

**REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE PARTIES
TO THE
AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF
GORILLAS AND THEIR HABITATS**

Rome, Italy, 29 November 2008

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INTRODUCTION

1. The first meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Gorillas and Their Habitats was held at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome, Italy, on 29 November and 1 and 3 December 2008.
2. The meeting was attended by the following Parties to the Agreement: Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon and Nigeria.
3. The non-party Range States of Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Uganda were also represented.
4. Governmental observers attended from France, Germany, Hungary, Monaco and Spain.
5. The following United Nations bodies were also represented by observers: Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), United Nations Environment Programme/Great Apes Survival Project (UNEP/GRASP), UNEP/Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species (UNEP/CMS) and UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC).
6. Also attending were non-governmental observers from the following: Humane Society International (HIS), International Union for Conservation of Nature/Species Survival Commission (IUCN/SSC) Primate Specialist Group, Regional Agency for Parks - Lazio Regional Government, Sinepad, World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), Wildlife Conservation Society and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-International).

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

7. At the opening session of the meeting, Mr. Robert Hepworth, Executive Secretary of the CMS, expressed his gratitude to donors, in particular the Government of France, for their support in nurturing to fruition the new flagship Agreement on the Conservation of Gorillas and Their Habitats, a process in which the GRASP Partnership had also played a similarly important supporting role. As a result, the Agreement had been successfully negotiated in a period of only three days at the meeting of Range States held in Paris, France, from 22 to 24 October 2007. Following its signature and

ratification by six Parties, the Agreement had very rapidly entered into force in June 2008 and he now looked forward to its ratification by the four remaining Range States.

8. The current meeting would provide an opportunity for the development of proposals to be considered by the Conference of the Parties at its forthcoming ninth meeting. In that regard, budget issues were especially significant. The four draft action plans constituting the Gorilla Action Plan to be considered by the meeting were another important issue, not least given the increased threat to gorillas since the Agreement was negotiated. The gorilla profile, however, would undoubtedly be raised during 2009, which had been declared as the Year of the Gorilla (YoG) by CMS, GRASP and WAZA. YoG had already generated a great deal of interest and it was hoped that its launch in Rome on 1 December 2008 would also generate more resources for implementation of the Gorilla Action Plan, thereby translating into action the strong feelings often expressed on the subject of gorillas.

2. RULES OF PROCEDURE

9. The meeting adopted the provisional Rules of Procedure for the First Meeting of Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Gorillas and Their Habitats (UNEP/CMS/GOR-MOP1/Doc.4), prepared by the CMS Secretariat.

3. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

10. The meeting adopted its agenda, which is attached as an annex to the present report.

11. In the course of the meeting, three working groups were convened to address the following issues: reporting, composition of the Technical Committee, and financial matters. The working groups reported to the plenary on the outcome of their discussions, which are set forth in the present report.

4. NOMINATION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

12. In accordance with rule 5.2 of the Rules of Procedure, Mr. Samy Mankoto (Man and the Biosphere Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Programme) was nominated as Chair of the meeting. Mr. John Mshelbwala (Nigeria) was nominated as Vice-Chair.

5. NOMINATION OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

13. Mr. Dieudonné Ankara (Congo), Ms. Melanie Virtue (UNEP/GRASP) and Mr. Liam Addis (CMS Secretariat) were nominated as members of the Credentials Committee.

14. Under the chairmanship of Mr. Ankara, the Credentials Committee subsequently examined the credentials submitted by three Parties, namely the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon and the Republic of Congo, and by one non-Party, namely Uganda. All of those credentials were found to be acceptable and in proper order.

6. CMS AND GRASP SECRETARIAT AND DEPOSITARY REPORT

15. Mr. Ian Redmond, GRASP Chief Consultant, in a PowerPoint presentation on the conservation status of gorillas, gave an overview of gorilla species and subspecies, including details of their morphology, feeding habits and habitats, 90 per cent of which were likely to be affected within the next two decades by encroaching infrastructural developments. The poaching of gorillas for bushmeat and traditional medicine purposes posed another threat, as did the security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It was important to prioritize the areas to be saved with all such facts in mind.

16. Gorillas were a vital part of the ecosystem, in which they played a multi-layered role that essentially shaped the whole forest architecture. As a major tourist attraction, moreover, they generated enormous revenues that were used to fund local community projects, for instance, thus reaping socio-economic benefits for the countries concerned. In short, the ultimate goal of conservation was to protect species function, to which end it was essential to take into account the interconnectedness of ecosystems when developing action plans for the conservation of gorillas and their habitats.

17. Mr. Liam Addis, CMS Secretariat, introducing the report by the CMS and GRASP Secretariats (UNEP/CMS/GOR-MOP1/Doc.5/Rev.1), highlighted the main activities of the Secretariat since 2007. He drew particular attention to the Gorilla Action Plan developed in conjunction with the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (IRSNB) and to the preparations for the Year of the Gorilla, organized with the support of UNEP, UNESCO and WAZA.

18. The Secretariat also acted as depositary for the Agreement, which it had registered with the United Nations registry. As for liaison with other organizations, CMS was now a member of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership and hoped to sign a memorandum of cooperation with the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC). It was already a member of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO).

19. He thanked the Governments of France, Germany, Monaco and Spain, as well as WAZA, for the earmarked contributions received for the Agreement, a summary of which for the period 2006-2008 was set forth in document UNEP/CMS/GOR-MOP1/Doc.5/Add.1.

20. The meeting took note of the report by the CMS and GRASP Secretariats.

7. ESTABLISHMENT OF A SECRETARIAT FOR THE AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF GORILLAS AND THEIR HABITATS

21. Mr. Hepworth, Executive Secretary of the CMS, introducing the item, said that no document had been prepared on the subject as the CMS Secretariat had been operating as the secretariat for the

Gorilla Agreement. The proposal was that staff members, i.a. a P-4 programme officer, an associate programme officer, and a general administrative officer, should be allocated to the secretariat for a percentage of their working hours. Some would be funded by the CMS Trust Fund, while other components of the secretariat would come from GRASP. The suggestion by the CMS Secretariat was that the proposal be submitted for consideration by the Conference of the Parties. CMS was a flexible organization and, where necessary, consultants could be employed and staff members loaned from other bodies and organizations. The financial aspects of the allocation of staff were considered under agenda item 11.

22. The Scientific Council recommended to the Conference of the Parties that it empower the secretariat to take all necessary measures to ensure continuation of the work of the Agreement. He therefore suggested that the meeting request the Conference of the Parties to confirm the mandate given to the CMS Secretariat in 2007.

23. After a discussion in which emphasis was placed on the important and effective networking role of the CMS Secretariat, it was agreed to recommend to the Conference of the Parties that the CMS Secretariat should continue to act as secretariat for the Agreement, and that the role of GRASP in providing secretariat services should be explicitly mentioned in the recommendation.

8. ADOPTION OF THE ACTION PLAN

24. Ms. Roseline Beudels-Jamar, Scientific Councillor for Terrestrial Mammals (and for Belgium), introducing the item, said that adoption of Action Plan was the main focus of the meeting. The four individual draft action plans of which it was composed had been drawn up on the basis of existing national plans and, wherever possible, with reference to regional action plans. The background information for the draft action plans, summarized in four conservation status reports, one for each of the 4 Gorilla taxa, had been included in the CMS Technical Series Publication No. 17, which had been published with support from the Government of Monaco.

25. In an ensuing discussion, it was stressed that the Action Plan must relate to work being done nationally and to gorilla conservation in the context of the needs of neighbouring communities. The Action Plan should also interrelate to work at the global level.

Draft action plan 2008 for the Western lowland gorilla (Gorilla gorilla gorilla)

26. Mr. Redmond, GRASP Chief Consultant, gave a brief PowerPoint presentation providing background information on the draft action plan for the Western lowland gorilla (UNEP/CMS/GOR-MOP1/Doc.7a), which he said was the most ambitious of the four draft action plans. Not only was the Western lowland gorilla the most numerous and most widely distributed of all gorilla species but it was also the most rapidly declining. It was poached for use as bushmeat and in traditional medicine,

in addition to which it was often the unintended victim of snares set for other animals. It was ebola haemorrhagic fever, however, that posed the major threat. He therefore suggested that methods of applying vaccine to gorillas in the path of the epidemic should form part of any action plan, to which end ebola should be more strongly identified. With that in mind, he urged Range States to ensure that their experts on emerging diseases participated in any task force established on the subject.

27. The relevant Range States commented favourably on the draft action plan, which was adopted on the understanding that their proposed amendments would be incorporated. The representative of Equatorial Guinea also informed the meeting that, in preparation for its accession to the Agreement, his country had enacted a decree prohibiting the consumption, capture and sale of all gorilla species. The representative of Congo added that his country would be submitting to the Secretariat information on national actions relating to its gorilla sanctuaries.

Draft action plan 2008 for the Cross River gorilla (Gorilla gorilla diehli)

28. Mr. Redmond gave a brief PowerPoint presentation providing background information on the draft action plan for the Cross River gorilla (UNEP/CMS/GOR-MOP1/Doc.7b), drawing particular attention to the geographical location of populations of the gorilla.

29. The relevant Range States expressed their support for the draft action plan, which drew heavily on the corresponding IUCN action plan. The draft was then adopted, on the understanding that amendments proposed during the discussion would be incorporated.

Draft action plan 2008 for the Eastern lowland gorilla (Gorilla berengei graueri)

30. The draft action plan for the Eastern lowland gorilla (UNEP/CMS/GOR-MOP1/Doc.7c) was adopted, following favourable comments by the relevant Range States.

Draft action plan 2008 for the mountain gorilla (Gorilla berengei berengei)

31. Mr. Redmond gave a PowerPoint presentation providing background information on the draft action plan for the mountain gorilla (UNEP/CMS/GOR-MOP1/Doc.7d), which also drew heavily on the corresponding IUCN action plan. In particular, he highlighted the location of mountain gorilla populations and the potential for transboundary movement.

32. The draft action plan was welcomed by the Range States. Emphasis was placed on the need for a sustainable action plan that took into account the situation on the ground and reflected the medium- and long-term actions of the Parties involved. In order to make the plan operational, however, the relevant Range States would require an indication of which actions were a priority.

33. The draft action plan was adopted, on the understanding that amendments proposed during the discussion would be incorporated.

9. FORMAT FOR REPORTING ON IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PLAN AND AGREEMENT

34. Introducing the item, Mr. Addis, CMS Secretariat, said that under article IV of the Agreement, reporting on implementation of the Agreement was required. The Secretariat recommended that such reporting be incorporated within the system of national reports submitted to the Conference of the Parties, in accordance with the project to harmonize reporting across the CMS bodies. The format of the report, however, was at the discretion of the meeting.

35. It was agreed that the working group on reporting should draft a proposal for means of reporting on implementation of the Agreement, including in national law. It was suggested that volunteers working on reintroducing populations and monitoring free populations should participate in the working group. The importance of synergy with other organizations and cross-border monitoring was also stressed. The outcome became Resolution 1 of this meeting.

10. ESTABLISHMENT OF A TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

36. The Chair, introducing the item, said that the composition of the Technical Committee was covered under article VI of the Agreement. He emphasized that synergy and cost-savings would be achieved if the same Range State representative were to attend the meetings of the Parties, the Technical Committee and GRASP.

37. After discussion, it was agreed that the designated working group should draft a proposal concerning the composition of the Technical Committee.

11. ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

38. Mr. Hepworth, Executive Secretary of the CMS, introducing the item, drew attention to the proposals for funding secretariat members contained in document UNEP/CMS/GOR-MOP1/Doc.6 and suggested that they be submitted to the Conference of the Parties for consideration.

39. Ms. Beudels-Jamar, Scientific Councillor for Terrestrial Mammals (and for Belgium), expressed the hope that a range of projects would follow on from adoption of the Action Plan. The national and regional action plans thus far proposed would cost from US\$50-60 million. The CMS Secretariat was unable to allocate such large amounts, but Range States, partners and donors had expressed their desire to help with funding and supporting projects. Without wishing to pre-empt adoption of the Action Plan, the Secretariat had already asked international experts to submit project proposals.

Following adoption of the Action Plan, the Technical Committee would consider and select projects from among those proposals.

40. On the subject of funding, the Chair recognized the considerable efforts of the French and United States Governments in the area of great ape conservation. He also welcomed the support pledged by the Government of Monaco for that same purpose.

41. The representative of France thanked the Secretariat for its recognition of the sum, amounting to just under €140,000, committed by his Government for conservation work under the Agreement. It had also made contributions in support of forest biodiversity, the conservation of great apes and the French translation of an important book on great apes.

42. The representative of Monaco announced that his country would continue its support of activities relating to the Agreement and to the Year of the Gorilla, and that a meeting was scheduled with the Prince Albert of Monaco Fund for the Environment to consider the amount of Monaco's contribution.

43. It was pointed out that the Scientific Council was to submit a number of proposals to the Conference of the Parties aimed at giving the Range States the resources to pursue projects, including in the context of the Congo River Basin Fund.

44. It was agreed that the working group on financial matters should discuss how to optimize the benefits and use the resources of other relevant bodies working to conserve the great apes, in particular the Congo River Basin Fund, GRASP and ITTO, as well as donor countries and the tourism industry. It was recalled, however, that funding would only be provided in the case of the Congo River Basin Fund for projects that met the Fund's two main aims of reducing deforestation and poverty.

45. The working group was also charged with considering the details contained in annexes A and B to document UNEP/CMS/GOR-MOP1/Doc.6, which was to be approved by the meeting, as not all the funding for those actions had been found.

46. Following the deliberations of the working group on financial matters, the meeting discussed the budget estimates set forth in annex A to document UNEP/CMS/GOR-MOP1/Doc.6. In response to a query as to whether the secretariat posts indicated in that annex would be funded by voluntary contributions, it was explained that the stated percentage cost of four of those posts, amounting to €113,000 or approximately one half of one man year for the period 2009-2011, would be absorbed within already existing posts funded by the CMS Trust Fund. The GRASP post would be directly funded by UNEP. New sources of funding would be required, however, for the new post of programme officer.

47. Gratitude was expressed to the Governments of France, Germany, Italy, Monaco, Spain and the United Kingdom for their provision of support towards the conservation of gorillas and their habitats. In that connection, the representative of France specified that his Government wished its voluntary contributions to be used for projects involving cross-border cooperation.

48. Following the conclusion of discussions, the meeting decided to note and agree on the budget estimates prepared by the Secretariat, as set forth in annex A of document UNEP/CMS/GOR-MOP1/Doc.6, in particular line 2200 relating to the conservation fund for selected projects. It also recognized the need to seek additional funding towards the implementation of projects.

12. PARTY CONTRIBUTIONS

49. Mr. Hepworth, Executive Secretary of the CMS, said that the Secretariat suggested that the Parties to the Agreement should contribute a minimum of €3,000 towards the cost of implementing the Agreement. Similar contribution systems had been established in the case of such other instruments as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds. Use of the United Nations scale was not advised, as it would result in distorted contributions and did not work well at the regional level.

50. Following the deliberations of the working group on financial matters, the meeting discussed the proposal to set a minimum contribution of €3,000, albeit on the understanding that an adjustment of that amount might be necessary in future. Use of the United Nations scale of assessments was discussed as a possible means of determining contributions and the problem of arrears was raised as a consideration, as was the criterion of an effective action plan. Also mentioned was the need to generate extrabudgetary resources, bearing in mind that the minimum contributions from Parties would amount to only a fraction of the total needed to implement the Agreement. In that regard, it was emphasized that Parties could make additional voluntary contributions if they so wished.

51. The overall response to the proposal was positive. The representatives of certain Parties and non-party Range States none the less stated that they would reserve their position on the matter until after they had consulted further with their national authorities. On reconvening on 3 December, all Parties agreed to the minimum annual contribution above after having consulted with the ministries in their respective capitals.

13. STATUS OF ACCESSION OF NON-PARTIES

52. The Chair provided information on the status of accession of non-Parties, namely Angola, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Uganda. The meeting noted with satisfaction the progress in that status and looked forward to the speedy accession to the Agreement by those States.

14. CLOSING OF THE MEETING

The meeting was closed. The Chairman expressed gratitude to all participants, interpreters and support staff for their successful endeavours.

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