



Policy Forum Guyana

PRESS RELEASE

DESTRUCTION OF MANGROVES RAISES MANY QUESTIONS



Malgre Tout where the mangroves were destroyed (Caliper Drones photo taken from Stabroek News May 10, 2021 edition)

Everything about the destruction of mangroves on the West Bank prompts alarm: the destruction itself; the defence of it by the Government Minister responsible; the silence of the EPA; by-passing the objections of the local Councils; and startling submissiveness in the face of business dismissal of climate change.

False narratives of ‘sustainable’ and ‘responsible’ development are forms of green-washing incidents such as the mangrove destruction.

Mangrove plantations globally are recognized as a more efficient carbon sink than even ancient forests. In Guyana’s case, they play an equally important role in stabilizing a coastline at a time when rising sea levels are progressively shortening the remaining lifespan of the coastlands. Unless extraordinary measures are taken Guyana’s coastline will be underwater within 20-30 years.

Government Ministers responsible for development need to understand is that economic growth must be subservient to climate realities, not the other way around. This fact is no longer in dispute,

the only question is whether the political will to implement it will be generated before time runs out.

Communities affected by decisions such as the mangrove destruction must be listened to. Communities have the right to say “no” to developments that threatened their health and welfare. The principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is the guiding standard to be applied.

Future generations of Guyanese have the right to inherit the same level of resources as this generation. In other words, developments that consume resources, continuously generating waste have to be phased out.

Statements from the developer responsible for the destruction reflect the same sense of entitlement exhibited by Exxon over excess flaring. No apologies, assurances they will fix the problem and a clear impression that the role of the Government is to accept they have the situation under control.

Unfortunately, the silence of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) over these incidents suggests the developers have nothing to be concerned about.

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