



United States Consulate General

J.B. Gorsiraweg #1, Willemstad, Curaçao

Tuesday, August 20, 2013

Smithsonian Institution Partners with Curacao on Deep Reef Exploration

Kirk Johnson, Director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC, was on Curacao August 13-20, 2013 to support Curacao's inclusion in the Smithsonian's planned global marine biodiversity network of coastal monitoring sites. As Director of the Museum of Natural History, Dr. Johnson oversees a collection of more than 126 million specimens and artifacts. The Museum of Natural History hosts an average of seven million visitors each year. The Smithsonian Institution (www.si.edu) is the world's largest museum and research complex, with 19 museums, nine research centers, and 140 international affiliate museums.

While it is widely recognized that shallow coral reefs are in peril worldwide, comparatively little is known about tropical deep reefs. The Curacao-based Smithsonian Deep Reef Observation Project aims to help fill this major gap in our knowledge. Capitalizing on exploratory submersible diving technology, the project is discovering a new world of biodiversity and beginning to monitor long-term changes in environmental and biological parameters that may help to determine the interconnectedness of deep and shallow reefs (<http://ocean.si.edu/content/collections-cura%C3%A7ao>). The U.S. Consulate General applauds this important collaboration between Curacao and the Smithsonian Institution.

On August 19, during an informative presentation followed by dinner at the consulate's Roosevelt House on August 19, Dr. Johnson, along with Mr. Dutch Schrier, founder of the Curacao Sea Aquarium, and Dr. Carole Baldwin, research zoologist at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, discussed the deep reef research the United States and Curacao are undertaking together on the island.

Curacao is an ideal location for monitoring because its shallow reefs are in good condition relative to many Caribbean localities; deep reefs are easily accessible because the bottom slopes rapidly to great depths right next to shore. The manned submersible Curasub is equipped with the necessary hydraulics to deploy and retrieve monitoring gear. A private enterprise initially established to accommodate tourists, Substation Curacao (<http://www.substation-curacao.com>) now supports deep-reef research efforts by scientists from around the world.

###

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

<http://www.state.gov>

<http://curacao.usconsulate.gov>