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**COMMONWEALTH CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON ENVIRONMENT
Third Meeting, New York, 30 April 1996**

**MOBILISING RESOURCES FOR THE IWOKRAMA INTERNATIONAL
RAIN FOREST PROGRAMME IN GUYANA**

Note by the Commonwealth Secretariat

Since it was launched under the Commonwealth's auspices in 1990, the Iwokrama Programme has been making steady progress thanks to a collaborative partnership between Guyana; the Commonwealth Secretariat; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF); Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC); and Britain's Overseas Development Administration. The Programme is uniquely privileged in enjoying long-term access to approximately 360,000 hectares of pristine rain forest generously set aside by the Government of Guyana. It can deliver practical insights and results which can serve as a model for developing effective policies for the sustainable management of forests and biodiversity worldwide.

2. The 1995 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) urged Commonwealth governments to extend their full support to the Programme, which has entered a crucial phase as a result of several major developments. A critical priority now is the establishment of a Donor Support Group to mobilise the resources needed to put the Programme on a financially sustainable basis.

Major Developments

Legal status

3. On 14 March 1996, the Parliament of Guyana enacted a Bill (the Iwokrama International Rain Forest Programme Act 1996) which establishes a sound foundation for the Programme under Guyanese and international law. This followed the signing of an Agreement for the Establishment of the Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development, by the President of Guyana and the Commonwealth Secretary-General, at the 1995 CHOGM. The Act enshrines the Government of Guyana's commitment of approximately 360,000 hectares of rain forest for the Programme. It assigns responsibility for management of the forest to the International Centre, and stipulates that approximately half of the area shall be maintained as a Wilderness Preserve with the remainder allocated to sustainable utilisation. It also contains specific provisions for the protection of Amerindian rights, including their intellectual property.

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4. The Agreement for the establishment of the International Centre stipulates that the latter shall implement the Iwokrama Programme by "undertaking research, training and the development of technologies which will promote the conservation and the sustainable and equitable use of tropical rain forests in a manner that will lead to lasting ecological, economic and social benefits to the people of Guyana and to the world in general". It provides for the Centre to be governed by a 15-member international Board of Trustees and supported by two key bodies: a Donor Support Group which will be responsible for providing core and project funding; and a Consortium of Collaborating Institutions which will enable a wide range of institutions to enter into collaborative partnerships with the Centre.

Interim Programme Management Group

5. Under the leadership of Dr Tschinkel, Iwokrama's interim Director-General (who has rich experience in tropical forest management in Central and Latin America), the three experts funded by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) - who successfully completed their assignments in February 1996 - have made major contributions to the Programme's development. Detailed surveys of Iwokrama's flora and fauna are now underway; a properly equipped field station built to high standards is fully operational; a Geographic Information System has been installed and a map of Iwokrama's forest types completed; an integrated malaria control programme has reduced the incidence of the disease at the programme site and in neighbouring Amerindian communities; a strategy to exploit ecotourism potential is being developed; partnerships with local communities have been created through several projects including training in biological survey techniques and the documentation of Amerindian knowledge of biological resources; and a medium-term operational plan has been drafted. The CFTC is now assigning another expert, for a period of 15 months, to develop a project on non-timber forest products. The CFTC's assistance to the Iwokrama Programme will finally total some \$460,000.

6. Canada's IDRC became a sponsor of the Iwokrama Programme in July 1995 and is assisting with institutional development and strategic planning, resource mobilisation, and information and communication. The IDRC has agreed to provide around \$290,000 for the development of an Information and Communication unit which will form part of the Iwokrama International Centre. The University of the West Indies Centre for Environment and Development (Jamaica) has agreed to provide \$80,000 to facilitate the participation of Caribbean scientists in Iwokrama research projects.

Medium-term operational and strategic plans

7. A medium-term plan (1996-2000) for Iwokrama has been drafted and a strategic statement of the Programme's objectives and vision is being finalised. Iwokrama will aim to achieve its mission through three core programmes and two cross-cutting programmes.

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Core programmes:

- *Sustainable management of the tropical rain forest:* to develop management regimes for the optimal use of forest resources leading to sustainably produced timber and non-timber forest products.
- *Conservation and sustainable utilisation of biodiversity:* to develop a programme of research that will take stock of species endemic to the site and local knowledge of them, as well as study inter-relations between these species in order to make informed decisions on biodiversity prospecting.
- *Sustainable human development:* to build institutional and human resource capacities for sustainable forest management and the conservation of biodiversity, promote the development of local Amerindian communities, and monitor and evaluate the socio-economic impact of Iwokrama's activities.

Cross-cutting programmes:

- *Research on forests and biodiversity:* to generate results which respond to the practical problems of conservation and sustainable utilisation (e.g. research on non-timber forest products and studies on the total economic value of the Iwokrama forest, including the valuation of the global environmental benefits it provides).
- *Information and communication:* to disseminate the results of research and lessons learned from Iwokrama's activities and establish linkages with national, regional and international institutions.

Next Steps

Iwokrama Donor Support Group

8. It is now critical to establish a Donor Support Group, with the widest possible Commonwealth participation, to mobilise the resources which are needed to make the Iwokrama Programme financially sustainable and enable it to realise its full potential. A meeting of Iwokrama's main collaborating partners, convened by the Secretariat in London in February 1995, agreed a resource mobilisation strategy which will address short-, medium- and long-term requirements. For the short to medium-term, approaches will be made to Commonwealth as well as non-Commonwealth bilateral and multilateral donors, including the GEF, to seek core and project funding for the Programme. Private foundations and organisations with interests in supporting sustainable forest management will also be approached. In the long-term, the aim will be to establish an endowment fund which would generate a steady stream of income for the Programme, supplementing the income generated by the Programme's own sustainable utilisation activities.

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9. At its next meeting in Georgetown from 6 to 8 May, the interim Board of Trustees, which is chaired by the eminent Indian scientist Dr M S Swaminathan, will consider and approve a detailed business plan for resource mobilisation which will specify precise financial targets and operational and capital requirements. Thereafter, it is envisaged that a number of missions will be mounted to approach potential donors preparatory to constituting the Iwokrama Donor Support Group and convening its first meeting by the end of 1996.

Consortium of Collaborating Institutions

10. After the Donor Support Group is established, a Consortium will be developed in order to enable a wide range of interested institutions in Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries to enter into collaborative partnerships with the Iwokrama International Centre. Such partnerships could cover areas such as joint research and training projects and the exchange of expertise and information. The specific modalities of collaboration (e.g. formal agreements or general memoranda of understanding) would be negotiated between the interested institutions and the International Centre. The agreement at last year's CCGE meeting that Iwokrama should form the node of a network of Commonwealth forestry institutions is relevant here.

Governance

11. Following the establishment of the Donor Support Group, the interim Board of Trustees will be dissolved and a permanent Board constituted to take charge of the Programme's governance. As stipulated in the 1996 Act, the Board's 15 members will be appointed as follows: four by the Government of Guyana; two by the Secretary-General; and eight by the President of Guyana and the Secretary-General, on the basis of recommendations from the Donor Support Group, and criteria such as professional expertise, geographical representation, and fund-raising capability. The Board of Trustees will appoint a Director-General to head the Iwokrama International Centre. The interim Programme Management Group will be phased out and the Director-General will then appoint the core staff needed to operate the Centre efficiently.

Conclusions

12. At its 1995 meeting, the Consultative Group agreed that the Commonwealth could make a distinctive contribution towards strengthening international co-operation on forests through the Iwokrama Programme. Apart from contributing to the development of more effective policies for sustainable forest management, Iwokrama will provide major global environmental benefits (e.g. sequestration/storage of carbon and the conservation of biodiversity). Guyana's generous donation of the large and extremely valuable natural endowment which Iwokrama represents must be reciprocated by the Commonwealth. It would therefore be helpful if the Group could:

- encourage Commonwealth governments to give urgent consideration to the contributions they might make towards the Iwokrama Programme by participating in

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the Iwokrama Donor Support Group, as well as in the establishment of a Consortium of Collaborating Institutions to forge partnerships with the Iwokrama International Centre;

- encourage Commonwealth governments which are represented on the GEF Council to extend their support for any future requests for GEF funding for the Iwokrama Programme.

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