A Sustainable Development Vision for Suriname

Introduction

General
Surinam is a democratic country, situated in South America. The geographic coordinates on the world sphere can be marked with 2-6 NB and 54-58 WL. Surinam has become on 25 November 1975 independent of Holland. The territory of Surinam has been subdivided in 10 districts. Paramaribo, one of the ten districts is the capital of Suriname. The government of Surinam has been established in Paramaribo, from where the complete financial and economic administration of the country happens. In contrast with Sipaliwini, the largest district, Paramaribo covers only 0.11% of the area. The results of the census in 2004 shows that 50% of the Surinamese population lives in Paramaribo, while 7% of this population lives in Sipaliwini, which cover 80% of the area.

The population of Suriname is multicultural. Because of the democratic law, every citizen has the right to profess its own religion. That’s why different traditions and dialect has keep remained, e.g. negro’s, Indians, Javanese, indigenous people, Chinese, Europeans, etc. In spite of the terrorism in the world, Surinamese people are tolerant and peace loving. In Suriname Muslims and Jews are living in peace with each other. A mosque and a synagogue are build near each other and both groups use each others facilities.

The influences of the colonial time is still present in Suriname. The official language is Dutch. Development strategies are based on insights of the Netherlands. The Surinamese legislation has had a lot of agreements with the Netherlands’, but now many of them adapted to Surinamese circumstances and time spirit.

Regional location of Suriname
Suriname has a land area of approximately 164,000 km². The northern boundary of Suriname is the Atlantic Ocean. Conform the international law of Sea, Suriname generate a territorial zone of 12 miles and an economic zone of 200 miles. In the East Suriname is bounded by French Guiana and seaward by an equidistance line with a direction of 30 grade east of the true north, reckoned from the middle of the line connecting Galibi (Suriname) and Les Hattes (French Guiana). The southern boundary is the watershed between the basin of the Amazone in the south and the basins of watercourses that flows through Suriname between the French Guiana and the Guyana borders. These 597 km boundary has been marked by boundary marks. The western boundary of Suriname is established by the west bank of the Corantijn River, from the source to the mouth.

The Relief of Suriname
The coastline of Suriname is formed by extensive mudflats interspersed with little sand and shell beaches. The mudflats and the beaches are continually migrating westward, because of the west flowing Guiana current. Thereby there is continually erosion on the eastside.

The relief of Suriname can be split in 5 categories (from north to south):
- The coastline
- The young coastal plain (0-4 meters above sea level)
- The old coastal Plain or the savanna belt (1-12 m above sea level)
- The cover landscape (10-100 m above sea level)
- The mountainous area (100-1230 m above sea level)

The mountain area is above 1 billion years old and the young coastal plain has been set off between 6000 and 10,000 years ago. The coastline and the coastal plain are mostly formed by mudflats and mangrove forest. The old coastal plain is the zone with the most river terraces, within mudbanks. These landscapes are almost formed by sediments deposited by the rivers and the sea. That is why there are wide complexes sand and shell ridges and creeks. The ridges are separated by narrow clay flats. Depends on the drainage the ripening process of the clay has took place. The soil fertility of the clay soils are good and can be used for the agriculture.

Southern of the country the underground is mostly a part of the Guiana shield, that is completed with tropical forest. The geomorphology of Suriname has been examined till the 4 NB line so there can not be said much about the fertility of the inland.

The hydrology of Suriname
The hydrografy of Suriname is mostly formed by the natural relief. In the coastal zone there are a lot of natural swamps, lagoons and lakes. Across the whole area of Suriname there is natural network of tidal rivers and rivers without tides. Water is very important for the people and the economy of Suriname. Water plays an important role in almost every activity in the house, the industry, the dilution decomposition, the discharge of water, generation of hydroelectric power, navigation, commercial fishery and recreation. The groundwater which is of good quality is used for domestic use. Theoretically Suriname is one of the fewest countries, which has not a lack of fresh water. This, because of the geographical position, the climate and the condition of the soil. Because of the direct connection with the Atlantic Ocean in the north of Surinam, there is a penetration of salt water, which is necessary for the ecological system in the coast plain. This ecological system is continuously getting out of balance, because of an uncontrolled salt water penetration caused by human actions.
The ecology or Suriname
Ecological the territory of Suriname can be subdivided five ecological zones:
- The maritime zone: this is the zone outside and near the coast, where there are predominately fish and sea turtles. In the deep ocean-floor there are amounts of nature oils.
- The young coastal plain: can be identified as the territory with beaches (sand and mud banks), river mouths, mangrove vegetation, swamps and the coastal forest.
- The old coastal plain: is the territory with higher sand ridges, inside swamps, watery area’s and secondary forest
- The savanna belt: the area with a paramount of grasslands and xerophytic temporary forest.
- The vegetation in the interior: is the wet tropical lowland, various heights of mountains.

Because of the variation in the geomorphology and the soils in the different zones in Suriname, there are different vegetation types. The most important types are:
- Vegetation of the brackish coastal area.
- Freshwater march and swamp scrubs.
- Low swamp forest.
- High swamp forest.
- High seasonal swamp forest.
- High dry land forest.
- Mountain forest.
- High and low xerophytic forest.
- Savannas.
- Vegetation on granite outcrops.
- Vegetation on cultivated and abandoned land.

On base of the biodiversity, whereby 5800 flora species and 1890 fauna species has been counted, nowadays 13% of the Suriname land area has been protected by law.

The demography of Suriname
It is difficult to analyses the development in the demography of Suriname, because the census has not been hold frequently. From the data of the census in 2004 there can be made an analyze of the population distribution, the educational level and the middle of mean.

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Totale bevolking per 2 augustus 2004
**Economical activities in Suriname**

To have an image of economic activities in Suriname, we can use the data from the census in 2004. There isn't enough recent material to compare this data, because 25 years ago, research on the same level was done.

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Development potentials of Suriname
To describe the potentials of the country, the territory can be divided in the interior and in the coastal plain.

The interior
The interior of Surinam is geographical part of the Guyana Shield. The soil al lot of scarce minerals, eg. gold, silver, bauxite, granite and rubble. Besides stretch the bottom fully with scarce minerals, by which are named can immediately: gold, silver, bauxiet, granite, stone blow etc. The soil is covered with a beautiful virginal tropical rain forest, by which the variety of flora and fauna are for many inconceivable. The natural waterfalls and rapids make the interior a paradise of aesthetics and relaxation. There are settlements of the maroons and indigenous people. These communities are living on a traditional way. Unique is that a large part of the original culture has been kept. These communities has a large amount of know how about traditional treatment and medical plants.

The developments potentials of the interior can be translate as follows:
- The mining sector: by which raw material can be exploited sustainable on supervision of the government.
- The tourism: the presences of waterfalls and rapids and the traditional cultures can fulfill an important role.
- The forestry sector: by preservation of the biodiversity for tourism and at the sale of carbon credits. The accent can’t be laid on the timber trade.
- The medical sector: Except of the traditional treatments, the presence of different medical plants can give a positive impulse at this sector.
- Scientific research on different fields and levels, e.g. the biodiversity and the medical sector.

Despite the growing interaction between the capital of Surinam and the interior, there is much work to do yet to bring the interior in development. One of the most important bottle necks is the lack of physical infrastructure. This results in a lack of supervision by the government on legal and illegal activities in the gold sector and marauding of protected species.

Important aspects, for the formulation of the developments views for sectors of the interior are:
The various conventions which Suriname has committed to: climate change office, air quality, maritime topics, biodiversity, human rights, forestry, cultural inheritance, regional development, labor, health and safety.

Suriname is committed to the international conventions of basic laws related to native and traditional communities. There is also a Presidential decision (PB 28/2000) which has confirmed the collective laws on the residential of the maroon and indigenous people.

Except of the formulation of a clear policy on the territory of the maroon and the indigenous people, there must be also a policy formulated the area’s which are used for the forestry and other mining concessions. After exploiting the raw materials these area’s will be property of the state again.

The coastal plain

De coastal plain of Suriname, covers approximately 20% of the country surface. 75-90% of the Surinamese population is settled there. The coastal plain is characterized a large amount of ridges, swamps and vegetation types.

The development potentials for this area are:

- The estuarine zone where the biodiversity is inconceivable. Except of the fact, that mangrove forest is protection against the coast reduction, it also hatch place for different species: birds, fish and shrimps.
- Petroleum supplies in the deep bottom of the waters and in the soil.
- Quaternary sediments and some sands sediments (mainly white sand and shells).
- The water sources have a very good quality for the dinking water provision.
- The soil fertility and the presence of sufficient fresh water are in favour of the agricultural sector.

The most important threat for the coastal plain is the rising of the sea level, which is caused by the climate change. This is the result of wrong human interventions.

For the formulating of a development vision for the coastal plain, the following aspect are important:

- The different conventions at which Suriname is committed to: climate change office, air quality, maritime topics, biodiversity, human rights, forestry, cultural inheritance, regional development, labor, health and safety.
- Most of the coastal region in the northern part of Suriname is property of the citizens in the country or domain ground on which citizen established a concise title. The implementation of the development vision will be only successful if the government comes to terms with the stakeholders.

The current physical planning in Suriname

The physical planning in Surinam is a responsibility of the government. Political developments have caused changes in tasks of the various ministries and other institutions. This is the reason why physical planning is not the responsibility of one ministry. The result is an inadequate physical planning.

The bottle necks are:

- an unbridled spacing of urban positions over the countryside;
- jostle of the economic weak positions through the economic strong positions;
- devaluation of urban centers, because of the move of commercial positions to economic more attractive areas;
- spatial isolation of residential areas for the elites (the so-called closed communities);
- damage of the natural and cultural inheritance through commercial and inefficient space use;
- bad or absent public provisions;
Development Vision for Suriname

Although the decentralization process of the districts, all districts are administrative and economically depend on Paramaribo. Without some simply organizational and spatial intervention all these areas will decay to sleep cities of Paramaribo. Because of those reasons it is necessary to formulate a national sustainable development vision on short term. There for the natural resources offer good potentials for the economic development of the country, through which the gross national product increases and with that the prosperity and the welfare of the total population.

Within the developments program the zones for the different destinations must be clear. On behalf of the law there can be protected areas, residential areas and production areas (forestry, mining, industry or a combination). It is important that the balance between the function: living, working, recreation and traffic, is realized in the development planning of areas. This should be the key to move back the dependence on Paramaribo. That will also increase the chance of the decentralization process.

To have the guarantee of the realization of development vision, the vision should be record by the law, followed through the formulation of structure and zoning plans for the delimited orders. The legal record of the developments vision, either translated in structure or zoning plan, will bind every citizen and every authorities at the observance of that. The memory of explanation of the development vision will clarified every article to the individual.

Considering the small population and the weak economy of Surinam it is necessary for the the government (in early stage) to decide which sectors can be develop by itself and which sectors should be develop with others, either with local or international market players.

The development vision should serve as a communication mean between the authorities and the private sector. Dependent on the projected sector it should make it possible to negotiate over the investment and the development.

To enlargement of the capacity of the development vision it is considerably that all actors should have a positive contribution in the vision. Considerably is to be mentioned that except of the government, the legislative power has an important task to realize the development vision.

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