



global witness

**For immediate release:** Wednesday 18 November 2009

## **Guyana a Test Case for REDD**

### **Global Witness hosts meeting with President Jagdeo to explore ambitious plan to stop deforestation**

Less than a month before the world's leaders meet to strike a new deal on climate change, campaign group, Global Witness, is hosting a public meeting with the President of Guyana, whose country stands to gain if an agreement is reached in Copenhagen on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD).

The meeting, taking place today in London, will explore the opportunities and risks of REDD, and provide a forum for NGOs, leading academics, government representatives and the press to question the President of Guyana, as well as the leader of indigenous people's groups, on an ambitious plan to stop deforestation and embark on a 'low carbon development' path.

"Guyana is at the forefront of the REDD negotiations and likely to be the first country to sign an agreement with the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. It's a test case for REDD," said Dr. Rosalind Reeve, Forest Campaign Manager at Global Witness. "Given the challenges in Guyana, good governance, transparency and strong oversight must be the watchwords of any deal, This meeting gives us a chance to find out if Guyana's plan will really work."

President Bharret Jagdeo will open the meeting by presenting Guyana's plan for REDD. Other speakers include indigenous people's representative Yvonne Pearson, Chair of the National Toshao's Council, as well as Global Witness and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). The presentations will be followed by an open Question and Answer session in which all guests will have the opportunity to participate.

Guyana lies at the heart of the Guiana Shield, one of the world's last four intact rainforests. Forests make up over 85% of the country's land area. It also has one of the highest levels of biodiversity of any country in the world, with approximately 8,000 plant species, half of which are endemic.

In June 2009 Guyana's Office of the President published a draft [Low Carbon Development Strategy](#). The plan shows the tension that exists between protecting rainforests and pursuing economic development. Guyana also recently signed an [agreement with Norway](#) worth up to US\$250 million over the next five years. Norway will provide financial support to Guyana in proportion to the country's success in limiting emissions.

Some of the areas Global Witness wants to explore at the meeting include:

- Guyana's deal with Norway could set a precedent for some 40 other REDD countries. Is it a good or a bad model for avoiding or reducing deforestation?
- Who owns the carbon? How will indigenous peoples' rights and other social and environmental safeguards be respected? Have their voices been heard in the development of the President's low carbon development strategy?
- What are the risks of a global carbon finance system, and how effective are the control measures likely to be? The logging sector in many developing countries has a track record of illegality, poor transparency and enriching the elite. How will carbon be different?

"If developing countries want to benefit from REDD, they need to build confidence in the frameworks and oversight they put in place, and demonstrate that safeguards are being met," said Dr. Reeve.

**/ Ends**

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**Transcript, video and audio** recordings will be available after the event at [www.globalwitness.org](http://www.globalwitness.org)

**To attend the event** please contact [Katherine Thomson](#) on 07980 636172

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**Global Witness investigates and campaigns to prevent natural resource-related conflict and corruption and associated environmental and human rights abuses.**