



TWENTY-FOURTH INTER-AMERICAN CONGRESS OF MINISTERS AND HIGH-LEVEL AUTHORITIES OF TOURISM

**March 21 and 22, 2018, Georgetown
The Cooperative Republic of Guyana**



Group Photo of The XXIV Inter-America Congress of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Tourism

The XXIV Inter-America Congress of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Tourism was held in Georgetown, Guyana on March 21 and 22, 2018. The theme of the first OAS Ministerial Conference in the Guianas was: **“Connecting the Americas through Sustainable Tourism”**.

The following themes were addressed:

- forging strategic business alliances for developing sustainable tourism;
- importance of Product Innovation in Connecting the Americas;
- multi Destination Travel to Promote market opportunities;
- building Resilience in the Tourism Sector in the Americas.



H.E. Sydney Allicock, Vice President and Minister for Indigenous Affairs of Guyana



Mr. Donald Sinclair, Director General of Tourism at the Ministry of Business in Guyana

Opening by the President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana

The Conference was officially opened by H.E. Brigadier David Granger, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, who offered his country as the gateway to Latin America, since Guyana is the single English-speaking country in South America. President Granger also reaffirmed March 21 as International Day of Forest, an affirmation that Guyana is serious in becoming a “GREEN STATE.”

President Granger informed the meeting that tourism connects countries, markets, peoples, and services throughout the hemisphere. Tourism can contribute to the development of the Americas and to the wellbeing of future generation by becoming more sustainable.

President Granger urged the conference to seek solutions to ensuring that the Americas would be able to catalyze their tourism potential by increasing annual tourist arrivals.

Besides representatives from OAS member states, stakeholders from the private sector and the tourism industry also participated. The aviation sector, travel companies, airlines, the Guyana Tourism Board, and hotels also showcased their products. Copa Airlines Vice President of marketing, Christophe Didier; Kayla Reece of Fly Jamaica; and Ivan Lopez Villalba gave presentations. Suriname Airways was also present at the opening session.

The aviation industry is growing rapidly in Guyana and the main port of entry, the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA), will complete its first phase of US\$150 million expansion and modernization in 2018. There are also plans to turn the frontier airstrip at Lethem into an international regional airport.



The Eugene Correia International Airport shared its 5, 10 and 15-year development plans at the Conference. In the near future, this airport also plans to extend the runway to accommodate larger aircrafts and private jets. The terminal is currently too small and will have to triple in size to accommodate projected growth for the next two decades.

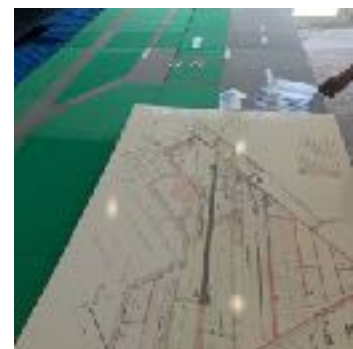
The WDF-LAC attended as an observer, since the Organization has been keen in promoting the Guiana Shield region as an upcoming and very promising sustainable tourism venture for adventure, Amazonian, forestry and green fanatics. WDF-LAC used its presence in Georgetown to introduce this idea to the Caribbean Tourism Organization, various Governments in mainly Central America, businesses and NGOs based in Georgetown.

Henry Mac Donald of the WDF-LAC also spoke privately with the First Vice-President and Minister for Indigenous Affairs of Guyana, H.E. Sydney Allicock, the Honorable Dominic Gaskin, Minister of Business of Guyana and Ms. Kim Osborne, Executive Secretary for Integral Development of the OAS.

Suriname was officially represented at the Conference by Ms. Liselle Blankendall, Charge d' Affaires a.i. at the Embassy of Suriname in Guyana. It is important to inform that Suriname was invited by Mr. Hugh Riley, CEO and Secretary General of the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) to join the Organization in order to enjoy the benefits and services of the group. Guyana is a member of the CTO.

Main speakers at the conference were, among many others: Honorable Dominic Gaskin M.P., Minister of Business of Guyana; H.E. Nestor Mendez, Assistant Secretary General of the OAS (video); Ms. Kim Osborne, Executive Secretary for Integral development at the OAS; Mr. Donald Sinclair, Director General at the Department of Tourism at the Ministry of Business; Dr. Richard Brown, CARICOM Director of Single Market and Sectoral Programs; Mr. Alejandro Varela, Deputy Regional Director for the Americas, UNWTO; Captain Jagmohan Singh, Vice President of operations at Caribbean Airlines, Ms. Julia Reifer Jones, CEO LIAT; Mr. Christopher Didier, Sales Vice president, COPA Holdings; Mr. Pablo Chalen, Commercial Director, travel Retail Latin America; Mr. Hugh Riley, CEO and Secretary General of the Caribbean Tourism Organization; Dr. David Singh, Director Conservation International Guyana; Ms. Catherine Hughes, Minister of telecommunications of Guyana; Ms. Sandra Howard, Vice Minister of Tourism of Colombia.

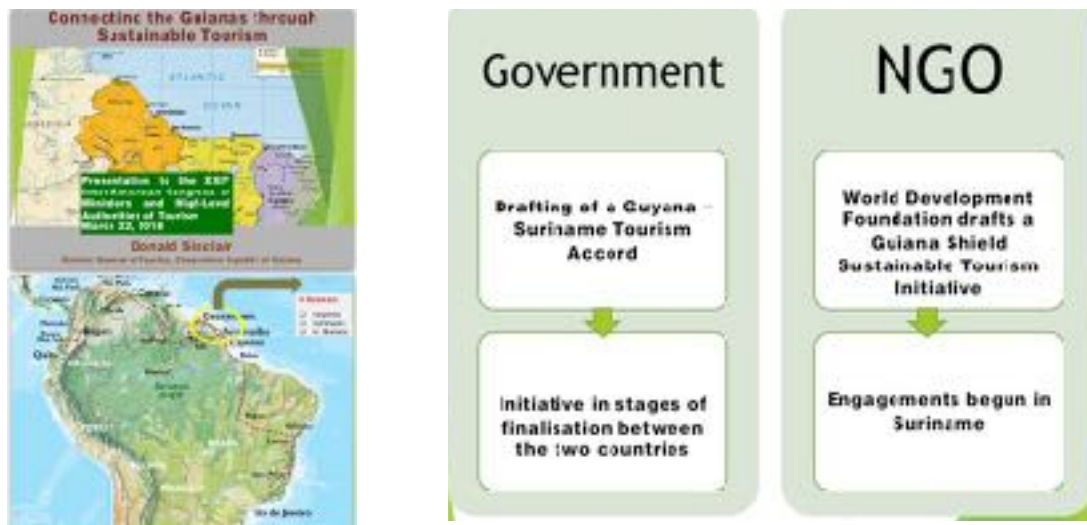
WDF, Report 24th OAS
Congress of Ministers of
Tourism, Georgetown,
Guyana





CONNECTING THE GUIANAS THROUGH SUSTAINABLE TOURISM:

The power-point presentation by the Director General of Tourism, Mr. Donald Sinclair focused largely on the development of the Guyana Shield region as a new, unique, green and future international tourism destination. In the presentation entitled “Connecting the Guianas through Sustainable Tourism”, the Director General brilliantly expressed the various previous initiatives, taken by all 3 Guianas to develop the region as a potential tourism destination:



2 slides for the report where the Guyana Shield presentation is being addressed

- **The Guianas Trail (GT) - a Guyana Tourism Private Sector Initiative of 2003;**
- **The Combined Amazon Tourism Project (CATP) – Initiative of the Suriname Tourism Foundation (2005 – 2007);**
- **The Amazon Caribbean Tourism Trail (ACTT) – Initiative of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO - 2009).**

The outcomes of these three initiatives were as follows:

- ***GT: Guyana and Suriname tourism bodies did not meet to develop and implement concrete plans. The initiative stalled at the official level, however the tour-operators links on the ground, continue;***
- ***CATP: there were meetings held involving operators from Suriname and French Guiana. Brochures were made and published. Changes of officials on the French side slowed down the process and progress was ultimately halted;***



- ***ACTT: The initiative involved Guyana, Suriname and the state of Para in Brazil. A destination manual was produced and launched at ITB 2010. There was a clear basis laid for later initiatives for cooperation in tourism.***

With respect to Government to Government initiatives he mentioned that Guyana and Suriname drafted a Tourism Accord last year and that the initiative is presently in stages of finalization between both countries.

On the NGO side the Director General mentioned that the World Development Foundation recently launched a Guyana Shield Sustainable Tourism Initiative. The Permanent Mission of Suriname at the United Nations launched the engagement. Both Ambassadors of Guyana and Suriname took the bold step to present that idea at a well-attended Public Private Partnership Conference, organized by Suriname in May 2017 at the United Nations in New York.

With regard to specific points of focus in order to move forward, Mr. Sinclair touched on the following important matters:

- ***Creation of connected itineraries based upon outstanding natural and cultural attractions;***
- ***Constant monitoring to ensure quality assurance;***
- ***Increasing transportation links;***
- ***Shared product research and information gathering;***
- ***Border port travel facilitation;***
- ***Agreement regarding appropriate standards.***

With respect to the future promotion of the Guiana Shield, the Director General highlighted the following key topics:

- ***More effective use of resources through joint promotional activities – trade fairs, road shows etc.; regard to the future promotion of the Guiana Shield he finally mentioned the following key topics:***
- ***Cooperation in branding of the Guianas product and use of websites, social media and other online campaigns.***



H.E. Dominic Gaskin
Minister of Business of Guyana



The Declaration of Georgetown: Connecting the Americas through Sustainable Tourism (CIDI/TUR-XXIV/RP/doc.3/18).

WE, THE MINISTERS AND HIGH-LEVEL AUTHORITIES OF TOURISM OF THE MEMBER STATES:

1. Recognize the importance of continuing to work towards expanding connectivity and increasing sustainable tourism within the countries of the Americas, including through forging alliances or strengthening them where they already exist, among public and private stakeholders.
2. Encourage the establishment and strengthening of public-private partnerships among the different actors of the tourist sector that contribute to improving the connectivity of the sub-regions of the Americas and promote the development of sustainable tourism.
3. Encourage the competent authorities of other tourism related sectors, such as transportation, security, infrastructure, etc., to analyze and implement, when possible, coordinated policies to achieve optimal development in connectivity and increase sustainable tourism benefits.
4. Encourage relevant authorities to adopt air transportation policies that enhance connectivity for the benefit of travelers, shippers and the tourism and business sectors. *(Agreed ad referendum of the delegation of Argentina - 2/8/2018)*
5. Request that the General Secretariat collaborates with other regional agencies in undertaking an impact study regarding the impact of the sharing economy on the tourism accommodation sub-sector in Latin America and the Caribbean, in order to address and provide recommendations on, inter alia, the best arrangements that can successfully incorporate the share accommodation alongside the formal accommodation sub-sector.
6. Will continue to work so that the development of tourism in the region is conducted within the framework of sustainability, focusing on its three pillars: environmental, socio-cultural, and economic.



7. Request the authorities of the Congress (TROIKA and CITUR Authorities) to begin planning the formulation of a sustainable community tourism development management model for the Americas, using as a basis the existing national models and initiatives, and taking into account the context of each country, to strengthen the integral development and the growth of the sector in the region.
8. Urge the CITUR to support the sharing of best practices on travel and tourism facilitation, including visa facilitation, to promote intra-regional and multi-destination travel among countries of the Americas.
9. Instruct the General Secretariat to submit for the consideration of the Authorities of the Congress, at its Planning Meeting to be held no later than July 31, 2018, a work plan based on the guidelines contained in this Declaration and that contribute to the implementation of the commitments of the Medium-Term Strategy to Enhance Tourism Cooperation and Competitiveness in the Americas.
10. Request the OAS General Secretariat to work with regional and international organizations and other relevant institutions in identifying adaptation strategies and plans which strengthen resilience, mitigate the impact of natural disasters on the tourism sector, and support tourism business recovery in a disaster's aftermath in OAS member states, with a focus on resource mobilization for the execution of identified initiatives, including, implementation of the actions contained in the Multi-hazard Contingency Planning Manual for the Caribbean Tourism Sector (OAS/CDERA).



Vote of Thanks to the People and Government of Guyana

At the conclusion of the Congress, the Declaration of Georgetown on Connecting the Americas Through Sustainable Tourism was adopted and the Ministers and high Level Authorities of Tourism encouraged the establishment and strengthening of Public Private Partnerships among the different actors of the tourist sector that contribute to improving the connectivity of the sub-regions of the Americas and promote the development of sustainable tourism, and commitment to continue the work so that the development of tourism in the region is conducted within the framework of sustainability focusing on its three pillars: environment, socio-cultural and economic.





LINKS TO PRESS RELEASES:

Travel Wire News:

Historic OAS tourism Congress for Next week, 25 Countries Confirm Attendance So Far:
<http://tavelwirenews.com/historic-oas-tourism-congress-for-next-week-25-countries-confirm-attendance-so-far-771797>

Cata Tourism Agency:

<http://www.catatourismagency.org/cata-expondra-modelo-de-promocion-multidestino-en-congreso-interamericano-de-la-oea/>

Caribbean News Now:

Guyana's President Opens OAS Tourism Conference in Guyana - By Ray Chickrie:
<https://guyaneseonline.wordpress.com/2018/03/22/guyanas-president-opens-oas-tourism-conference-in-guyana-by-ray-chickrie/>

Guiana Shield Tourism Initiative takes Center Stage at the UN:

http://www.caribbeannewsnow.com/news/newspublish/home.print.php?news_id=34568

OAS Tourism Conference put spotlight on Guiana Shield initiative:

<http://wp.caribbeannewsnow.com/2018/03/28/oas-tourism-meeting-puts-spotlight-on-guiana-shield-initiative/>

You tube:

OAS Ministerial Tourism Conference could be used to push Guyana's Tourism:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NVE-uleYovU>

~~~~~