



PRESS RELEASE

GREEN STATE DEVELOPMENT REPORT NEEDS MAJOR IMPROVEMENT

The recently circulated Report on the Green State Development Strategy (GSDS) falls woefully short of the promise implied when President Granger launched it. The Policy Forum Guyana (PFG) considers it both premature and unwise for this document to advance in its present form. Civic organizations are requesting an extension of the unreasonably short period granted them for commenting on the Report, to allow for omissions to be included and for a more coherent presentation of some of the difficult questions facing the nation.

The first paragraph of the Report limits the aim of the GSDS to a narrow technical purpose: *"to guide public investment over the next 20 years in achieving sustainable and inclusive development."* Inevitably, with an objective of this nature, the Report is dominated by financial discussions, which in turn are dominated by considerations with respect to oil and gas.

What instead is really needed is a broad-based vision of environmental justice capable of taking account of our indigenous community, the migrant, the urban poor, as well as the middle-class consumer and their relationship to environmental entitlements. Unresolved relationships related to ethnicity and territory also fall within the ambit of a national strategy.

Rather than a holistic vision for a green Guyana, the Report reads like a shopping list of seemingly good – but totally unconnected – projects ranging from good governance to solar energy, land use, transport, and agriculture and mining that individually seem well intentioned but as a whole don't add up to a green Guyana. In fact, the projects, if implemented, could produce a 'booming' economy without much "green" about it.

Without a coherent vision the Report cannot address effectively difficult decisions such as trade-offs between renewables and hydro-carbons. The Section on Energy focuses on gas not renewables and the renewable amount mentioned is less than in the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) commitments made by Guyana at the 2015 COP21 Paris Climate Conference. The time-line for those changes has also been pushed back from 2025. When was this decision to abandon the NDCs taken? Nor does the GSDS document reflect the recent progressive break-through on solar energy arrived at with Norway. Indeed, new wind and solar technologies are emerging every day and are getting better and cheaper. Already solar power can be produced cheaper than any other source, it also can be developed faster and, together with grid-scale battery storage, be deployed in a way that increases grid reliability and reduces the burning of heavy fuel oil. Are we setting all this aside to drift inevitably into the hydro-carbon dependency despite the looming catastrophe predicted in the latest UNFCCC Report?

Similarly payment for ecosystem services, including forest carbon (REDD+), climate change mitigation, protected areas and their role for tourism and conservation of Guyana's ecosystem services and biodiversity, do not merit a mention in the Report.

A further consequence of the absence of vision is that it allows reference to Guyana as one of the countries with most freshwater per capital, whereas the reality is that all of our rivers are threatened by pollution from mining.

The GSDS Report can still help achieve a greater level of coherence if its major omissions were recognized and a reasonable time allowed for the civic and business sectors to provide their considered inputs. Such a move would be far more meaningful at this juncture than pursuing the original time-table for moving forward with this clearly deficient Report. The Policy Forum Guyana (PFG) is of the view that an extension of time for consultation to allow such contributions to be made would enhance the possibility of the Green State Development Strategy emerging as a genuinely national strategy for environmental governance.

Policy Forum Guyana

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Contact Info: 227-4911 policyforumgy@gmail.com

Amerindian Peoples Association (APA), BENAB Foundation, Clerical & Commercial Workers Union (CU), Community-Based Rehabilitation(CBR),Guyana Council for the Blind, Guyana Human Rights Association (GHRA), Guyanese Organization of Indigenous peoples(GOIP), Jesuits in Guyana, Red Thread, Rights of Children(ROC) Transparency International Guyana Inc (TIGI) , The Environment Initiative. The National Toshias Council (NTC), Ursuline Sisters, Conservation international (CI), World Wildlife Fund (WWF).