

Year of the Gorilla Event Mobilizes Major Audience in Paris



Bert Lenten (CMS) and Ian Redmond (YoG Ambassador)

Paris, 5 December - A major outreach event to mark the Year of the Gorilla at the Museum of Natural History in Paris attracted an interested public in large numbers.

The event on 5th December, organized by the French Ministry for the Environment (MEEDDM), was held in the run-up to the United Nations' climate change conference in Copenhagen.

Theatre performances, which were inspired by African oral traditions, raised awareness on the plight of gorillas and their role to conserve rainforests as keystone species.

A series of films which was screened in the auditorium of the Museum dealt with threats to gorillas as a result of logging, charcoal production, mining activities, armed conflicts and poaching. The role of Lowland and Mountain Gorillas for biodiversity was emphasized in the film "Retour aux Virungas" directed by André Lucas, who guided the audience through the film sessions.



Ian Redmond (YoG Ambassador)

UN YoG Ambassador Ian Redmond, participated in panel discussions with key players in gorilla conservation in the African range states including Fidel Ruzigandekwe, Director of Uganda Wildlife Authority, Norbert Mushenzi, Director of the National Park of the Virungas and NGO representatives. Samy Mankoto in charge of the Man and Biosphere Programme at UNESCO and primatologist Sabrina Krief from the National Museum of Natural History, who played a major role in developing a French version of the Great Apes Atlas, contributed to the debate by answering questions from a highly interested audience.

In Redmond complimented the national educational awareness project "*Great Apes and their Habitat*" in Uganda and Gabon and its importance of protecting great apes from extinction and preventing deforestation and climate change. Involving the young generation was key to educate them to be conservationists and spread the message to save gorillas from extinction.

In his official statement CMS Deputy Executive Secretary Bert Lenten explained major conservation activities to reduce the continuous plight of gorillas and their habitat. Mr. Lenten called upon the Parties to the Convention to provide resources to implement the action plan of the CMS Gorilla Agreement.