



Office of the President

Shiv Chanderpaul Drive, Bourda

Georgetown,

Guyana

22 April, 2022

Amerindian Peoples' Association (APA)

Dear APA Members,

The Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) of the Office of the President wishes to acknowledge your feedback on the draft Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030 in its communication dated 12 April 2022.

As detailed in the draft LCDS 2030, respecting the rights to consultation, participation and free prior and informed consent (FPIC) sit at the core of the Government's programme on Amerindian and hinterland affairs.

The DECC shares its feedback on the points raised and seeks to provide further clarification and information for discussion.

Full Indigenous Representation and Robust Process Implemented for LCDS 2030

Firstly, the DECC wishes to thank the APA for serving as an active member of the Multistakeholder Steering Committee (MSSC), the highest oversight body of the LCDS. The APA's support and guidance to the stakeholder engagement sub-committee are commendable and highly appreciated. We wish to highlight the four main indigenous non-governmental organizations (NGOs): (i) Amerindian Peoples' Association, (ii) The Amerindian Action Movement of Guyana, (iii) Guyanese Organization of Indigenous Peoples,' and (iv) the National Amerindian Development Foundation are represented, as well as the (v) Indigenous Peoples Commission (IPC) and the (vi) National Toshaos' Council (NTC). It is anticipated that these representatives will uphold their duty to actively provide feedback to the MSSC and the stakeholder groups they represent.

The Government will continue to build on the work previously done in Indigenous villages and communities with the LCDS 2030 by enhancing the potential and knowledge of the people in these communities. In this spirit, the DECC wishes to convey that **the current LCDS 2030 is a draft document available for public consultations.**

The LCDS 2010, which laid the early framework for low carbon development in Guyana, including forest carbon credits, was subject to extensive national, regional and community-based consultations. The LCDS, which has been and remains at a national scale, was discussed at the community and National Toshaos' Council levels and received full



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endorsement. The central tenet of the LCDS has been one where communities benefit from revenues earned from the programme of forest carbon services. To this end, under the Guyana Norway Agreement, with a total of US\$220M earned under the Agreement, a wide range of programmes that benefitted communities directly were implemented. The LCDS 2030 seeks to advance the work started under the first LCDS for a sustainable future towards 2030.

Following the MSSC's guidance, the consultation process has undertaken a national, regional and district level focus, where community-level consultations will further enrich. Indeed, the LCDS team has also engaged with representatives of other indigenous groups, including the South Rupununi District Council, who received a specially organized LCDS presentation at the Office of the President and facilitated the team's participation in their District Council meeting held in Maruranau on 11 March 2022. Additionally, the team participated in the quarterly meeting of the North Rupununi District Development Board and engaged with Tshaos, councillors, students and other residents of the North Rupununi on 25 March 2022.

The outreaches are facilitated with an LCDS 2030 presentation and translation at the village level. The Department places major efforts in ensuring the rights of indigenous peoples in the development, consultation and finalization of the LCDS 2030 are respected. The Department intends for this approach to continue and deepen in the months ahead. There is no deadline being set for the community-based consultations, as these sessions will inform the implementation aspects of the LCDS, and the Department looks forward to continuing working with the APA and other members of the MSSC as communities continue to deepen their engagement which will be ongoing over the years to come.

LCDS 2030 respects the Right to Free Prior and Informed Consent

The draft LCDS 2030 states the Government's recognition of FPIC as "a guiding principle" and its intent to strengthen Indigenous peoples' participation. The draft Strategy outlines a programme where the villages will inform intervention at the indigenous community and village level through Village Plans.

The villages will develop these plans in consultation with the relevant government agency and where technical advice is needed. The integrity of the process of determining the programmes needed for the sustainable development of the villages rests with the good process followed by villages. The Government trusts that this will be done well by villages and that NGOs, such as the APA, would provide assistance to the village councils and communities where requested by those villages.

FPIC is fundamental to the development of plans that will represent the community level implementation of the LCDS; we urge you to implement this at the village level fully and tap



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into the pool of persons versed in this important value, such as the 210 persons trained in FPIC under the Amerindian Land Titling project. There is no time limit to this process, and we strongly encourage you to take as much time as needed for project identification. The Government stands by to support all Amerindian villages in this process as is needed and requested.

National-Level Programmes under the LCDS 2030

While community-level projects and programmes will be identified and progressed by villages through the Village Plans as outlined above, some programmes will progress at a national level. We welcome your feedback on several of these in your submissions.

The DECC notes that broader ongoing engagements are being had on the Amerindian Act and the elections of the National Tshao Council (NTC). Whilst the engagements on the Amerindian Act and NTC elections have a bearing on the LCDS process, these are being advanced through the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs.

Similarly, specific national-level projects outlined in the LCDS, such as Hydropower development, will engage with stakeholders directly through the respective Ministries and agencies, such as the Environment Protection Agency. In advancing these national projects, the Government of Guyana has maintained as a primary focus the advancement of broad-based, inclusive, sustainable development alongside the avoidance and limiting of any negative impact these projects may have on livelihoods and ecosystems as part of its development mandate.

When it comes to national-level projects that are particularly focused on areas of village concern, DECC notes the interest of the signatories in seeing the advancement of the Land Titling Programme, the Amerindian Development Fund and programmes on Low impact mining and logging. These programmes will be advanced through government resources and potential financing from the LCDS.

Specifically, the Amerindian Land Titling Programme (ALT) being implemented by the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs (MoAA) will continue to progress in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Under the ALT, thirteen (13) communities have been issued Absolute Grants, and twenty-three (23) villages demarcated, with nineteen (19) of these having been issued Certificates of Title. This brings the total number of communities in Guyana with Absolute Grants to one hundred and nine (109) and those with Certificates of Title to ninety-eight (98). The MoAA and UNDP will continue with the guidance of the ALT project board, which includes representation by the APA and other Indigenous NGOs, to title all remaining communities desirous of doing so. The titling process will, as highlighted in the project document, continue to follow and be guided by best practices and guidelines, including the principle of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC); the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; UN-REDD Programme



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Social And Environmental Principles and Criteria; and The United Nations Development Group's Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, to name a few. As you may be aware, under the previous Administration, the land titling programme, the main mechanism for securing land tenure for Indigenous peoples, was stalled. This programme has been restarted under the current Administration and programmed to fulfil its initial mandate. It is also noted that with the commencement of this programme under the Guyana REDD+ Investment Fund, the total land area under Amerindian title has doubled and is recorded now at 14% of Guyana's land area.

The parameters for programmes within the extractive industries will be relevant and appropriate to indigenous livelihoods. The LCDS aims to support sustainable livelihood opportunities for indigenous villages and not reduce this. The LCDS 2030 will further strengthen the Guyana Forestry Commission, Guyana Geology and Mines Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, and other regulatory agencies.

The Government remains open and welcomes suggestions on programmes that can most impact the forestry and mining sectors at the Indigenous community level. Similarly, the structure of the ADF, like in previous cycles, will implement programmes identified under village plans and developed by villages for villages.

Structure of Implementation of LCDS 2030 and General Responses

During the consultations, the DECC shared extensively that ongoing work will enhance the structure of involvement in LCDS 2030 and will include both titled and untitled villages and forest and non-forest ecosystems. The mechanism for participating in the LCDS consultations will be financed by the DECC and developed with inputs from all stakeholders, including villages and communities.

The DECC notes the significant contribution of indigenous peoples to the discourse on climate action and low carbon development. The DECC intends to fully utilize these resources at the national and international level, including but not limited to meetings, conferences and workshops, for the benefit of all Guyanese.

The DECC is pleased to have this opportunity to provide more information on the areas sought for clarity and restate our interest in all feedback towards refining and finalizing Guyana's LCDS 2030. We look forward to the APA's continued support as the stakeholder engagement process continues and to your partnership for the success of this National Strategy in transforming our country's development and enhancing the livelihood of our people while contributing to the global fight against climate change.

Thank you and best wishes to your members across Guyana.



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Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background.

Project Manager

Department of Environment & Climate Change

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