

Hon Robert Pickersgill
Minister of Water, Land, Environment and Climate Change
25 Dominica Drive
Kingston 5
Jamaica

28th May 2013

Your Excellency,

RE: Support for the ban on charcoal exportation from Jamaica to the Caribbean and beyond

We write to you today because we understand that the government of Jamaica has made a commitment to ban the export of charcoal. We welcome this action because it demonstrates your willingness to address the escalating concern that increased demand for charcoal will have serious implications for the future of dry forests across Jamaica.

A rising demand for charcoal has accelerated the exploitation of Jamaica's forests and there are now serious worries of the implications this has for the future of the Hellshire Hills in southern Jamaica. This region is arguably the most outstanding remaining example of pristine tropical dry forest in the insular Caribbean, and has been internationally recognized as an Alliance for Zero Extinction Site, being the only place in the world where the Critically Endangered Jamaican iguana *Cyclura collei* occurs.

The Jamaican iguana was highlighted last year as one of the 100 most threatened animals in the world in a high-profile publication entitled "*Priceless or Worthless? The World's Most Threatened Species*" published by the Zoological Society of London in collaboration with the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) (copy included for your interest). With the dedication of Jamaican and international partners, an extensive head-starting, research, monitoring, and non-native predator control program is conducted year-round by the Jamaican Iguana Recovery Group, based at the Department of Life Sciences, University of the West Indies, Mona (Kingston), to help prevent the species' extinction.

Currently, the iguanas persist only within a 10km² core zone in the Hellshire Hills, which scientific experts have witnessed is becoming increasingly threatened through the destruction of its forests due, in particular, to illegal tree cutting. The domestic demand for dry forest products has always been unsustainable, but recent reports highlighting the establishment of an export market in charcoal are of particular concern. Any exacerbation of the current level of charcoal extraction is very likely to inflict further stress on the last remaining stands of tropical dry forest in Jamaica and would devastate the Hellshire Hills, causing the extinction of a species found nowhere else in the world.

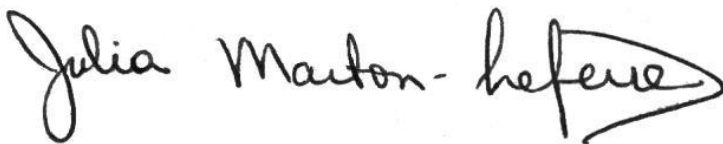
As a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Jamaica has made a commitment to biodiversity conservation efforts, particularly to the Strategic Plan on Biodiversity and its accompanying targets. The forests of the Hellshire Hills are currently protected under Jamaican law by the Forest Act and the Wild Life Protection Act, and are part of the Portland Bight Protected Area (PBPA; declared on Earth Day in 1999). The wetlands of the PBPA have also been designated as a Ramsar site. Clearly,

effective implementation of this legislation, and appropriate protection and management of the Hellshire Hills, is needed to ensure that, for example, *“By 2020, the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained”* (CBD Aichi Target 12).

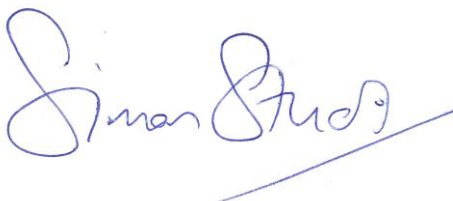
While we recognize the rights of Jamaicans to secure a diversified export market, we are concerned that extensive exploitation of hardwoods will cause irreversible impacts. IUCN encourages the government of Jamaica to continue the measures you have already taken (including the charcoal export ban), and take the necessary steps to ensure enhanced protection of those areas at increased risk of charcoal exploitation, in particular the Hellshire Hills. IUCN also wishes to encourage serious discussions between forest managers and policy makers to prevent the unregulated and large-scale destruction of the irreplaceable tropical dry forests of Jamaica, as exemplified by those in the Hellshire Hills.

IUCN, SSC, and particularly the expertise contained within the SSC Iguana Specialist Group, stand ready to provide advice and technical assistance on this issue as needed.

Yours sincerely and respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julia Marton-Lefèvre". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Julia Marton-Lefèvre
Director General
IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature)

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Simon N. Stuart". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Simon N. Stuart
Chair
IUCN Species Survival Commission

Copies to:

Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Most Honourable Portia Simpson Miller
Office of the Prime Minister, 1 Devon Road, Kingston 10, Jamaica

Minister of Finance and Planning, Dr. the Honourable Peter David Phillips
Ministry of Finance, 30 National Heroes Circle, Kingston 4, Jamaica