

Closing Remarks of Peter Lallas, GEF Expanded Constituency Workshop (ECW)
Asa Wright Nature Center, Trinidad and Tobago
Friday, March 5, 2016

Good afternoon everyone. Thank you so much Pamela for that wonderful poem. I can't think of a better or more beautiful way to cap off this week. Wow! And thank you again to our hosts and organizers. Thank you Risa and Kimberly from SGP, Ann and your wonderful staff here at the Center, all the people at the stations today, and all of you.

It has been a wonderful day and we are very grateful.

The mission and organizing purpose of the GEF is to support actions to help protect the global environment.

We do that by providing grants to support actions to protect the global environment, working as a financial mechanism for several global environmental treaties, and with all of you. It is a privilege to do this work with you. The GEF is a partnership, and we each need all of us to do the work that we need to do. We're marking our 25th year this June, and - while great challenges persist - there is also much to celebrate in the path that we have followed so far. Today is a reminder of that.

One of the beautiful things about this work, as we've seen today, is that in its heart are people. The project we're visiting today, this beautiful Asa Wright conservation center, is not just about the extraordinary biodiversity down this valley. It also is about the local communities. The project helps support many types of work and livelihoods, people who make and sell goods and crafts, work on research and conservation, provide tours, and run the entire system. The protected lands here provide fresh air and clean water, and people have told us of their pride in being able to protect this forest.

It's also about the school children, over 2000 of whom have come to visit. You can see the joy in their faces when they come here, and we can hope that they may carry this knowledge and feeling into our future. I want this for my kids too! And the initiative here is also about sharing this spirit with people from other places, and about the hard- working people and staff who make this all a reality.

And in the end, we want these efforts to produce results. So we need to keep at it, to understand all these things and our task, and do it well.

I hope that the sessions this week will help us fulfill our purposes. I know that for us, at the GEF, it has been a great opportunity to learn from you, and try to know better what we can do to support your countries and people. And we appreciate too, very much, the chance to get to know you better, and the camaraderie and friendship.

Let me also not forget to say a big thanks also to the staff at the GEF Secretariat, William, Yasemin, Oreste, Chris, Patrizia, Rawleston, Anil, Sarah, Kathy, from the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (Jeneen), and our honorary GEF member for a week from IEG (Vivek). Your hard work and passion for doing it well have been amazing, and help make all this happen.

So with this let us officially close this expanded constituency workshop, and open the work which it brings about. Thanks again to the host government, the SGP, the project organizers, the staff, board and local communities, and all of you. A safe and good return to all.