



FISHERMEN AND FRIENDS OF THE SEA

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Press Statement

World Environment Day 2021

Date: June 5th, 2021

Dear Editor/Newsroom,

Fishermen and Friends of the Sea (FFOS) recognize World Environment Day 2021. In spite of nearly 50 years of this United Nations celebration, and in spite of decades of activism, what have we really accomplished? Have we, our region or our world taken sufficient steps to improve our environment and our affected health?

The simple answer is not nearly enough. We continue to carelessly extract natural resources including oil and gas, minerals and ground water with little to no rehabilitation.

Our pristine marine and terrestrial environments have been devastated and successive governments have done almost nothing to restore their former viability.

The theme of this year's celebration is "ecosystem restoration". For decades FFOS have been appealing for restorative efforts but without avail.

Our northern range is littered with the quarry scars of an open pit paradise. A Google Earth search will show dead blots of scars in our beautiful range. Quarries are obligated to perform rehabilitation works as a term and condition of issued Certificates of Environmental Clearance (CECs) and Mineral Licenses. A lack of enforcement of these laws and non-existent monitoring allows these "sand and gravel gangsters" to ravage our mountains with no regard for water aquifers, the Environment or rural communities.

Our marine waters, especially our Gulf of Paria, are poisoned with industrial and residential pollutants and yet we eat fish. The Environmental Management Authority (EMA) reported 377 oil spills in a 4-year period, yet virtually none of these polluters have been charged and outside paltry requirements of the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP) none have meaningfully remedied their damage.

The Point Lisas Estate discharges unquantifiable amounts of waste daily into the Gulf of Paria, our major fishery. None of these Companies operating in this estate have owed up to this damage. How long must our people and creatures suffer?

Groundwater supplies are being extracted faster than they can replenish although it plays a pivotal role in the environment, maintaining water levels and flow in our rivers. With the constant

extraction from these aquifers, ecosystems and farmers who depend on surface water are impacted. So instead of WASA boastfully drilling deeper and deeper, we must invest in other more sustainable means of water harvesting and retention.....

We are now waking up from a sweet dream to the nightmare reality of our environmental mismanagement. For far too long we have paid lip service to sustainability. The time for talk has passed! FFOS hereby formally and respectfully call on Minister of Planning and Development, the Honourable Camille Robinson Regis to engage in urgent and open dialogue and consultations with the public and with experts in the respective fields to develop a feasible action plan to restore our environment. We cannot argue with fools because they will beat us with their experience. We must dialogue with science and sensibilities. Talk alone will get us nowhere. We must act with haste or perish at leisure.

Sincerely,

Gary Aboud
Corporate Secretary