chronicle | Filed Under [News](#)

PRESIDENT Bharat Jagdeo, on Wednesday, assured small and medium scale miners that the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) he is spearheading has nothing to do with mining regulations compliance. The LCDS does not look at specific mining regulations. There is no linkage between the LCDS and these regulations," he emphasised at a well attended meeting with members of Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners Association (GGDMA), at Hotel Tower in Main Street, Georgetown.

Mr. Jagdeo said: "With the LCDS, we are just looking at the concept of how to raise money to fund the development of Guyana."

He also pledged that the Government does not intend to do anything that would harm the interests of the mining sector.

I wanted you to hear from me the reasoning behind the LCDS, because I have heard lots of rumours, in various quarters of our country which significantly distort the real intent of this strategy. This strategy is not a biodiversity strategy. It is not an environment strategy. It is a development strategy intended to increase prosperity of Guyanese," the Head of State said.

President Jagdeo gave the undertaking that mining and logging would still be allowed to continue even after the LCDS is in place, although operators in those industries will have to upgrade their activities, in relation to their patrimony to future generations.

With regard to mining, he reiterated that no new stringent regulations are envisaged.

All that is required of miners is already in existing mining regulations. No new regulations are intended. The LCDS is a different initiative altogether and has nothing to do with these regulations."

With President Jagdeo, as he spoke, were Prime Minister Samuel Hinds, who has portfolio responsibility for mining; Minister of Public Works, Mr. Robeson Benn; Chairman of Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), Mr. Ron Webster; Commissioner, Mr. William Woolford and several other senior GGMC officials and Environmental Management Specialist, Mr. Shyam Nokta.

Programme

The Wednesday afternoon programme chaired by Executive Director of GGDMA, Mr. Edward Shields, included a presentation by recently elected President of GGDMA, Major General (ret'd) Norman McLean.

President Jagdeo offered several clarifications on the intent of the LCDS during his half hour opening remarks and then elaborated during a two hours long interactive session.

Explaining the rationale behind the LCDS, he said that for Guyana to move to a higher level of prosperity, there needs to be put in place the infrastructure that would catalyse new sectors of investment with the potential for generating greater income.

Those sectors include transformation of telecommunications with the greater use of fibre optic cable, construction of hydropower facilities and roads that would lead to investments in agriculture and access to resources in the hinterland, President Jagdeo said.

According to him: “We need a large sum of money to finance this new wave of development if we don’t want our GDP (Gross Domestic Product) to remain where it is. We have to build the infrastructure that would catalyse investments in these areas.”

He said, despite the growth and development in recent years, the Government still operates with a fiscal deficit.

"So we still have to think about where the money will come from for the next wave of development and additionally to address the challenges of climate change."

This is where the LCDS would come in, President Jagdeo said.

Our trees will provide a service to the world, because they take carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and store it in their leaves. This is a service to the world and someone needs to compensate us for this service," he contended.

Foregoing

President Jagdeo said it is estimated that Guyana is foregoing \$600M annually, as a country for keeping its forest intact.

So that is what the model is based on," he said.

President Jagdeo said carbon trading is already becoming a reality and will be one of the big sectors of the future.

This is a huge opportunity for us. We can sell and everyone gets the benefit. If this money comes to Guyana, we can use it to build the second wave of infrastructure to generate a whole series of alternatives so that our young people don’t have to resort to cutting the trees to earn a good living but would have enough employment in many other sectors to make them become prosperous," he posited. He added: “We don’t have to shut down forestry. We can expand wood production and still be compliant with sustainable forestry. We don’t have to shut down any operations. What we have to do is improve on these operations.”

President Jagdeo continued: “The same thing with mining. We want to make it clear that mining is going to continue. It’s just that miners have to do things that are not necessarily part of the LCDS but are already in the laws governing the mining sector.

Whether you have the LCDS or not, you still have to comply. You can cut down trees but you have to replant them when your operations in that area are concluded.”

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(This is the second in a 10-part series intended to look at some of the issues surrounding Guyana’s bid for funds from the World Bank-administered Forest Carbon Partnership Fund (FCPF) and from Norway, and for the President’s Low Carbon Development Strategy.)

By Janette Bulkan

Carbon as in the ‘Low-Carbon Development Strategy’ is only the latest manifestation of what may well prove to be a whimsical belief in ‘El Dorado’. What exactly is carbon? Mr Freddie Kissoon recently described one commonplace understanding of the meaning of ‘carbon’: “when I was a small boy in Wortmanville at Christmas we used to put carbide in empty cans, spit inside the tin and light it. It went off like a bomb. One day it went the wrong way and almost flew into my face. I was about eight years old then, and I ran home crying. Since then I have no interest in any kind of carbon” (Guyana – Kaieteur

News. Columnist Freddie Kissoon. 19 June 2009. President Jagdeo was at UG.

<http://www.kaieteurnewsonline.com/2009/06/19/president-jagdeo-was-at-ug/>). Coal and diamonds are two forms of elemental carbon; carbon stored in trees is another. In today's column, we will review some basic information on the nature of carbon, and its place in global initiatives to address global warming.

What is carbon?

Carbon is a chemical element, which is depicted by the symbol 'C'. Carbon is the fourth most abundant element in the universe by mass, and the second most abundant element in the human body by mass (about 18.5 percent) after oxygen. Carbon is present in all known life forms; its abundance, and its ability to form organic compounds like carbon dioxide (CO₂), make this element one of the chemical bases of all known life. Carbon dioxide is the most abundant of the greenhouse gases (GHG) which are causing the planet to warm dangerously. The following are three key points about carbon and trees:

#1: Trees remove or sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Carbon is constantly being exchanged between the atmosphere, the oceans and the land. Plants play an important role in this exchange: using the energy from sunlight, plants convert atmospheric carbon dioxide into plant food, stored as biomass in the form of various compounds of carbon. This conversion is called photosynthesis, and is one reason why forests feature prominently in the discussions on global warming. But trees also respire to release the energy needed for growth and for defence against pest attack, and this respiration returns almost as much CO₂ to the atmosphere as is taken up by photosynthesis.

Many tree species are long-lived. Trees increase in size as they absorb more carbon from the atmosphere. A recent report 'Increasing Carbon Storage in Intact African Tropical Forests' published in the journal Nature (19 February 2009) estimates that tropical forests are absorbing nearly one-fifth of the global carbon dioxide released by burning fossil fuels. Eventually trees die and in decaying release their stored CO₂ back to the atmosphere. So, in a natural forest undisturbed by human activity most of the trees are taking in CO₂ by photosynthesis, respiring most of that CO₂ to generate energy, and sequestering some of the CO₂ in timber. But some old trees are dying and there is dead wood on the ground, and that is returning the stored CO₂ back to the atmosphere. A mature forest undisturbed by human activity is mostly in equilibrium, with carbon gain and carbon loss almost exactly balanced. In terms of area, you can imagine that most of the natural forest is sequestering carbon but some patches of forest are naturally releasing more carbon through decomposition.

#2: Trees release carbon into the atmosphere when burnt

Trees contribute to global warming when trees are burnt, whether deliberately or accidentally, or when a tree ages and dies. In the case of forest fires, carbon is released rapidly; in the case of natural processes of decay and dying, the carbon is released slowly. As tropical forests are removed (deforestation) or degraded (which is technically a reversible process), the planet loses in two major inter-related ways: generally an irreversible loss of a critical carbon sink (the absorptive capacity of trees), and intensification of global warming, and all its catastrophic feedback effects.

#3: Trees provide multiple ecosystem benefits, beyond storing carbon

In addition to storing most of the planet's above- and below-ground carbon, forests provide many significant environmental and sustainable development co-benefits including biodiversity conservation; watershed protection; reduction of runoff, siltation and flooding; protection of fisheries; and sustained

livelihoods and incomes for indigenous peoples and local communities dependent on intact natural environments. These are in addition to commercial benefits from harvests of timber and non-wood forest products.

Greenhouse gases – roles in atmosphere

Greenhouse gases (GHGs) are those gases in the atmosphere that allow sunlight to reach the Earth, but slow down the outward flow of heat from Earth. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the most abundant, making up 56 percent of the greenhouse gases, with methane making up another 16 percent. Carbon is released to the atmosphere when fossil fuels (coal, petroleum), and trees, are burned. Carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries make up about one-fifth of the total global emissions of GHGs every year.

Changes in GHG emissions

– historical, present

Every year human activities add about 30 billion tonnes of CO₂ to the atmosphere. From studying climate records, scientists have established that half of this CO₂ accumulates in the atmosphere. The concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere has risen by a little over 1/3 from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (c. 1750): from 270 parts per million (ppm) to 384 ppm – or from 2.2 trillion tonnes to almost 3 trillion tonnes globally. It is only when those figures are disaggregated that we can fully appreciate the alarming accelerations in CO₂ emissions over the last fifty years. Between 1750 and 1952, CO₂ levels increased by 45 ppm. In the following 40 year-period – from 1952 to 1991 – the rate of CO₂ emissions quintupled to 1 ppm a year – as another 40 ppm were added to the atmosphere. Then, in the past 15 years, from 1991 to 2006, the rate of increase doubled again with 30 ppm, or 2 ppm a year, added in 15 years. This is an exponential rate of increase, and starkly underlines why urgent action is needed.

There are two important points to add: For a long time, it was widely, and mistakenly, thought that the ocean would absorb nearly all the industrial CO₂ released particularly over the past 250 years after the invention of machinery powered by coal, or fossil fuels. Scientists later established that because of the slowness of ocean uptake, CO₂ concentrations will take decades and centuries to come back down, even if humans stop emitting CO₂ immediately. Roughly 15 percent of the carbon we emit will still be in the atmosphere 500 years from now. Secondly, simply stabilizing CO₂ at the present concentration requires a reduction in current emissions of around 60 percent, and because of climate feedbacks, the reduction may need to be closer to 80 percent in the long term. I shall look at when and how carbon became a tradable commodity in my next column.

Low carbon, low life, low stereo, low everything

July 26, 2009 | By [KNews](#) | Filed Under [Features / Columnists](#), [Freddie Kissoon](#)

Guyanese have a fantastic sense of humour. If President Bush had made one percent of the ocean of mistakes that the Guyanese President have incurred, the stand-up comedians in the US would have material to last them a lifetime.

Imagine if President Bush had initiated a concept called low carbon development, and knowing how unpopular he was, what the comedy circuit would have done with him with the central attraction being the word, “low...”

Guyanese refer to people without ambition as being low life. That word actually has a rib-tickling story behind it in terms of women's fashion. I will stay away from any further discussion but will leave you with a question. Do you know what in local lingo is meant when the boyz in the hood say; "de woman playing she stereo low?"

So "low" is in the headlines. Mr. Jagdeo has popularized the word because he is running out of time to acquire a legacy. Ask me and I will tell you that I believe the election campaign is on. Mr. Jagdeo hasn't got much time. He has chosen to end his career by seeking to acquire an international reputation on climate change.

His low carbon strategy is supposed to catapult Guyana into a financial windfall. Of course one has to feel sorry for Mr. Jagdeo. The Kingston hotel is cocooned in a mirage. Oil isn't soon to appear on the horizon. Bauxite is a shaky ship. Sugar is in the same bauxite boat. So these high-keyed ventures became very low and transferred Mr. Jagdeo's overdrive into a low gear.

The trouble with low carbon is that it depends on high expectations in December in Denmark where the tide is normally low that time of the year in Scandinavia.

In Denmark, the global community will meet to decide where to go after the Kyoto Protocol. If it agrees to help countries that save their forest by giving them money, Mr. Jagdeo hopes to cash in.

But examining the mood of the international financial system, it is doubtful that the high expectations of Mr. Jagdeo will be met. There is a strong possibility that Mr. Jagdeo will come away from Denmark in low spirits in December

However let us look at the politics of low carbon from the angle of low governance. Why should this nation believe what Mr. Jagdeo and his Government tell us about accountability and transparency in relation to the operations of the low carbon development strategy when lowness in every aspect of governance has been the trademark of Mr. Jagdeo's presidency.

This is what is so exasperating about the regime of President Jagdeo. There has been no attempt since he came to power in 1999 to move away from low tolerance, low efficiency, low transparency, low accountability, low showmanship, low rebuttals, low moves. In other words, low governance.

This is a President that resorts to low attacks on his critics calling some of them ugly, ignorant of the laws on taxation, sleaze balls among other derogations. This is a President whose Government had to backdate the laws so as to make legal, an illegal act his regime had performed in relation to Queens Atlantic.

To date, there isn't even a whisper of an apology to Dr. Yesu Persaud who was on the receiving end of a presidential rant. This is a President that vehemently, adamantly, and barefacedly refused to go on a high note and reveal to the nation who was the investor in the proposed Marriott Hotel. To date, he is still low on that information. This is a President that is in a low mood in observance of what the laws require of him.

He refuses to transfer the Lotto money into the Consolidated Fund even though that is the law that Mr. Jagdeo hasn't got the constitutional authority to change. There is still the low act of prolonging the life of the Ethnic Relations Commission when the Constitution is evanescently clear - it requires two-thirds vote in Parliament.

This is a President whose regime is still low on transparency because there is still no procurement commission. The Auditor General's Report is full of low moves on how the Ministry of Health ordered drugs and on low moves in relation to how Mr. Jagdeo's Government spends the nation's resources.

The low moods continue because there is no Ombudsman, no Public Service Appellate Tribunal, no Human Rights Commission, no Freedom of Information Act. What a low act to take that money away from Critchlow Labour College.

How Freudian are the thoughts of Mr. Jagdeo. He chose to use a curious word “low” in his strategy to acquire his elusive legacy. Funny eh!

Global financial crisis threatens success at Copenhagen

July 23, 2009 | By [KNews](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

...Guyana’s alternative will be to resort to utilizing forest - Jagdeo

By Gary Eleazar

Participants at the interactive session with President Bharrat Jagdeo at OP yesterday

The success of having Guyana’s Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) to include forest preservation and have developed countries pay carbon credits to forested countries such as Guyana, is currently under threat by the global economic crisis.

President Bharrat Jagdeo expressed this opinion during an interactive session with media operatives at the Office of the President yesterday.

He said that should forest preservation not be included in the successor to the Kyoto Protocol, then Guyana would have no alternative but to look to the forest to accelerate its GDP per capita growth.

The President said that some countries simply did not have the money to pay for carbon credits, but emphasised that the alternative, which could be deforestation, was even more dismal.

He noted that future strategies will depend on what Guyana sees as opportunities, pointing out that there was still land on the coast for the production of ethanol.

The demand will increase in the future as is the case with food commodities that can be produced in the agriculturally-rich land in Guyana.

Should Guyana not be a beneficiary of the growing carbon market post-Copenhagen, then for the country to be a major player in the food market, it will have to open up more land for cultivation.

He did point out that in such a scenario at least half of Guyana’s forest would be safeguarded, given that climate change is a phenomenon that is already affecting the world.

According to Jagdeo, he was hoping to see coming out of the Copenhagen meet, an agreement wherein the developed world would be forced to commit to significantly steeper emission cuts from anywhere between 25 and 40 per cent of the 1990 base line.

This, the President said, will see the developed world stepping up domestic measures in their countries, and given the limitations of the technology available then they will have to offset the forested countries.

Jagdeo said that he was in no way supportive of a fund that would see all countries contributing to this, given that the developing world did not cause the problem, namely Global Warming, and as such it is the developed world that needs to pay.

The Head of State emphasised that the LCDS is first and foremost a development strategy, in that the money earned will be used to upgrade the country as well as the quality of life enjoyed.

He posited that the initial investments in adaptation to climate change, the opening up of new land as well as biofuel projects, can all be costly, and was hoping the money would come from the service that

would be provided by Guyana through the preservation of its forest.

President Jagdeo said that there are developed countries who are willing to pay for carbon credits because in their Third World Governments are corrupt.

Jagdeo said that this was a most unfortunate stereotype, in that it is perceived that “the darker your skin the more corrupt you are.”

As such, the president said that there will be mechanisms built-in to safeguard against corruption wherein there would have to be accountability and regular audits.

The president also pointed out that in Guyana the consultations have been as transparent as possible in that everything negative or positive has been posted online and could be used to scrutinise the final document given that the current consultations are being done with a draft LCDS.

To date, consultations have been conducted with some 222 villages across seven regions in Guyana exclusive of Regions Three, Four and Five whilst engaging in excess of 3,000 residents.

The consultation team included representatives from Government namely Prime Minister Samuel Hinds, Ministers Robert Persaud, Dr. Ashni Singh, Dr. Bheri Ramsaran, Dr. Jennifer Westford, Pauline Sukhai, Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, Jennifer Webster; Shyam Nokta of the Climate Unit as well, Andrew Bishop, James Singh, William Woolford and Nigel Dharamlall, among others

A series of awareness fora are being convened to provide information on the LCDS as well as an opportunity for discussion.

To date, the Forest Products and the Miners’ associations have convened sessions as well as the grouping of women’s organisations.

Outreach activities are being conducted by the GGMC to mining areas while the North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB) will conduct awareness among youths and in its communities in general.

The Office of Climate Change is also responding to requests for presentations and fora are being planned with youth and other organisations.

The National Consultation and Awareness Process for Guyana’s LCDS is being overseen by a Multi-Stakeholder Steering Committee which is chaired by President Jagdeo and meets weekly.

The MSSC includes representatives from Government, youth, women, private sector, indigenous NGOs, conservation NGOs, forestry, mining, and the international monitor Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

GIVE JAGDEO A BREAK!

July 22, 2009 | By [KNews](#) | Filed Under [Features / Columnists](#), [Peeping Tom](#)

The only initiative that has been called the Jagdeo Initiative is the one being promoted within the Caribbean Community dealing with agriculture.

The Low Carbon Development Strategy has been originated by President Jagdeo but it is not being called a “Jagdeo Initiative”, neither is the demand for a Freedom of Information Act being labelled as an AFC Initiative.

We can hardly speak today of an original idea, but we can speak of a new initiative.

Initiatives must be distinguished from the ideas contained within. Initiatives can be original while the ideas contained within are rarely novel.

Take for example Cheddi’s Jagan’s New Global Order. As an initiative Cheddi Jagan took a number of proposals which had been made before the United Nations but which were being placed on the back-burner.

He integrated them into an international proposal to address the inequalities between the rich and the poor. His assemblage was unique but the ideas within were not.

The Tobin Tax, which he articulated as the means to finance a development fund for poor countries had been made a long time ago, and would probably have been continued to be ignored had Cheddi not advanced it as a mechanism within his New Global Human Order.

The Low Carbon Development Strategy contains a number of ideas, which may have long been advanced. But what is novel is the development of a number of ideas concerning carbon sequestration, ecological justice and sustainable development, into a development strategy for a country.

This is what makes the LCDS stick out because it is not just a plan for the forestry sector or a means to create a fund by utilising Guyana’s forest reserves. It goes beyond this.

The second observation that should be made is that we can have a number of ideas being thrown out by experts and consultants, well-meaning ideas.

These ideas, however, often cannot be pursued because their time has not yet come.

Long before the World Bank and the IMF agreed to reduce the foreign debt of countries by writing off their own loans to poor countries, Cheddi Jagan had proposed this.

In Cheddi’s time, however, this idea did not mature, because the West was too engrossed in its own debt relief initiatives and with the imposition of the neo-liberal model of development.

Thus the emphasis was on keeping the debt on the agenda to force structural change.

It was not until it became clear that multilateral debt was itself hindering market reforms of highly indebted poor countries that the IMF and World Bank opted to amend their charters to allow for debt write-offs.

No matter how original an idea is, there is a time when it makes a difference, and most often that time is not consistent with the time when the idea is first proposed.

I have no doubt that the person who put forward the proposal for a rainforest fund, had the foresight to recognise that Guyana ought to benefit from not cutting down its forests.

This column had also made a suggestion that Guyana repossess the Iwokrama forests and use it as a magnet for attracting international funding.

The idea of a fund for the rainforests, however, could not be implemented because there were not many takers at the time.

Iwokrama itself, on to this day, continues to find problems in raising the sort of funds that are necessary. Clearly, therefore, while the rainforest fund may be an interesting proposition, it did not take off

because the conditions necessary for it just were not present and are still not present.

Contrast this with the propositions being advanced under the LCDS. Under the LCDS, there is a proposal for a mechanism of carbon trading rather than the mere creation of a fund.

It must be conceded even by a Ramjattan, that the carbon trading mechanism under the LCDS creates a far superior incentive for financing than does the rainforest fund, which has not seen the light of day in any country.

There is a far greater chance that Guyana can trade carbon credits in the carbon markets. These markets exist. They do not have to be created.

And this is why the LCDS is such an interesting and timely proposition and for which President Jagdeo deserves enormous credit.

The LCDS is, however, not without its shortcomings. In fact, it can be criticised for being too highly dependent on the degree to which western governments agree to emission cuts.

It is also hinged on a major decision being taken in December of this year that would permit countries such as Guyana to be compensated through the markets for not cutting down its forests.

The fact is that the cuts agreed to this year by the European Union and the G8, as well as the recent passage in the Senate of a Climate Change Bill, may put paid to Guyana's ambitions of cashing on the carbon markets.

But this aside we should at least be proud of the fact that there is an Initiative out there, which, regardless of what happens in the carbon markets, has elements that are good for Guyana.

Instead, therefore, of harping on whether the initiative is original or not, there should be a serious attempt by the Alliance For Change, in keeping with the tenor of Raphael Trotman's recent letter to the media concerning the fire at the Ministry of Health, to try to find a way of salvaging this Initiative by advancing workable proposals that would reduce the Initiative's vulnerability to what happens in Copenhagen in December.

LCDS and Oil

July 19, 2009 | By [KNews](#) | Filed Under [Features / Columnists](#), [Ravi Dev](#)

Many Guyanese are frustrated at the slow pace that the efforts to extract our confirmed oil reserves have been proceeding. However oil has proven to be a mixed blessing to so many other poor countries

that Lee Quan Yu once avowed that he was happy that Singapore did not have oil.

This statement may seem counterintuitive but the ground reality is that resource-rich former colonies in general and oil rich ones in particular have been the worst performers as far as increasing their growth rates are concerned. One study showed that countries that depended heavily on resource extraction in 1970 grew at a measly average of 1% between 1970 –1989. As a consequence their people have not experienced the dramatic increases in standards of living in such resource-poor countries like Singapore. Such results cry out for explanation.

Recently, a strong correlation has been also demonstrated between the growth of the resource component of the GDP and conflicts within the said countries. While the causation for this effect is complex and contextual it challenges the widespread hope that with increased revenue our squabbles over whether “marginalisation” is real or imagined will disappear. This effect of increased conflict is especially noticeable in divided societies and should be of major concern to our policymakers. Not surprisingly, most conflicts have at their base a nexus with economics and as the stakes rise with the flow of oil revenue into the national coffers it is natural that competition for those revenues would increase.

In divided societies it is not natural for the groups outside the administration to suspect that the “in-group” is being favoured.

If the increased revenues are not equitable distributed, the growth frontier of the country as a whole is inevitably constrained since the creative potential of significant segments of the population are not allowed to flower – and becomes lost to the society. All modern growth theories show that sustained high growth rates are only possible when the widest possible cross section of the society are involved. Social capital and all that. Increased conflicts – whether hot or cold – inevitably hinder economic activity and growth and in so many instances precipitate a spiral of increasing poverty and death in the midst of “plenty”.

The most significant factor in ensuring that countries remain locked in low growth rates and mired in poverty while the dollars keep pouring in is what the economists like to call “rapacious rent-seeking” - but we laypersons recognise by the catch-all expression, “corruption”.

Corruption, from all studies, appears to be the major by-product of resource extraction from even the developed countries – much less the poor ones like Guyana. Whether the administration has taken heed or not of the sustained accusations of “corruption” that has bedevilled them up to now, it must accept that the opportunities for graft will increase in direct proportion to the increase in revenue when the oil starts flowing. And so the potential for conflict over increased “marginalisation”.

Even from the limited review of possible pitfalls in the development of our oil potential it is obvious that if we want to head off such increased conflict (which even without oil has been an albatross around our neck for half a century) we have to come up with a model of development that will involve the greatest number of our citizens as the oil revenues begin to flow in the next decade.

We propose that the Government later extend the present Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) consultation to include a wider industrial policy strategy, with the understanding that future oil revenues will be utilized to fund the projects proposed by the strategy. A national consensus on development projects should go a long way towards ameliorating the conditions that precipitate conflict over “marginalisation” of any group. We suggest that “Ethnic Impact Statements”, which we have long

advocated, accompany every project to address concerns over ethnic favouritism that have bedevilled us for so long.

To ensure that the oil revenues do not flow into the pockets of corrupt politicians it would be best to constitute an independent “Oil Fund for National Development” (OFND) that operates on transparent accounting rules to ensure that all oil revenues are accounted for. The rules of such transparency have now been fully endorsed by the international community so it would not present any problems to so-called “privacy” needs of corporations.

To place the oil revenue directly into the Consolidated Fund is to ensure that at the very best (assuming no sticky fingers) the money will be fritted away in pork barrel showy schemes with no long-term impact on our sustainable development.

The OFND will have to ensure that the oil industry does not blossom at the expense of other previously important production sectors, such as agriculture and fishing and ensure that the economy diversifies into manufacturing and higher technologies – and involve all sections of the society.

It is obvious that such an entity as the OFND, which would be organised along the lines of development agencies that catapulted the Eastern Tigers from Third World into First, would have to have the widest possible support to earn the necessary legitimacy that is crucial to its eventual success.

There is also the issue of expertise to run such development strategy. Now there has been much speculation about the possibility that the President may seek a third term because he is such a young man and it would be a waste to lose the expertise that he has gained in both the Finance Ministry and the Presidency.

We agree that we do not have the luxury of jettisoning our hard-earned recourses – especially human recourses – but we believe that seeking a third term will put unnecessary pressures onto our already fragile political system. A better use of the President’s expertise and experience would be for him to take charge of the OFND and execute its mission to take Guyana, with dignity, into the 21st Century. This would be a fitting legacy for a man who began his working career in the Office of Development in this country.

Pessimism on REDD

July 19, 2009 | By [KNews](#) | Filed Under [Editorial](#)

In the forthcoming issue of Washington Monthly, within the context of discussing the saving of tropical forests, the chances of securing an agreement on Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) at Copenhagen in December are assessed. To a large extent, the success of the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) proposed by President Bharrat Jagdeo, and now under national discussion, depends in general on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) crafting a successor to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

More specifically, it also depends on whether any new Protocol will not only incorporate the reduction of deforestation goals of REDD but extend the concept to cover those countries, like us, that have standing forests without a history of deforestation.

What will make this outcome very difficult is the fact that under the UNFCCC rules, all countries must agree on everything for the Copenhagen meeting to produce a new treaty, which means that the fate of

a forest management scheme, such as REDD, is tied to wider agreement in Copenhagen. Since the breakthrough in Bali in December 2007 when REDD was accepted for consideration, progress has not been uninterrupted.

According to one report in WM, “When climate negotiations resumed for the first time since Bali in December 2008, in the Polish city of Poznan, hopes were high that agreement on deforestation offered a relatively easy win for nations eager to prove they were taking climate change seriously.

In fact, the discussions were quickly soured by an argument about the deletion of a reference to the rights of indigenous people in the draft text, for which campaigners blamed New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States. Amid protests and accusations, no decision was reached.” While the issue will be brought up at the two remaining preparatory meetings before Copenhagen, “indigenous rights” is likely to prove an insurmountable barrier to any agreement. The other barrier will be the present standoff between the USA and China, the two largest polluters at present. As the report notes, “For a new deal to succeed, both countries must be included.

China wants the U.S. to acknowledge its responsibilities, while the U.S. points out that Western efforts to cut emissions will be pointless if Chinese emissions soar as predicted, and wants China to at least make an effort. “For them to sign up in Copenhagen, both will want to be able to claim victory.”

While it is hoped that President Obama may want to break the deadlock, he would face the same opposition as did President Clinton, who signed the Kyoto Protocol but backed down from submitting it to a hostile Senate, opposed to pollution limits not being set on the developing world, mainly China. President Bush never even tried to get the protocol approved, deeming it “flawed”.

Another hurdle that has to be overcome is the necessity of incorporating the US into the Kyoto agreement before extending its mandate beyond 2012.

While it may appear that jettisoning the Protocol may be an easier way to proceed onto a new agreement, “The developing world has voiced fears that rich countries would use that as a chance to escape from Kyoto’s existing binding targets.” They do not want to lose “corn and husk”.

The assessment of WR is pessimistic on the chances of any new treaty in Copenhagen, much less REDD and its extension that would benefit Guyana’s LCDS. “With the talks heading toward the finish line, there remains much to do, and many senior figures in the field of climate change are already privately playing down the chances of a breakthrough at Copenhagen. The talks have come too soon for the new Obama administration, they warn. Others are pessimistic about the chances of serious targets being set, never mind being met. The preparatory meetings may help clear the table, but the serious emissions targets that will form the backbone of a new treaty are unlikely to appear until the closing days of the Copenhagen meeting.”

Strategy will better manage forest exploitation – Persaud

July 14, 2009 | By [KNews](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

A section of the gathering at the consultation yesterday at Regency Suites

Issues and suggestions to better manage Guyana’s forest with alternative arrangements were yesterday discussed when the Forest Products Association, in collaboration with the Guyana Forestry Commission, hosted a consultation on the Low Carbon Development Strategy.

Stakeholders within the sector, among them several forestry associations, forest producers, sawmillers and other stakeholders were present at the Regency Suites along with Minister of Agriculture, Robert Persaud, were assembled for the forum.

The Minister with responsibilities for Forestry explained that the LCDS is not meant to harm the forestry sector but instead to influence it in a positive way.

The initiative, he said, does not mean closing down concessions or slowing down the sector. Instead it is about stimulating the activities within the sector from an environmental and sustainability standpoint.

There were a number of concerns, he said, raised on the impact that the initiative will have on the sector, but Persaud assured that this will have a positive rather than negative impact on the sector.

Large companies, he explained, will acquire their forest stewardship certification easier with the LCDS.

The difficulties experienced by these companies in obtaining this certification are as a result of bad forestry practices by others.

He explained that if the international community does not buy into the model, then not much will change, he noted, pointing out that it will not change Guyana's resolve to insist that sustainable forestry is practiced.

The Minister noted that the stakeholders in the sector have to be creative in determining how to expand developmental strategy for economic gain.

According to Persaud, there are indeed gaps and weaknesses in the sector but stated that these can be addressed.

Commissioner of Forestry, James Singh, gave an overview of the LCDS at the consultation.

He highlighted the effects of climate change and its consequence on Guyana as a low-lying state.

At the event yesterday, concerns were raised about the failure of the authorities to include Amerindian lands as part of the state forest.

It was nonetheless pointed out that Amerindian lands are considered private lands and as such they have a choice to be a part of the initiative or not.

Neil Chan of the FPA called for the completion of the national land use plan, which is currently at the draft stage and also for less 'policing' especially during the embryonic stages of the LCDS.

A call was also made for the much needed balancing between the forestry and mining sectors, since there are currently major constraints on how both are presently operating.

Last month, President Bharrat Jagdeo, launched Guyana's low carbon development strategy aimed at promoting economic development, while at the same time combating climate change.

He called for a platform on which developing countries like Guyana are not seen as mere recipients of aid, but as equal partners in the search for climate solutions.

The launch of the strategy represented the start of an aggressive round of consultations and a robust public relations campaign, before it is adopted by the government.

A low carbon economy is one where economic activities are geared to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide that would otherwise go into the air, and also where other activities and lifestyles seek to minimize the effects of climate change.

The implementation of the strategy, for the large part, hangs on the December meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Copenhagen.

The meeting is expected to lay out a new global framework to combat climate change.

Guyana and other forest-rich nations, want Copenhagen to include incentives for them in keeping the

forests alive, thereby providing a reward for the eco-system services the forests provide.

About 80 percent of Guyana's forests, or some 16 million hectares (37 million acres), have remained untouched over time.

An expert study commissioned by Guyana, estimates that the country could receive payment in excess of US\$580 million annually, if it were to engage in economic activities that could lead to the destruction of the forests, but the economic value to the world, if these same forests were left standing would be equivalent to US\$40 billion.

Guyana's forests has been described as 'world class asset', in that in its home to 600 species of animals and plant life; generate rainfall; and absorb carbon dioxide, one of the greenhouse gases which pollute the atmosphere and help contribute to global warming.

LCDS and Sustainable Development

July 6, 2009 | By [KNews](#) | Filed Under [Editorial](#)

The success of the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) that was launched by President Jagdeo last month is ultimately premised on the acceptance by the developed nations of the concept of "sustainable development".

The phrase and the ideas that it encompassed had become a veritable mantra of those countries and the institutions through which they interacted with the rest of the world over the last three decades. It was therefore a bit of a surprise when "The Economist", a veritable bastion of the establishment that mirrors the perspective of the ruling elites of those countries, in its latest edition launched a debate about whether "sustainable development" is sustainable or not.

While we hope this foray does not mean that sustainable development as a paradigm to guide our utilisation of the resources of our planet is going to be abandoned, it might signal a new tack the developed countries may adopt in the upcoming negotiations in December at Copenhagen on the successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol. Since such a position would impact rather negatively on funding for our LCDS, we ought to take cognisance of the debate.

The ideal of sustainable development basically came out of the consciousness raised by the environmental movement which flowered in the wake of the publication by Rachael Carson of her classic "Silent Spring" in the 1960's.

The "flower power" generation of that decade exposed the damage done to the environment by the operations of big business. The long-term implications of such activity were slowly accepted by establishment types after several major disasters were precipitated by such behaviour.

In the 1970's, the Club of Rome that gathered movers and shakers of the developed world published "The Limits to Growth" which outlined the other side of the argument about the resources of our planet by pointing out that such resources were also being depleted at such a rate that many could run out in the next century.

Countries, therefore, had to consider within their models of development their impact on resources from two perspectives, first on the impact of the activities industries and secondly on their depletion through consumption.

In 1987, Gro Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway as chair of a commission on development and the environment, offered a succinct definition of what by then has coalesced as "sustainable development":

that which “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Global warming which threatened the viability of our entire planet to sustain life, much less “future generations” was soon after recognised as a consequence of the excessive production of carbon dioxide through the burning of fossil fuels and also through deforestation. And we arrive as proposals such as the LCDS that addresses the latter directly by seeking to conserve our forests and indirectly by developing non-fossil fuel “clean energy” sources such as hydropower.

The argument against “sustainable development” however condemns the notion as serving to deny future generations the continuing rising standard of living that were enjoyed by their forefathers up to now. They see it as moving us backwards or at best a leading to a stagnation of living standards, especially in developing countries.

While they concede that some resources are being rapidly depleted, they point out that this is not a new phenomenon and that the ingenuity of man has always discovered or invented alternative resources that took care of the threatened need.

Similarly, they placed great faith on that same ingenuity to deliver alternatives to the present identified danger of global warming caused by utilisation of fossil fuels, which would not only cut carbon dioxide emissions from this source, but would allow forested countries to exploit their timber resources. In other words we can have our cake and eat it too.

As we pointed out earlier, we do not know how persuasive the latter argument will prove, but it does suggest that maybe we ought to diversify our development eggs in some additional baskets to the LCDS.

Friday Musings

Shout it out, girls!

By Sharief Khan

July 5th, 2009 | By [Guyana](#) Chronicle | Filed Under [News](#)

Two major changes in ‘globalization’ logistics have hit the deck. Globalization has become a fashion

contest; and to be in it is to be 'hip'. Globalization is no longer a standalone operation; Globalization has become wedded to economic integration, not political and social integration.

I AM sure there will be a lot of shouting of support from different groups of backers for the girls in tomorrow night's Miss Universe Guyana pageant, but I want to join in shouting out some of them before.

There was much to shout about when they appeared on the question and answer segment broadcast live on NCN TV Wednesday night, although there were some howlers among the responses.

But that's the nature of the game – participants sometimes lose their cool in such contests and whatever they want to say comes out the wrong way. The tongue gets tangled and the right words just seem to vanish.

I join in a big shout out for the NCN crew that seemed to be right on the ball in the live broadcast. There were few flaws and the file footage from the bikini wear segment was a treat in between the on-screen appearances by the contestants for the questions and answers.

(See NCN? I give praise where praise is due, and it's not just because it is about girls in a beauty contest. Take a bow!)

Enrico Woolford and Cathy Hughes did a fine job in trying to get the best out of the girls, even helping to guide them through their nervous and anxious moments.

Some emerged well from the session but it's up to the judges and not me to publicly say who stood out and who can go on to do well by being a fine ambassador for Guyana at the Miss Universe pageant in The Bahamas later this month.

I couldn't help smiling though at the boldness and firmness of the contestant who wants to be a criminal prosecutor and had no qualms about police and military officers shooting criminals trying to escape from the law.

While she believes in due process under the law, she feels suspects in crime have no right trying to escape from law enforcers and it's too bad if they are shot while trying to flee. Her frankness was endearing.

But I wonder what the cynics about Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy feel though about so many of the contestants taking the initiative as their platform for the pageant?

Some people in some circles have been trying to dis the thrust to transform Guyana's economy on to a low carbon trajectory by using the model to save its standing forests in the service of climate change and getting paid for the services.

Some claim it's all futuristic but the fact that contestants in a national beauty contest have joined the bandwagon speaks volumes about its appeal across the nation.

And judging from some of the answers in that show, most aren't just pandering to a popular cause and seem to have a firm grasp about what it's all about, even though some people have argued that the LCDS is much too technical a concept to be understood by the population at large.

Despite all the bad mouthing about Guyana by some leaders and others in the Caribbean and elsewhere, this country is a beautiful place – sometimes incomparable beyond words.

It's our job to help keep it beautiful and it's a joy to behold when some of our beauties rally to the cause.

Saving forests may seem to be mundane but throw in some bikini-clad beauties along the creeks, rivers, waterfalls and other places of comfort and see what a difference it makes.
Let's hear it for the forest savers!

Guyana's Low Carbon Strategy outreach gathers momentum

June 28, 2009 | By [KNews](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

THE national outreach on Guyana's ambitious and historic draft low carbon development strategy is well underway with officials reporting good responses from the first sub-national consultations.

President Bharrat Jagdeo, on June 17, gave a detailed presentation on the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) to a full house in the George Walcott Lecture Theatre at the University of Guyana. This was followed by consultations in the Rupununi over the weekend.

Officials said that more than 600 people, predominantly Amerindians, from about 45 communities in Region Nine, participated in that first round of sub-national consultations.

The region is probably the most remote in Guyana with some 20,000 people from the indigenous groups scattered over about 22,000 square miles. Many of those attending the sessions spent days traveling over mountains and sprawling savannahs to get to the three main meeting places.

At his weekly post-Cabinet briefing on Wednesday, Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Roger Luncheon, said that the initial public consultations "secured healthy participation" from the indigenous communities and constituencies.

According to Dr Luncheon, there was an "impressive sharing" of information about the strategy and matters of concern to members of the indigenous community in Region Nine.

The public consultations continue this weekend in Region One where Amerindian Affairs Minister, Pauline Sukhai and Foreign Affairs Minister, Carolyn Rodrigues-Birket will lead the team that includes representatives from Amerindian and non-governmental organisations.

The widespread national consultations on the draft Low Carbon Development Strategy are being conducted over three months and the government wants to table the plan at the December United Nations summit in Copenhagen, Denmark for inclusion in a new climate change regime.

Guyana's strategy is

based on avoiding deforestation and preserving its standing forests in exchange for payment for this service in the cause of climate change from the international community.

Climate change is a major agenda item for next month's Caribbean Community summit here and officials feel the timing is opportune as it will be another opportunity to forge a common regional position for Copenhagen .

Chairman of the National Climate Committee, Mr. Shyam Nokta, noted that the forests in CARICOM member states, Guyana, Suriname and Belize, provide a substantial forest cover to contribute to the climate change cause and the region needs to come together in the effort.

"As a region we have a substantial amount of forest cover to contribute to climate change and we have to work together. We hope that the summit can identify clear concrete positions for Copenhagen," he said.

In his presentation at UG, President Jagdeo said the current debate for countries like Guyana is about, among other key issues, getting payment for helping to save the planet by preserving standing forests.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND LOW-CARBON DEVELOPMENT

June 24th, 2009 | By [Guyana Chronicle](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

By Ralph Ramkarran

Climate change relates to increasingly high temperatures caused by the warming of the earth's atmosphere. The earth is now at its warmest for a thousand years. The 3 hottest years ever occurred in the last 8 years. The result has been increasingly ferocious storms, hurricanes, floods, and forest fires. Guyana has already been beset by flooding and changing weather patterns, and may also face rising sea levels. The dangers to our continued existence, especially on the coast, are obvious. President Jagdeo pointed out that: "Nobody needs to tell the citizens of Guyana that climate change is occurring – in 2005 the worst flood in our history caused damage equivalent to 60% of our GDP, and every year we experience some flood-related damage in parts of our country. In other parts, this year it seems as though we are experiencing drought-like conditions."

The President unveiled his proposals for a low-carbon development strategy and combating climate change on June 8 at the Convention Centre. These were contained in a draft for consultation, which has been proposed for discussion among all Guyanese, particularly stakeholders. Upon completion the document, "Transforming Guyana's Economy While Combating Climate Change", will contain Guyana's proposals for low-carbon development and climate change.

Climate change relates to increasingly high temperatures caused by the warming of the earth's atmosphere. The earth is now at its warmest for a thousand years. The 3 hottest years ever occurred in the last 8 years.

The result has been increasingly ferocious storms, hurricanes, floods, and forest fires. Guyana has already been beset by flooding and changing weather patterns, and may also face rising sea levels. The dangers to our continued existence, especially on the coast, are obvious. President Jagdeo pointed out that: "Nobody needs to tell the citizens of Guyana that climate change is occurring – in 2005 the worst flood in our history caused damage equivalent to 60% of our GDP, and every year we experience some flood-related damage in parts of our country. In other parts, this year it seems as though we are experiencing drought-like conditions."

The main culprit in this deadly drama playing out in the earth's atmosphere, and on its surface, is a gas called carbon dioxide, which is colourless and odourless, but which absorbs heat. It is beneficial and necessary for life as we know it, maintaining an even temperature, so far, on earth. But in recent times the emission of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, and the consequential storage of heat, creating global warming, has been intensified by the burning of coal, the consumption of oil, and deforestation. The latter represents "17% of the greenhouse gas emissions, which are the dominant cause of climate change," as explained by the President.

In order to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, the President proposes, firstly, a low-carbon development strategy.

Developing such a strategy would require the development of hydropower and building the infrastructure for the utilising of unforested lands for agricultural development and investment in fibre optic cable technology to facilitate the growth of the outsourcing industry.

The success of this twin strategy to preserve our forests for the benefit of the world, while at the same time generating resources for Guyana, and to put Guyana on a path to low carbon development, thereby playing its role in the world community of nations by action and example, is dependent on the support of the Guyanese people. It is more than a worthy cause. It is vital for our future.

Significant investment would have to be undertaken to promote Guyana as a home for a wide range of low-carbon investments, including aquaculture, eco-tourism, and others mentioned above. To promote, manage, and develop these ideas, the President announced that three offices will be established: an Office of Climate Change to consolidate and streamline Government efforts, a Low Carbon Strategy Project Management Office to drive key projects, and a Guyana Low-Carbon Finance Authority to manage forest payments.

The second limb of the strategy, as proposed, is to protect and preserve our forest and deploy it in the battle against climate change. Deforestation worldwide, at the rate of 32,000 hectares a day, equates to 17% of carbon dioxide emissions.

An incentive scheme has been proposed within the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) mechanism at a level capable of generating sufficient finances to make conservation and sustainable use more profitable than deforestation.

The Economic Value to the Nation (EVN) from deforestation was outlined in the draft as follows: "Standing forests provide tremendous global economic value in the form of ecosystem services, including carbon storage, climate regulation, and biodiversity conservation."

The valuation of these services, and their inclusion in a post-Kyoto accord at Copenhagen in December, will bring benefits, not only to rainforest countries, but also significant benefits to the world in the fight against global warming.

The success of this twin strategy to preserve our forests for the benefit of the world, while at the same time generating resources for Guyana, and to put Guyana on a path to low carbon development, thereby playing its role in the world community of nations by action and example, is dependent on the support of the Guyanese people. It is more than a worthy cause. It is vital for our future.

The sun is the Earth's primary energy source, a burning star so hot that we can feel its heat from over 150 million kilometers away. Its rays enter our atmosphere and shower upon our planet. About one-third of this solar energy is reflected back into the universe by shimmering glaciers, water and other bright surfaces. Two-thirds, however, are absorbed by the Earth, warming land, oceans, and the atmosphere.

Much of this heat radiates back out into space, but some of it is stored in the atmosphere. This process is called the greenhouse effect. Without it, the Earth's average temperature would be a chilling -18 degrees Celsius, even despite the sun's constant energy supply.

In a world like this, life on Earth would probably have never emerged from the sea. Thanks to the greenhouse effect, however, heat emitted from the Earth is trapped in the atmosphere, providing us with a comfortable average temperature of 14 degrees.

Sunrays enter the glass roof and walls of a greenhouse. But once they heat up the ground, which, in turn, heats up the air inside the greenhouse, the glass panels trap that warm air and temperatures

increase. But our planet has no glass walls; the only thing that comes close to acting as such is our atmosphere. But, unfortunately, in here, processes are much more complicated.

Only about half of all solar energy that reaches the Earth is infrared radiation and causes immediate warming when passing the atmosphere. The other half is of a higher frequency, and only translates into heat once it hits Earth and is later reflected back into space as waves of infrared radiation.

This transformation of solar radiation into infrared radiation is crucial, because infrared radiation can be absorbed by the atmosphere. So, on a cold and clear night, parts of this infrared radiation that would normally dissipate into space get caught up in the Earth's atmosphere and, like a radiator in the middle of a room, our atmosphere radiates this heat into all directions.

Parts of this accumulated heat are finally dispersed into the frozen nothingness of space; and parts of it are sent back to Earth, where they step up global temperatures. Just how much warmer it gets down here depends on how much energy is absorbed up there – and this, in turn, depends on the atmosphere's composition.

Move Capital in LCDS

June 22, 2009 | By [knews](#) | Filed Under [Editorial](#)

The Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) is intended to integrate our development plans within the overhanging global threat posed by climate change induced by global warming. While it is not the subject of this editorial, right off the bat, we would wish to disabuse a few of the notion that the expected payments for preserving our forests, is a form of “mendicancy”.

While one may disagree with some of the premises of the strategy to be compensated for providing a service to the rest of the world (sequestering carbon) is the very essence of what economic arrangements are all about.

While there are those that may want to continue to be free riders, there is rising awareness that each country will have to pay their way in the coming years. It is only a matter of time and it appears that the time has arrived.

With this preliminary matter behind us, we can proceed with the subject at hand, a subject that we have raised on more than one occasion in this space – the planning and launching of a new capital located in the interior of our country.

While the LCDS focuses on the economic opportunities of climate change in the near term, we cannot ignore the dangers that it poses to our country. And right up there among those dangers is the threat that rising seas pose to our capital.

In 2007, the World Bank released a study it had specially commissioned: “The Impact of Sea Level Rise on Developing Countries: A Comparative Analysis”. Guyana was ubiquitous in the report which noted that the loss of ice from the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets had recently been shown to be greater than that expected even a few years ago.

More ominously it stated that “recent research and expert opinion indicate that significant sea level rise may occur earlier than previously thought.” It was not a coincidence that a grant project to protect Guyana's sea walls was the first to be approved under the WB Global Environmental Facility's Special Climate Change.

The LCDS draft document has a very excellent graphic, captioned “Flood Map of Georgetown” and the text spells out the implications quite starkly: “Guyana’s coastal regions, including Georgetown, lie below sea level, and a large part of Guyana’s population (39 percent of its population and 43 percent of its GDP) live in regions exposed to significant flooding risk. As such, flooding is a major adaptation challenge for Guyana.”

However, the adaptation measures estimated at US\$1billion only go towards ameliorative efforts such as buttressing sea-walls and conservancies; building codes, flood insurance etc.

The problem with this approach is that with Georgetown not only housing one-quarter of our entire population, but all our corporate and financial headquarters, Ministries, communications infrastructure, warehouses, etc. we are certainly putting too many of our eggs in a basket by the inexorably rising Atlantic Ocean. With all the best laid plans within the LCDS and without, we risk them all being washed away by the time they really start to deliver the expected goods.

We have to bite the bullet and this as good a time as any, maybe even better. The extra sensitivity to the impact of climate change with the UNFCCC coming up can also redound to our benefit.

Our new capital can take into consideration the imperatives of Low Carbon Development in all its ramifications and demonstrate to the world not only in industrial development, but in housing and shelter, that a poor country can lead the way to an environmentally sustainable future.

The new capital does not have to be constructed in one fell swoop. The gradual development of Boa Vista right across the Brazilian border is a good example and model to follow. Laid out decades ago, the city grew and continues to grow at a pace driven by the development of the surrounding countryside, but catalysed by the governmental activities housed there.

President Jagdeo should be wary of the environmental lobby

June 20, 2009 | By [knews](#) | Filed Under [Features / Columnists](#), [Peeping Tom](#)

In a previous column, I had suggested that the fate of President Jagdeo’s Low Carbon Development Strategy depended on the outcome of this December’s meeting in Copenhagen. The President is hoping

at that meeting, an agreement can be reached that would allow countries to be compensated for avoided deforestation or in other words, Guyana will be paid for not cutting down its forests.

The environmental argument is that if countries can be compensated for regenerative activities, then countries that instead keep their forest cover intact should also be assisted. The President of Guyana is therefore hoping that avoided deforestation would qualify for money under the post Copenhagen agreement. He is hoping for too much. He is not seeing what is behind this pushing for avoided deforestation.

It is being argued that some 17 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions are caused by deforestation. But is this true? And has this figure been verified? If it is true that 17 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions are caused by deforestation, there is still reason to ask from where the other 83 per cent is originating? How much is being caused by industry? How much is being caused by the military establishment? How much is being caused by motor vehicles?

If there is a need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, then the entire pie needs to be revealed and cuts made to all the major contributors, because while forestry may or may not contribute a fairly sizeable chunk to greenhouse gas emissions, forestry activities also contribute by far a greater share to what is known as carbon sequestration of the replacing of carbon in the environment and the conversion of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, into oxygen.

Forestry activities also contribute a great deal to the development of poor countries and despite the fact that in the felling of trees, greenhouse gases may be emitted, in the vast majority of cases, the countries that are tearing down their forests in the name of development, still do not pollute the environment as much as the industrial countries.

There is therefore a greater responsibility on the part of industrialized countries to reduce emission levels, rather than unethically asking poor countries such as Guyana, to defer development in lieu of some vague compensation plan and in the interest of saving humanity.

The attack on deforestation also has an economic and trade dimension. President Jagdeo should recall that when his government first came to power, the World Bank and other lending agencies caused a number of major investments in the forestry sector to disappear by their insistence of environmental standards.

Guyana lost major investments in the forestry sector, since there were four major timber companies from Singapore and Malaysia who were interested in not just chopping down our forests, but also in establishing businesses within Guyana. These investments fizzed away because the concessions could not be granted due to Guyana not having an adequate environmental-monitoring capacity.

It had long been suspected that the real reason why the environmental argument was used against Guyana, was because of the need of the West to protect their timber industry from the competition that was being provided by countries such as Malaysia and Singapore. The environmental argument was being used to stifle the growth of the timber industry by the Asian Tigers.

A few years ago, oil prices began to rise astronomically. In fact, it reached US\$140 per barrel, prompting renewed interest in countries such as Brazil for ethanol production. Brazil produces cheaper ethanol than the United States, which has imposed a tariff on imports of ethanol so as to protect its domestic industry. There has also been renewed interest in other bio-fuels caused by the rise in global fuel prices. The production of these bio-fuels, including ethanol, requires increased deforestation and therefore the pro-environmental lobby that is calling for reduce deforestation is harming the expansion of the bio-fuel

industry. Some may even wish to say that there is link between the need to stifle the ethanol market outside of the West, and this sudden interest by environmentalists in calling for avoided deforestation. Whether or not there is such a link, it cannot be deemphasized that avoided deforestation will work against countries seeking to expand their ethanol production, so as to offset the high cost of fuel imports.

Some politicians do not see the land that is being cleared for the cultivation of crops for conversion to bio-fuels as constituting forests. For example, they do not see the thinly forested hilly sand and clay area as constituting forests. However, the global definition of forest covers these lands that are used for the production of bio-fuels and therefore, President Bharrat Jagdeo may be shooting himself in the foot, when on the one hand he is advocating for avoided deforestation, while on the other hand his government is also interested in the cultivation of food for conversion to bio-fuels.

The President has to be careful that he is not being manipulated by the powerful environmental lobby, because in pushing for avoided deforestation, he may be serving the interests of those who are not only keen on curbing the expansion of ethanol production outside of the United States, but also harnessing the expansion forestry related by Asian companies which are out-competing the West.

President lectures UG students on Low Carbon Development Strategy

June 18, 2009 | By [knews](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

A section of the audience at UG during the President's lecture

President Bharrat Jagdeo yesterday gave a lecture at the University of Guyana on the country's Low Carbon Development Strategy where he stated that it is important that the institution get involved in formulating national policies.

The strategy is aimed towards promoting economic development, while at the same time combating climate change.

Following his lecture, the Head of State entertained questions from students about the strategy whilst calling for a platform on which developing countries like Guyana are not seen as mere recipients of aid, but as equal partners in the search for climate solutions.

The first set of public consultations on the strategy will begin on Friday in Region 9.

During July 6-15, the consultations will be taken to Regions Six, Seven, Eight and Ten.

Initial negotiations on new climate change agreement completed

June 17, 2009 | By [knews](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

Caribbean negotiators have come out of the first round of negotiations, on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) text of the draft declaration for a new Climate Change Agreement, very optimistic that significant common understanding has been built to facilitate the negotiations, when the 15th UN Conference of the Parties (COP 15) meet in Copenhagen in December.

Over the past two weeks, Caricom negotiators joined their counterparts of the United Nations Member States at a meeting in Bonn, Germany, to initiate negotiations on the draft document.

The issue of climate change, including the outcomes of the Bonn meeting, in addition to final

preparations for COP 15 will be one of the major issues for discussion when Heads of Government meet in Guyana from July 2, 2009.

The negotiating text of the draft Declaration will be addressed further at another round of negotiations in Germany during August.

It will also be discussed at the UN Special Session on Climate Change in September resulting from decisions taken in Bonn at several parallel sessions, contact and working groups and subsidiary bodies. Representatives from the Caribbean led the discussions on a range of issues by acting as facilitators for four of the important groups and bodies of the Convention.

These included the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice, the Nairobi Work Programme and the longer-term aspects of international climate change cooperation.

In addition, the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations, Ambassador John Ashe was elected to serve as the Chair of the important working group reviewing the Kyoto Protocol.

Two readings of the draft text provided the opportunity for the Caribbean representatives to address regional concerns.

It was also reported that progress had been in relation to global requirements for stabilising Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and on reduced emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD).

With respect to a carbon tax being advocated by President Bharrat Jagdeo it was agreed that Belize and Guyana would be working along with other like-minded parties to formulate a coherent response on the REDD plus initiative.

Despite the positive note on which the negotiations ended however, it was understood that there were still some gaps to be addressed, chief among which are the negotiations on the Kyoto Protocol on emissions reduction where the developed countries are yet to agree with the developing countries on emission reductions levels proposed for 2012.

There are also the outstanding issues on land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) that remain unresolved.

Last Monday, President Jagdeo, launched Guyana's low carbon development strategy towards promoting economic development, while at the same time combating climate change.

While doing so, he called for a platform on which developing countries like Guyana are not seen as mere recipients of aid, but as equal partners in the search for climate solutions.

The launch of the strategy represented the start of an aggressive round of consultations, three months long, with all stakeholders, and a robust public relations campaign, before it is adopted by the government.

Deforestation and Communities

June 15, 2009 | By [knews](#) | Filed Under [Editorial](#)

In the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) draft paper that has been put forward as the base document for national consultations, the impact of deforestation on local communities has been emphasised.

We have a unique situation in our rainforests, where practically all the indigenous Amerindians have communal title to their lands (13% of our landmass) and they have been given the option to “opt in” or chose not to participate in whatever eventual plan that will emerge. They, however, have been included in the consultation process, not only to make them aware of what may be in the offing, but to offer their invaluable experience gleaned from centuries of coexisting with the forest ecosystem.

In the premises of the LCDS, the argument for deforestation is made by pointing to the economic gains that come from the logging, agriculture, livestock etc. that replace the forests. A study that was just published in the prestigious journal *Science*, however, is questioning that assumption by taking a more nuanced approach to the notion of “development”. The researchers used the UNDP’s development index, a metric that combines life expectancy, literacy, and standard of living, to assess the welfare of two-hundred and eighty-six villages in the Brazilian Amazon with varying degrees of deforestation. They found that the relative welfare of the inhabitants increases as deforestation begins, but then declines as the frontier progresses on to other areas, leaving pre and post-deforestation levels of human development statistically equal. In other words, the boom-and-bust cycle generates few lasting benefits for local permanent populations.

Most gains accrue to a population of migrants—loggers, ranchers, speculators, land squatters, miners, and farmers, that move with the frontier as resources are exhausted and land is degraded. This discrepancy between the economic growth that the migrants produce, and is reflected in booming GDP figures and the transitory benefits to the permanent population, brings to the fore the old distinction between “growth” and ‘development that should be a caution to our indigenous peoples.

The study supports the conclusion of the LCDS that the mechanisms to compensate communities for keeping forests standing, may be a better approach to improving human welfare, while simultaneously sustaining biodiversity and ecosystem services, in rainforest areas.

However, while the LCDS focuses on the relative benefits of the various funding mechanisms that have been touted (and will be decided on at the upcoming UNFCCC’s December meeting in Copenhagen) the study suggests that payments for ecosystem services schemes will only be effective where there is the institutional capacity to deliver benefits to local people.

The authors argue, as does the LSDS, that emerging payments for ecosystem services schemes, could become a key mechanism for delivering benefits to local populations as an incentive for preserving forests as viable and productive ecosystems. They point out that a handful of ecosystem services programs are already being implemented in the Brazilian Amazon, including Bolsa Floresta in the state of Amazonas, an initiative that offers payment and access to education and healthcare to families that voluntary agree to reduce deforestation.

Finally, in line with the LCDS proposed parallel “green development” of the intermediate savannahs, the study concludes, “A combined approach might include supporting the better use of areas that have already been deforested, or in our case, savannahs-(e.g., via the intensification of ranching and agriculture) alongside restricting further deforestation [e.g., through protected areas and appropriate land use zoning] and promoting reforestation in degraded landscapes; direct incentives to encourage forest-based livelihoods based on the sustainable harvest of timber and non-timber forest products,

within and beyond forest concessions; and targeted policies to improve literacy, health, and land tenure security.”

It would appear that there should be some concentrated attention by the administration and the indigenous peoples, to ensure that sustainable development is the result of all the strum and drang.

PNCR expects no genuine consultations

June 15, 2009 | By [knews](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

Low Carbon Development Strategy...

The main opposition People’s National Congress Reform (PNCR) says it expects no genuine consultations on the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LDCS) that was launched by President Jagdeo last Monday. PNCR executive council member, Lance Carberry, said there should have been consultations before the draft strategy was developed, and hence, “the cart is manifestly here before the horse.”

It is believed that by having the consultations after the launch of the plan, the Jagdeo government will ensure that its documents remain virtually intact.

“The Jagdeo Administration is fully aware that very few of our citizens would want to incur the wrath and venom of the Administration, by making any major proposals to change the text of the Low-Carbon Development Strategy,” Carberry stated.

He took particular note of the fact that the work and research being undertaken by the Iwokrama International Centre, finds no mention in the Strategy. The Centre manages the one-million acre Iwokrama forest in the heart of Guyana, to show how tropical forests can be conserved and sustainably used to provide ecological, social and economic benefits to local, national and international communities.

The forest was offered, by the now late and former President Desmond Hoyte of the PNCR administration.

The PNCR finds it a matter of curiosity that the Jagdeo Administration “did not think that the work and research being undertaken by the Centre, to be of sufficient importance for informing the development and implementation of the plan, for realising the benefits from the Low-Carbon Development Strategy.”

“It is remarkable that, in this country, the PPP and the Jagdeo Administration continue to believe that the history of this nation began in 1992. Anything of worth or which is a credit to any other organisation or group is ruthlessly excised,” Carberry stated.

However, he said of greater concern to the PNCR, is the manner in which the people of Guyana will benefit from the financial and other benefits accruing from the proposed Low-Carbon Development Strategy and the Avoided Deforestation initiative of President Jagdeo.

So far, Carberry suggested, the Administration has proceeded on the assumption that the natural resources of Guyana are under the exclusive control of the PPP Administration to do as they please.

“Consequently, the benefits to be derived may be treated in the same inequitable and discriminatory manner in which the Jagdeo regime has been conducting the affairs of Guyana,” he charged.

“The Jagdeo Administration should be put on notice, however, that the PNCR is determined to ensure that any benefits, which Guyana derives, from its natural resources endowment are equitably distributed, for the benefit of all citizens and free from political partisanship,” Carberry declared.

The government is seeking an international partnership that will provide incentives for keeping alive about 80 percent of Guyana's forests, or some 15 million hectares, which have not been touched over time. These forests form part of the State Forest Estate, and Amerindian communities are being told they can opt into the initiative, or choose not to be part of it.

This week, the government will launch a three-month consultation process on the Low Carbon Development Strategy.

Leader of the Opposition, Robert Corbin said the PNCR does not have confidence in the consultative process, because Jagdeo had also promised a series of consultations on his strategy for avoided deforestation, but this has not happened.

BHARRAT'S BIG GAMBLE

June 14, 2009 | By [knews](#) | Filed Under [Features / Columnists](#), [Peeping Tom](#)

If what the President of Guyana is hoping for comes true, it would be like Guyana discovering oil without the help of CGX. The only difference being that we would not need to invest a cent and our new found source of wealth would be clean development.

President Jagdeo's climate change initiative and his new Low Carbon Development Strategy are like an egg hanging five thousand feet above ground level on a thin thread. If that thread breaks then it will all come crashing down.

The thread on which this initiative stands is Copenhagen in December where the President is hoping that the developed world will agree to two sets of things – firstly, a significant cut on greenhouse gases, and secondly, rewarding countries such as Guyana for not cutting down their forests.

Guyana estimates that it can gain hundreds of millions of dollars as consequence of these two actions. If the developed world agree to significant cuts in emissions, then the carbon trading market will increase and Guyana which will be in a position to trade carbon credits may capitalize on the sale of credits to countries and companies which may be required to cap their emissions but which may be unable to do so. These companies and countries, in order not to be penalized, would then have to buy carbon credits for exceeding their emission levels and Guyana is hoping to have a great deal to sell since we have a lot of virgin rainforest.

At the same time, Guyana is hoping that the developed world will decide to reward countries which promise not to cut down trees i.e. it is hoping the developed world will reward Guyana for simply doing nothing.

Guyana may be hoping for too much. First of all, a great deal rests on what the American's decide and the initial indications are that the Americans are not willing in a time of recession to ask their industry to bear the additional costs of cutting greenhouse gas emissions. The American administration supports the need for taking action on the environment but the administration has also made it clear that in a time of recession, this cannot come at a price to boosting production and putting Americans back to work.

President Jagdeo's climate change initiative may therefore be ill-timed. He is banking on a major decision at Copenhagen in December but the signs are not that clear cut that the deal he is envisioning is going to happen. The Europeans in fact have already indicated that only cautious cuts in emissions are

likely to be agreed to by them from now till 2020, and these cuts would not go far enough to bolster the carbon markets much less to lay the foundations for countries like Guyana to be paid for not chopping down their forests.

A Low Carbon Economy sounds like a pipe dream, especially considering that Guyana does not have a national industrial policy and in fact industrialization outside of sugar and bauxite is very limited within the local economy. A Low Carbon Growth Strategy is however necessary if Guyana is to sell its proposals. It is hardly likely that Guyana would have any chance of impacting on the consciences of the world if it stands up and argues for greater emission cuts when it runs an economy which in itself does not utilize a great deal of alternative energy sources.

The Low Carbon Development Strategy also proposes that Guyana develop an information technology park. Guyana is apparently priding itself as an ideal point for the provision of “outsourcing” services. Again the presence of a national industrial and technological strategy would have been most helpful. At least it may have answered the question as to whether Guyana has not missed the bus when it comes to these services and whether we have the requisite human resources to allow us to compete against giants such as India which have made inroads into this sector.

Perhaps we can learn from the experience of Barbados who was supposed to be a regional forerunner in information technology and see how well that country has done and how long it has taken them before we move more aggressively towards the creating of this information technology park.

If on the other hand, there is a dramatic turn of events in December at Copenhagen, then Guyana could benefit significantly and its foresight in drawing up a Low Carbon Development Strategy can prove to be extremely beneficial. Guyana stands to gain considerably if the international community commits to significant cuts and to a special deal for avoided deforestation.

The thread upon which these deals are hanging is tenuous at the least. Come December we will know for sure whether the gamble that our President is taking is likely to be blessed with luck or doom. Or in other words whether Guyana will finally find its long lost El Dorado or whether like we, like Sir Walter Raleigh, are chasing after a mythical dream.

The Low Carbon Development Strategy

June 14, 2009 | By [knews](#) | Filed Under [Features / Columnists](#), [Ravi Dev](#)

The new Low Carbon Development Strategy, announced last week by President Jagdeo should have come as a surprise to Guyanese. Over the last two years, the President has been rather single-minded in his promotion of the conservation of our forests in the global efforts to deal with the dangers that climate change pose to the planet. It is only natural that as the leader of a poor developing country, he has united whatever interests he may have as an environmentalist to those that seek to further our country's development.

Forests, of course –especially tropical forests – play an invaluable role in controlling the amount of carbon dioxide, which is the major contributor to the greenhouse effect that causes global warming, in the atmosphere. There is more carbon stored in trees than in the entire atmosphere of earth and deforestation, at present, pumps out some twenty percent of annual harmful emissions – more than that of all the vehicles in the world. Not surprisingly, parallel with the efforts to reduce emissions from

machines was the one to halt the rate of deforestation. Moral suasion centring on the deleterious effects on “Mother Earth” was the major armament deployed against the major deforestation countries – such as Brazil and Indonesia.

It did not dawn on many of the early “environmentalists” – as on many ordinary Guyanese even today – that there ought to be an economic value placed on the reduction of emissions by reducing deforestation. If the world was willing to pay countless billions annually to reduce emissions, not only from vehicles but from other sources such as factories to prevent global warming, ought there not to be a mechanism to compensate countries for the prevention of deforestation that performs the same task for the rest of the world? That world finally decided that the answer was “yes” a year and a half ago at Bali and the UN is supposed to come up with a mechanism of compensation at the end of this year at Copenhagen. The agreement, was bureaucratically labelled Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD).

But the agreement still focuses on “emissions” and their reduction. The countries that are in line for compensation are those that have been rapidly deforesting recently and that will now promise to clean up their act. President’s Jagdeo’s contribution has been to take the discourse to a new level – to ask what about those countries that did not rape their forests but rather conserved them in rather pristine condition? Doesn’t this action in sequestering carbon away from the atmosphere also have economic value? While he may not have been the first person to pose the question, as an economist, he early on saw the benefits for Guyana since sooner or later the answer to the question had to also be “yes”.

The UN body working on the new arrangements to succeed the Kyoto Protocol has just finished a meeting in Bonn and there are three more scheduled before Copenhagen. While there is still a ways to go, there has been some progress in accepting the Guyana position that envisages that a carbon trading mechanism be instituted to compensate for sequestered carbon. One major hurdle to overcome would be the position of Brazil, which has the largest block of forests standing (even after all the criticised deforestation) and is seen a key to any future agreement. Brazil is also of the view that countries must be compensated for their conserved forests but rather than the cap and trade route that would allow polluters in the developed world to trade allowances with the forested countries – and so “get off the hook” for their past and present violations, they prefer direct contributions.

Brazil also is very leery of the various stipulations that trading schemes may seek to impose on the conserving countries – which may work to hinder their development into first world status. Brazil is proposing that it will (and has already) set aside stipulated (and vast) areas of its forests for conservation – and even reclamation. It has established a fund (the Amazonian Fund) to compensate the inhabitants and further their development – much along the lines proposed by President Jagdeo in the LCDS. The major difference is that Brazil is insisting that the developed countries that caused the present crisis in the first place must contribute to the fund with no preconditions excepting that the areas stipulated to be conserved must be kept that way. They have to pay for their past excesses in harming the entire planet – it is no handout – and developing countries must be given some (not even an equal - chance. Norway, which has become the major backer of President Jagdeo’s proposal has already contributed US\$1billion dollars to the Brazilian Fund. Germany has also signalled that it will step up to bat. Brazil has indicated, however, that it may be prepared to compromise somewhat to ensure that progress is made on compensation for the rainforest countries. One hitch has surfaced that has confirmed the fears of some the “anti-cap and trade” camp is a recent fraud in one established privately in New Guinea that

has been the pioneer in the effort to fund standing forests. The fear is that unless the system is monitored very strenuously, the intended beneficiaries of the scheme – generally the forest dwellers may not see much of the money.

The Brazilian scheme deals with this objection by the insisting that sovereign countries must be given authority to develop its country based on its own criteria.

Their stance highlights our own concern that Guyana ought not to be hogtied in its efforts to develop Guyana as a whole by the regulations that will come down with the “market” mechanisms of compensation. We have had too much experience with the “conditionalities” of the World Bank and the IMF over the last quarter of century.

Office of the President accuses Kaieteur News of misquote

June 12, 2009 | By [knews](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

The Kaieteur News report yesterday headed “Low Carbon development Strategy – No ‘special’ consultations for Amerindians” is off target, according to Office of the President.

It said that Dr. Roger Luncheon, Head of the Presidential Secretariat and Cabinet Secretary, told the Kaieteur News in response to a question from one of its reporters: “The consultations with stakeholders start with the most comprehensive of outreach. It is indeed to provide comprehensive awareness. “It is not targeting specific stakeholders. So whether Amerindians, indigenous communities in Regions One, Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten opt in or opt out, they will be a part of the consultative process.

“Their opting in and opting out is a decision that the communities would make at some point in the implementation of the strategy.”

Amerindian Affairs Ministry insists on hinterland consultations

June 12, 2009 | By [knews](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

“It is our duty as a government to provide the Amerindian population with enough information with enough capacity to understand what the strategy holds for us as a nation and also the benefits that may be accruing from pursuing such a development strategy,” - Sukhai

The Amerindian Affairs Ministry has announced that there will be special consultations held in Amerindian communities to edify them on the recently launched Low Carbon Development Strategy. On Tuesday last, at a press briefing, Amerindian Affairs Minister, Pauline Sukhai, told media operatives, “We will be moving to consult with the communities on the strategy and also to educate them and make them much more aware of what the strategy holds and what it means for Guyana; what it means for hinterland development and also to hold them to understand the strategy so that they will be able to make their decision whether they want to opt in.”

The Minister pointed out that it was the duty of the government to provide the Amerindian population with enough information, with enough capacity, to understand what the strategy holds for us as a nation and also the benefits that may be accruing from pursuing such a development strategy that will be taking off on the 19th (June).”

She announced that Government teams would be traveling to Regions nine, one, seven, eight and 10. The coastal Amerindian communities would have a chance to join any of the coastal consultations and there are plans afoot to discuss further in that, they will be seeking to have all the coastal Amerindian communities at one forum, she said. “They too can sit together and be able to discuss and also hear from the presenters from the government side a more in-depth presentation on the strategy.”

Dr Luncheon at his weekly post Cabinet press briefing on Wednesday last, told media operatives that Amerindian communities in Guyana, which own 14 percent of the country’s land, will not benefit from any “special” treatment in the consultations that will lead to the adoption of the government’s Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS).

The government is now seeking an international partnership that will provide incentives for keeping alive about 80 percent of Guyana’s forests, or some 15 million hectares, which have not been touched over time.

These forests form part of the State Forest Estate and Amerindian communities are being told they can opt into the initiative, or choose not to be part of it.

The government will next week launch a three-month consultation process and public education drive.

No ‘special’ consultations for Amerindians

June 11, 2009 | By [knews](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

... Low Carbon Development Strategy

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The government will next week launch a three-month consultation process and public education drive, Cabinet Secretary Dr Roger Luncheon said yesterday, but said “special” stakeholders are not being catered for.

He stated the government has no intention of “soliciting” any community to opt in or out of the strategy when consultations begin in Regions 1, 7, 8, 9 and 10 next week.

According to Dr Luncheon, copies of the strategy will be made available before the consultation process is held. The Norwegian government will monitor the consultation process.

The government of Norway is working with Guyana to determine a system of payment for this country’s climate change programme, particularly that of keeping the rainforest standing, instead of engaging in timber operations, mineral exploration or other economic activities that could mean a destruction of the forest.

Norway is prepared to provide performance-based, substantial and sustained compensation for the progress Guyana makes in limiting emissions from deforestation at low levels and further decreasing forest degradation.

In cooperation with Guyana and its multilateral partners, this will include contributing to the development and implementation of the necessary strategies and reforms, capacity building, and developing, funding and implementing suitable low-carbon and adaptation investments.

Dr Luncheon yesterday said the agreement with Norway is going according to plan.

Amerindian leaders had previously expressed concern about the government’s low carbon development initiative, saying they do not know anything about carbon trading or REDD - the United Nations led collaborative programme on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

The Amerindian Act of 2006 gives Amerindian villages legal powers to manage and conserve their lands.

The Amerindians are Guyana’s first people and make up 9.1 percent of the country’s population.

According to the strategy released by President Bharrat Jagdeo on Monday, Amerindians are increasingly instituting formal mechanisms to protect the forest within their communities, but are not “obliged by law to protect forested areas.”

As such, Amerindian lands have been omitted from the calculation of the Economic Value to the Nation (EVN) in an expert study that determined how much Guyana could earn by pursuing income-generating activities from the forest. The EVN calculation was limited to the State Forest Estate.

Inclusion of Amerindian land in forest payments, including REDD, will be determined through the consultative process with individual forest communities.

Ninety-six village communities have title over their lands, and another ten villages do not yet have formal legal title. Amerindian lands are owned collectively by the whole village and administered through an elected Village Council that has the power to make legally-binding rules for everyone within village lands.

According to the strategy statement, the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs is continuing to work to expand land under Amerindian ownership, and extra resources provided through REDD and other forest payments will be used to accelerate this process.

Over the next few years, Amerindian villages will have a choice of whether to put their forests into the international protection programme (side-by-side with the State Estate) and, assuming continuing adherence to the agreement, receive their appropriate share of forest compensation payments.

The decision to participate will likely be based on whether participation will lead to improved access to

opportunities and services for forest-dependent communities. Communities will be asked to propose priority improvement opportunities, such as expansion of social services including health and education, provision of low-carbon energy sources (most villages are not on the national grid so need alternate power sources), and provision of clean water.

The strategy stated that previous consultations with forest communities in Guyana have highlighted the importance of providing attractive income-generating opportunities – for example, support to grow and market non-subsistence agriculture products without stimulating deforestation (for example, non-perishable spices) and help to develop community-based ecotourism offerings.

Based on proposals from some representatives of Amerindian communities during the preparation of the Strategy, it is planned to set up an indigenous development fund with forest payments that are for Amerindian lands.

Some payments would flow directly to individual villages, and the balance would fund a broader Amerindian Development Fund.

The Amerindian Development Fund would be a grant-based programme where indigenous groups (not just those who live in the forest) could apply for funds for development programs (similar to the Brazilian Amazon Fund).

The Ethanol Train

June 11, 2009 | By [knews](#) | Filed Under [Editorial](#)

Brazil organised a Global Ethanol Summit last week that drew a gamut of specialists, entrepreneurs, investors, elected officials and environmentalists from interested countries, not to mention President Lula and environmental spokesman ex-US President Bill Clinton.

We do not have any reports whether Guyana was represented but we hope that we were. The summit reiterated the key role that biofuels in general and ethanol in particular will play in the paradigmatic shift in fuel supplies that the world must undergo to replace fossil fuels and also to counteract global warming.

In the last three decades, Brazil has ramped up production of ethanol from sugar cane to become the second largest producer in the world behind the US. The former's production costs, however, are fall below that of the latter - even after a subsidy of forty-five cents. One of the dominant themes of the conference was the additional fifty-four cents per gallon U.S. tariff on imported ethanol which has become a thorn in the side of U.S.-Brazil bilateral trade ties.

This tariff will also work against Caribbean ethanol producers. Heavily criticised for instigating a global food shortage in 2007, the largely inefficient U.S.-based corn ethanol agro-industry has been propped up by a series of tariffs, quotas, and subsidies.

These are obviously anti-developmental and sharply at odds with the free trade rhetoric espoused by U.S. agencies and Washington-based international actors like the IMF and World Bank.

The "pick and choose" free trade model was consistently criticised at the summit.

At the Summit, panels and their presenters addressed problems faced as well as posed by the biofuels industry. These include the merits of new technologies, sustainable economic growth patterns throughout Latin America and Africa, equitable debt solutions for producers, the prospective reduction

of climate change, and increasing market access in the US and EU. Lula's chief of staff Rouseff announced Brazil's moves toward producing for commercial use cellulose-based (also known as second-generation) ethanol made mainly from woodchips and switchgrass.

Clinton urged Brazil not to expand ethanol production at the expense of its rainforest and asked that it share its technology with potential ethanol producers like the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

The ex-President, however, was misinformed since Brazil sugar cane (like ours) is not grown on cleared forests. In terms of sharing its technology, President Lula, on his visit to our country in 2005, offered to share that technology with us. The ball is in our court. In the last decade, Colombia has plunged ahead to become South America's second biggest ethanol player and this year is seeking to double its production with six new plants coming on stream.

Our government has long expressed its commitment to developing our ethanol potential. Back in 2007 we had a high-level hemispheric seminar on expanding bio-energy opportunities in the Caribbean right here at the Guyana International Conference Centre.

The President of the IDB pointed out that sugar-ethanol could power half of Guyana and meet all gasoline needs as he announced that through a donation from the Government of Japan, Guyana was benefiting from an IDB-administered technical cooperation programme that will provide US\$850,000 to evaluate and screen bio-energy project proposals.

Since then we have had several proposals from investors for establishing new sugar plantations to supply ethanol plants but we suspect that the present global financial meltdown might have a role in slowing their progress.

Drainage and irrigation constraints in the Canje Basin, which has been identified as potential cultivation site, will also have to be addressed. The recently announced low-carbon development strategy mentions overcoming these constraints. The Minister of Agriculture had also announced that Guysuco would be establishing a small ethanol plant –possibly as a demonstrator project – associated with one of the eight sugar plantations - but here the problems with obtaining sufficient sugarcane for the sugar operations might be holding matters up.

Be as it may, we will have to bite the bullet sooner rather than later. The ethanol train has left the station and have to get on or be left behind.

Low Carbon Development Strategy

June 10, 2009 | By [knews](#) | Filed Under [Editorial](#)

President Bharrat Jagdeo, on Monday, unveiled a bold new vision for our country's future in the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) that he outlined at the National Convention Centre.

He has committed to a broad and comprehensive national consultation process over the next three months and during that time, starting with this editorial; we will attempt to highlight various aspects of the LCDS to facilitate a more informed interaction.

Today we look at the funding premises.

By now most Guyanese are probably aware of the basis of the President's argument for the world to compensate Guyana for its standing forests. Deforestation and degradation of forests supply some 17 percent of the greenhouse gases that literally fuel global warming and its attendant disastrous climate change effects, such as rising oceans, floods and droughts.

If Guyana were to follow the past practices of developed countries and the present practices of many developing countries in the "exploitation" of its forests, we would be adding to that emission problem. By keeping those forests standing, therefore, Guyana is providing a service to the rest of the world. The problem, however, as the President pointed out, will be whether the world will place a value on "the services that forests provide when trees are kept alive, including the storage of greenhouse gases". For the longest while, most of the attention was placed on reducing emissions of greenhouse gases (sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxide and carbon dioxide) from industrial processes and vehicles but of recent, the significant contribution of deforestation was recognised.

Four ways were proposed to deal with the problem: reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD) conserved carbon stocks, plantation forestry and ecosystem services.

The REDD concept won tacit approval in the UNFCCC's December 2007 climate talks in Bali and has been lauded by many for its capacity to reduce emissions and protect biodiversity.

The problem for us is that the only countries that may qualify are those with high deforestation rates – such as Brazil and Indonesia.

These countries would in effect be rewarded for slowing down their recent rapid deforestation.

Countries with low deforestation rates will see little funding under the proposed system since carbon credits are only issued for emissions reductions, not carbon stored.

This was the "perverse incentive" to which President Jagdeo alluded when he first broached the subject of offering to keep Guyana's forests unravaged for the benefit of the global climate stabilization.

Under the present orientation it would be in Guyana's interest to encourage the companies in the forestry sector to plunder the forests.

Markets value fallen forests because the lumber is given a value but the carbon they store while standing is not. This, of course, is a classic example of a market failure but the \$64,000 question is whether it can be corrected with a broader scheme by December of this year (only six months away) when the UNFCCC will design a successor to the Kyoto Protocol.

We can project figures on the Present Net Value of our forests based on opportunity costs forgone by deforestation, but how realistic will they be seen? Mechanized agriculture, cattle ranching, ranch land prices that work for, say Brazil with deeper soils in their forests, might be more suitable for our savannahs that do not fall under REDD.

We have not seen many timber plantations or oil palm concessions turned away: emitters might more likely to opt for the free rider route.

And this fact in itself brings out the flaw in the broader scheme, known as preventative or conserved carbon credits, which would pay countries for the carbon contained in their forests, and seen as a way to include countries such as Guyana that have effectively preserved their forests.

U.N. negotiators up to now are concerned that the sheer volume of carbon stored in global ecosystems could lead to an oversupply of credits, triggering a collapse in the price of carbon and therefore undermining the market and the incentive to reduce emissions.

We hope that a government spokesperson could comment on the UNFCCC's latest position since a voluntary scheme would not provide the funds for the outlined development projects.

Guyana launches Low Carbon Development Strategy

June 9, 2009 | By [knews](#) | Filed Under [News](#)

-Jagdeo calls for "equal partnership" in climate change fight

President Bharrat Jagdeo, yesterday, launched Guyana's low carbon development strategy towards promoting economic development, while at the same time combating climate change.

British High Commissioner Fraser Wheeler shares a light moment with President Bharrat Jagdeo after the launch of Guyana's Low Carbon development strategy.

While doing so, he called for a platform on which developing countries like Guyana, are not seen as mere recipients of aid, but as equal partners in the search for climate solutions.

The launch of the strategy represented the start of an aggressive round of consultations, three months long, with all stakeholders, and a robust public relations campaign, before it is adopted by the government.

"There will be plenty of time and more materials," Jagdeo said at the launching of the strategy at the Guyana International Conference Centre.

A low carbon economy, is one where economic activities are geared to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide that would otherwise go into the air, and also where other activities and lifestyles seek to minimize the effects of climate change.

The implementation of the strategy, for the large part, hangs on the December meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Copenhagen. The meeting is expected to lay out a new global framework to combat climate change. Guyana and other forest-rich nations, want Copenhagen to include incentives for them in keeping the forests alive, thereby providing a reward for the eco-system services the forests provide.

About 80 percent of Guyana's forests, or some 15 million hectares (37 million acres), have remained untouched over time. An expert study commissioned by Guyana, estimates that the country could receive payment in excess of US\$580 million annually, if it were to engage in economic activities that could lead to the destruction of the forests, but the economic value to the world, if these same forests were left standing would be equivalent to US\$40 billion.

The President described Guyana's forests as a world class asset, in that in its home to 600 species of animals and plant life; generate rainfall; and absorb carbon dioxide, one of the greenhouse gases which pollute the atmosphere and help contribute to global warming.

With the right low-deforestation economic incentives, Guyana will avoid emissions of 1.5 gigatons of CO₂ (carbon dioxide equivalent which includes other greenhouse gases) by 2020 that would have been produced by an otherwise economically rational development path.