

SUMMARY ON IV INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON BIODIVERSITY OF THE GUIANA SHIELD 2016



Background

The IV International Congress on Biodiversity of the Guiana Shield would be held in August, 8 - 12, 2016 in Georgetown, Guyana, under the theme ***leveraging our high endemicity, cultural diversity, and intact ecosystems for inclusive growth and secure futures***. This Congress would be held under the aegis of the International Society for Biodiversity of the Guiana Shield (IBG) which was established to address a multiplicity of socio-economic, political, cultural and environmental issues confronting the Guiana Shield region (see <http://ibg-society.blogspot.com/>). The Congress is the fourth international conference in a series of periodic IBG meetings that aim to *foster and develop education and research in all disciplines contributing to the knowledge and stewardship of the biodiversity of the Guiana Shield and the conservation, preservation, and sustainable management of its natural, rural and urban ecosystems*.

The Guiana Shield is globally recognized for its rich biodiversity, diverse regions with pristine forests and aquatic ecosystems, including 10-15% of global fresh water supply. The region is also the habitat of numerous rare and endemic species, and is home to several indigenous and culturally diverse peoples who depend on the environment and ecosystem services for their livelihood.

Over the past two decades countries in the Guiana Shield have sought to intensify the exploitation of their natural resources (gold mining, logging, and wildlife harvesting, etc.) as a means of alleviating poverty and promoting socio-economic development. Guyana, as one of the six countries in the Shield (the others being Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Suriname and French Guiana) is undoubtedly one of the most biologically rich and ecologically diverse countries in the world. The IV IBG Congress is being convened in a country that strives to balance natural resources utilization with environmental protection - as host, Guyana has many lessons to share and benefit from regional and international partners.

Institutional Support

IBG 2016 is being organized by the Guyana Society for Biodiversity and Ecosystems (GSBE), a local non-governmental organization through its affiliation with the IBG, and in association with the Government of Guyana, University of Guyana, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Guiana Shield Facility, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Iwokrama, Guyana Marine Turtle Conservation Society, and Conservation International-Guyana. The Society is coordinating the work of the local organizing committee (LOC) for the hosting of this Congress (<http://www.biodiversityguyana.org/>).

Context

Overall, the Congress is intended to share information among researchers within the region, achievements, limitations and cross-border experiences and other critical aspects with respect to fostering a holistic approach to the management of biodiversity in the Guiana Shield. It is also envisaged that discussions will further enhance the use of technology and data sharing among the participating countries with respect to issues such as the status and threats to the region's biodiversity, the conservation challenges participating countries encounter and possible plans of action to address these concerns.

To support the overall theme, presentations and discussions will focus on the following sub-themes:

- State and Conservation of Biodiversity and Ecological functions of the Guiana Shield

- Ecosystem-dependent and Indigenous Peoples and Conservation in The Guiana Shield
- The Guiana Shield and Global Climate
- Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Sustainable Development.
- Biodiversity Governance and Vulnerable Groups

Partnerships and Expectations

Organizing a Congress of this scope and magnitude requires the LOC to establish partnerships and collaborative arrangements if success is to be attained. In this regard, affiliation to the Congress is open to individuals and groups living in or working on biodiversity related issues in the Guiana Shield and whose interests are in conservation and willing to actively participate and support the objectives of the IBG.

The IV IBG Congress is organized to meet number expectations. These include:

- disseminating information and promoting actions to protect and conserve fragile and critical ecosystems and the livelihoods they support,
- highlighting research conducted in the Shield by sharing lessons learnt and enhancing networking opportunities for researchers, policy makers, the private sector, development partners, local and indigenous groups,
- providing space to engage governments, investors and development partners in promoting/strengthening a coordinated approach to planning and development actions, enhancing knowledge and sharing of data/information with all stakeholders,
- highlighting the roles of local and indigenous communities and mainstreaming issues related to gender and youth for biodiversity conservation and management,
- promoting private sector entities that support and engage in activities with an environmental consciousness and emphasize the importance of supporting research through technical and financial resources.

The Congress will also provide the opportunity for shared experiences from other eco-regions which face similar ecological and socio-economic issues.

It is anticipated that there will be continuity in the post-Congress era since activities will continue through the GSBE. Such activities will include seminars, workshops, capacity building, collaborative engagements and exchange visits among others.

Conclusion

The IV IBG Congress 2016 has the potential of being one of the largest single academic gatherings in the Region and will foster greater interaction amongst participants for achieving greater balance for wise management of its resources while enhancing the socio-economic wellbeing of its population.

The success of the IBG Congress would forge and strengthen partnerships to promote awareness and research for the benefit of policy makers and the local and international communities for the conservation and protection of natural, rural and urban ecosystems of the Guiana Shield.