

**Message of greeting  
on the occasion of the Frankfurt Symposium  
on the United Nations Year of the Gorilla**



My warmest greetings to all those participating in the Gorilla Symposium.

Your conference ties in with the Year of the Gorilla, declared by the United Nations for 2009. With your Symposium, you are sending a clear signal to save a very special animal species from extinction. If the gorilla dies out, it will be irrevocably lost. Such finality should stir us to action. Of course, we will always see certain species vanish while others emerge. What is new, however, is the rate at which we are now losing species.

Your important call to protect the gorilla is also an appeal to make it possible for the people in Central Africa to lead peaceful, healthy, and prosperous lives. For the example of the gorilla also highlights the complex nature of our habitats. Everything is interconnected: species protection and climate protection, combating poverty, extracting resources, agriculture, tourism, and securing peace. The complexity of these interdependencies requires a comprehensive approach, which you are taking in your Symposium.

Germany places great value on nature conservation and species protection. Even in times of financial and economic crisis, the conservation of biological diversity is and will remain crucial for our own long-term survival. What answers do we have to this existential challenge? Protected areas can play a key role. People are increasingly recognising that we can and must attach an economic value to the services provided by ecosystems. It will be decisive to sustainably manage the natural riches of such areas, and to distribute them as fairly as possible. Stable conditions in the regions concerned are a prerequisite for achieving this goal. Of course, these fundamental principles are no cure-all. But they are a form of compass, providing

guidance for many individual contributions.

We in Germany acknowledge our special responsibility both as a Contracting Party to the international Convention on Biological Diversity and as President of the Convention until the end of 2010. We therefore support the Life Web Initiative which was officially launched in Bonn last year. We advocate the idea of a coherent global network of protected areas. In particular, we have made concrete financial commitments to the conservation of rainforests.

The Gorilla Symposium in Frankfurt brings together many experts from all over the world, who will extend their knowledge on complex interconnections, engage in discussions and present their results to the public. External communication is indispensable, as not every consumer is automatically aware of the link between their new, budget-priced laptop and ore mining in the last remaining gorilla habitats.

I hope that you will be able to send an unmistakable signal with the "Frankfurt Gorilla Declaration". It is now a question of acting on the insights gained. To this end I wish you every success in the Symposium, interesting discussions and fruitful contacts, and a very pleasant stay here in Germany.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angela Merkel', written in a cursive style.

**Dr. Angela Merkel**

Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany