

NEWS: Jamaica Gov't, local communes align to protect forests under GCCA-ACP programme

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ST ANDREWS, Jamaica, 1 February 2012/ JIS/ ACP: Rural Jamaican communities will have a more proactive hand in protecting the country's forests, with a shared management system launched this week between the St. Andrews communities of Dallas Castle and Constitutional Hill and the Government's Forestry Department.

The Local Forest Management Committees (LFMC), funded through the Global Climate Change Alliance in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group, aims to involve communities in co-managing forested areas, while building their resilience to the risks that come with natural hazards.

The committees are part of the EUR13 million Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Reduction Project, which falls under the GCCA's work in the ACP Group.

At the launch, Jamaican Minister of Water, Land, Environment and Climate Change Hon. Robert Pickersgill said the work of the LFMCs is critical to the government's efforts to protect and preserve the country's forest resources against abuse, degradation and the harmful effects of climate change.

"The destruction of forests also threatens diversity of plant and animal life including the 21.2 percent of mammals and reptiles endemic only to Jamaica and just over 27 percent of plant species that are only to be found on this island," he remarked.

Director for Sustainable Development and Regional Planning Division, PIOJ, Claire Bernard, said she is heartened by the level of cooperation and partnership displayed by the community members under the LFMCs.

She implored the communities to keep the work going "so that when we come back here in another year or so, we can demonstrate to the EU that work is really taking place and their investment is making a difference."

EU Representative Pierre-Luc Vanhaeverbeke added that the EU has been working with UNEP and the government to develop an effective strategy to curtail the effects of climate change on the local environment.

The project is managed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), and is being implemented by the Forestry Department, National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA), Environmental Management Division of the Ministry, and the Meteorological Service.

The launch of the Dallas Castle and Constitution Hill LFMCs brings to 10 the number of such committees across the island.

(Photo: Minister of Water, Land, Environment and Climate Change, Hon. Robert Pickersgill (left), shakes hands with Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Conserver of Forests, Forestry Department, Marilyn Headley (right), following the launch of Local Forest Management Committees in the communities of Dallas Castle and Constitutional Hill on Thursday (Jan. 26), at the Mount Beulah Rehoboth Apostolic Church in Lindo's Gap, St. Andrew. Sharing the moment are: Programme Assistant, United Nations Environment Programme, Sanya Wedermier-Graham (2nd left); and European Union Representative, Pierre-Luc Vanhaeverbeke/ JIS)

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