

## **Guyana: Commonwealth Day Message from President Bharrat Jagdeo**

Today Guyana is proud to join the Commonwealth family of nations in observing Commonwealth Day 2008, under the theme 'The Environment - Our Future'.

On this occasion I would like to pay tribute to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II for her role as the Head of the Commonwealth in furthering its principles and purposes within the wider Community of Nations.

The theme this year 'the Environment-Our Future' is both timely and appropriate calling our attention to the dangers posed by climate change to our common home-the Earth. The Lake Victoria Commonwealth Climate Change Action Plan; which was adopted at the recent Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kampala is the most recent initiative undertaken by the Commonwealth family of Nations to curb the threat of climate change to the global environment.

There can no longer be any denial of the threats since abundant scientific evidence now exists confirming the reality of global warming.

Given our terrible experience of the great flood of 2005 and more recently the heavy rainfall resulting from the La Nina Phenomenon, we in Guyana have been brought face to face with this reality.

As a small low-lying coastal state which is perennially vulnerable to changes in the weather patterns, Guyana has had to respond to these phenomena by formulating a Climate Change Action Plan that addresses our commitment under the International Convention to undertake the measures to reduce our vulnerability through clear strategies aimed at adaptation, mitigation, capacity building and public awareness. To be successful, these strategies will require the full support of all Guyanese.

Additionally, the Government has taken a number of initiatives by way of our contribution to a global response to the need to protect and preserve our national environment. As most will know the Government of Guyana has dedicated to the international community almost one million acres of pristine forest for research in biodiversity and the sustainable development of its forestry resources. At the last Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Uganda, I announced a plan that would place our standing forests at the disposal of the Global Campaign against Climate Change while earning carbon credits for Guyana to assist with its national development.

Guyana, in 2007, had the honour to host the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting where the focus again was on climate change and on ways and means to address this issue. The Government of Guyana urges, not only our sister Commonwealth member countries but also other countries around the globe to recognise the cost of inaction and to make whatever contribution they can to diminishing the environmental dangers which now surround them. The Government of Guyana takes this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to the ideals of the Commonwealth and to working towards the common good. May the Commonwealth family long continue in service, not only to its members, but also to the world.