

## **Mini-Treaty on Gorillas Agreed at "Paris Primates" Meetings**

*Paris, 26 October 2007:* A new and legally-binding Agreement for the conservation of gorillas is open for signature in Paris today.

Representatives of nine African Range States hammered out the terms of the new Agreement to protect man's closest relatives, at a meeting earlier this week hosted by the Government of France and the United Nations (UNEP) Convention on Migratory Species.

The main objective of the Agreement is to conserve and restore Gorilla populations in Central and West Africa through an Action Plan covering education, research and forest protection.

The Gorilla Agreement will provide legal teeth to support an urgent conservation and sustainable development programme under the Great Apes Survival Project Partnership (GRASP), an alliance of over 30 Governments, UN agencies and numerous voluntary bodies whose new programme "Plan It for the Apes" was also published this week. The CMS Secretariat will work in close co-operation with GRASP to the Gorilla Agreement.

At the request of the Range States, the new Agreement also links gorilla conservation explicitly to the objectives of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) which convenes in Paris today. Speaking to the Ministerial session of the CBFP, Robert Hepworth, Executive Secretary of CMS, emphasized the opportunity to achieve environmental and development objectives simultaneously:

"We have GRASP mobilizing a grand alliance of Governments and civil society to "Plan It for the Apes". We have the Congo Basin Forest Partnership mobilizing resources for forests and the millions of many poor people who depend on them. We have outstanding examples in Uganda and Rwanda of how Gorilla tourism can help local communities to become self-sufficient. We have a new report from UNEP today about responding to the environmental causes and consequences of the current conflict in DRC particularly by developing new and greener energy to reduce demand for fuel from the forest where gorillas and many other endangered animals and plants live. We have a clear understanding of how important - and relatively cheap - the conservation of existing forests can be in creating a carbon-neutral planet.

Now the Convention on Migratory Species has joined forces with gorilla Range States and France to negotiate a new "Treaty for the Apes" in record time - 3 days of concentrated negotiations.

We have to use the opportunity to weave the strands represented by these key objectives into a robust cloth which will allow humans and the gorillas, as our closest relatives, to live in harmony and peace".

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