

World news story: British Ambassador Visits Project for the Protection of the Mayan Biosphere Reserve

The Ambassador met with representatives of the National Forestry Institute (INAB), the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP), the environmental police (DIPRONA), the Ministry of Agriculture (MAGA) and other local and international partners that are working with the UK Space Agency (UKSA) in implementing this new technology.

The project uses space technology such as remote sensors and the Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) to monitor Guatemala's forests from space through the use of an application installed in cell phones or tablets.

Deforestation, fires, extensive cattle ranching and ungovernability are some of the threats to the Mayan Biosphere Reserve (MBR), where the project will provide its first results. The programme seeks to gather evidence using information from space technology to help the authorities in the decision making process of forest administration and in the fight against illegal exploitation of resources.

Among other benefits that this project will have, is the strengthening of human resources, the use of software and technological equipment, and technological innovation to fulfil the institutional functions of the sector. As a result it is expected this will provide greater transparency in the forestry sector and hence attract foreign investments.

Later, Ambassador Davidson travelled to the Wildlife Conservation and Rescue Association (ARCAS) to take a tour of its facilities and learn about some of the schemes used to protect the MBR. Among these is an Environmental Education Centre, which will receive funds from the project, to sensitize local and foreign students and visitors about the problems of the MBR.

The project FMAP (Forestry Management and Protection) is scheduled to last 3 years starting from December 2016 with an investment of some Q50 million that will also cover areas of Alta and Baja Verapaz.

To mark her visit to Petén, Ambassador Carolyn Davidson said:

The United Kingdom is very clear that climate change is a global threat, not only for issues of conservation and preservation of natural resources, but also as an element of impact on the national security of countries. We wish the project success.