

Frankfurt Declaration on Gorilla Conservation

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Marking the “*UN Year of the Gorilla 2009*”, representatives of gorilla range states and donor states, the UNEP/UNESCO Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP), other UN agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, scientists, conservation experts and the private sector met for a symposium on gorilla conservation at *Zoo Frankfurt* in Germany on 9 and 10 June 2009.

Background

Gorillas are internationally classified as Endangered or Critically Endangered by the IUCN Red List. All gorilla species are protected by law both nationally in the ten range states, as well as internationally through listings of *Gorilla gorilla* and *Gorilla beringei* on Appendix I of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Nevertheless, gorillas still face a high risk of extinction and global population numbers continue to decline sharply. Wide-ranging measures to address the threats outlined below are required to restore gorilla populations for future generations.

The forest ecosystems inhabited by gorillas provide services to the entire world, including carbon sequestration and storage, estimated at several billion tonnes of carbon dioxide, as well as generating rainfall both locally and globally. The long-term health of these forests depends on viable populations of animals such as gorillas, *inter alia*, to disperse the seeds of the next generation of trees.

The CMS Agreement on the Conservation of Gorillas and their Habitats, which came into force in June 2008, is the first legally binding international instrument exclusively targeting gorillas and complements the work of the GRASP partnership. The action plans under the Agreement provide a well-defined roadmap for gorilla conservation throughout the ten range states. The Frankfurt Declaration aims to support this Agreement.

Threats and Challenges

A combination of direct and indirect factors including climate change, habitat destruction, poaching, disease, exploitation of timber, fuel-wood and minerals, harmful practices related to traditional medicine, as well as the pet trade, human conflict and subsequent displacement are currently contributing to the gorilla’s demise.

Illegal hunting and bushmeat trade

Impunity remains a problematic catalyst for encouraging the illegal exploitation of gorillas. Without a considerable increase in political will and consequent government support for law enforcement efforts, increases in the efficiency of the judiciary, and increased public awareness, gorilla numbers are likely to continue to decline until their recovery is unlikely or impossible. Hunting for bushmeat and the pet trade as well as for traditional medicine is reaching proportions where large areas of forest are now devoid of wildlife.

Forestry, deforestation and energy

Forests are being cut down or degraded for a variety of reasons, including charcoal production, firewood needs, timber extraction and agricultural expansion. The timber industry creates a network of routes into previously remote areas greatly facilitating hunting access and bushmeat transportation.

Loss of forest cover and changes in forest composition threaten gorilla conservation and ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration and the capacity of forests to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, reduce poverty, and support sustainable livelihoods.

Mining

Mining industries, if not planned and regulated properly, are a growing threat to wildlife conservation in general and in particular to gorillas across their range, leading to destruction and degradation of habitats and increased poaching pressure.

For example, coltan and other natural resources are one means of understanding the dynamics of civil war in Central Africa; profit is a main driver for all kinds of illegal activities and warring factions. The relevance for international markets is high, as coltan and other raw materials are used in cell-phones, computers and other high-tech equipment.

Armed conflict

Protected areas, including World Heritage Sites can become centres of violence during times of armed conflict. This results in the loss of life, displacement of local communities, violations of human rights, the loss of biodiversity, key species and ecosystem services. Additionally, the loss of valuable natural heritage compromises future opportunities for local, national and regional sustainable development.

Disease

The conservation of great apes is inextricably linked to ecosystem, human, wildlife and livestock health. Diseases, including those of human origin, are one of the primary threats to gorilla survival, yet there exists scant comprehensive health data on free-ranging gorilla populations.

An emerging threat is the highly infectious Ebola virus, which can have up to 95% mortality in gorillas and humans. A large proportion of Central African great apes were killed by Ebola epidemics between 1994 and 2005, and this remains an ongoing threat. Their extremely low reproductive rate means that it would take over a century for great ape populations to recover from Ebola outbreaks even in the absence of poaching.

Ecotourism

Sustainable conservation-based tourism contributes to the ecologically sound management of forests and provides livelihood opportunities to local communities. A number of stakeholders can benefit from a successful gorilla tourism site, including conservation authorities, local communities, private sector partners and even national economies. However, gorilla tourism also has a number of potential negative impacts such as increased risk of diseases and poaching, which should be minimised.

Conservation and poverty alleviation are complementary goals at many gorilla tourism sites; the expectations of stakeholders and potential beneficiaries of gorilla tourism must be balanced. The private sector's and others' profits must be viewed as an added value rather than the driving force.

We, the participants of the Gorilla Symposium:

Law enforcement

1. *Request* range states to enforce laws in order to restore gorilla populations to a favourable conservation status as a matter of urgency,
2. *Call upon* the international community, donor states and other gorilla stakeholders to provide technical and financial support to range states in order to develop and enforce these laws,

Gorilla hunting and capture

3. *Urge* range states to:
 - i. Enforce existing laws banning the taking and trading of gorillas, including strictly regulating the wider bushmeat trade,
 - ii. Establish zones available for sustainable use of wildlife over which local communities have full ownership,
 - iii. Create a network of effectively managed protected areas,
 - iv. Develop and adhere to best practice guidelines on logging, mineral resource extraction and agricultural production,
 - v. Raise awareness of the legal status and exploitation of gorillas and other wildlife and take action in order to change public attitudes and consumer behaviour,
 - vi. Promote research projects and implement systematic monitoring programmes aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of anti-poaching efforts and halting the illegal bushmeat trade,
 - vii. Reduce bushmeat transportation options,
 - viii. Develop alternative protein sources,
4. *Urge* donor states, the international community including NGOs and the private sector to assist range states in implementing the above-mentioned points through the provision of financial and technical assistance,
5. *Call upon* states to combat illegal trade through the confiscation of illegally held live gorillas and ensure their repatriation into sanctuaries in their country of origin in cooperation with CITES,
6. *Call upon* the states of the European Union to assess the level of bushmeat imported into the European Union from gorilla range states and to improve the enforcement of existing legislation and regulations governing such imports,
7. *Call for* laws dealing with the disposal of bushmeat seized by the authorities to be harmonised across countries, so that with the sole exception of preserved samples or specimens needed for non-commercial scientific research or reference collections, all great ape meat, or parts of great apes, or meat or parts of other fully protected species be

incinerated or otherwise destroyed, rather than being sold or given away, so that it is no longer available for human or animal consumption,

Forestry, deforestation and energy

8. *Recommend* governments to develop and implement comprehensive, integrated land use plans that address the needs of local people as well as the needs of gorillas, their habitat and other wildlife,
9. *Urge* the regulation and provision of a region-wide, sustainable energy supply to local people, which includes the use of fuel-efficient stoves and the exploration of alternative energy opportunities,
10. *Urge* forestry companies to develop and implement adequate protection measures within their forest management plans, in accordance with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and IUCN guidelines, and in cooperation with all stakeholders,
11. *Urge* the international community to increase support to gorilla range states with concrete and long-term solutions concerning the energy-related deforestation threats affecting ever shrinking gorilla habitats,
12. *Recommend* the implementation of socially and environmentally sound lending practices by institutions lending to forestry companies operating in gorilla habitat,
13. *Further recommend* the development of a differentiated forestry taxation system to reward best practice and promote sustainable forestry and sustainable development,
14. *Recommend* that range state governments ensure forest taxes and other benefits are effectively remitted to decentralised entities and local communities,
15. *Urge* the international donor community to assist range states in reducing destruction and degradation of gorilla habitat through the provision of financial and technical assistance to support the following areas of work:
 - i. Establishing national strategies for Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD),
 - ii. Undertaking early action on REDD,
 - iii. Establishing financial and governance mechanisms for REDD,

Mining

16. *Emphasise* the importance of transparent trade for all competitors and certified standards along the commodity chain of mineral resources, including the possibility of the use of mineral fingerprinting,
17. *Encourage*, in conformity with national legislation in gorilla range states, the development of instruments and tools to ensure safe mineral exploitation, *request* range states to enforce existing laws and *further recommend* the application of adequate land use planning during any infrastructure development,
18. *Recommend* that no mineral exploitation activities be permitted in gorilla habitats and associated buffer zones,

19. *Remind* stakeholders to develop alternative sources of income for local people dependent on mining in protected areas to feed their families,
20. *Urge* mining companies to adopt socially and environmentally responsible practices, and to ensure their operations do not negatively impact gorillas or other biodiversity,
21. *Recommend* the regular update and implementation of adequate regulatory frameworks for infrastructure and extractives development,

Armed conflict

22. *Call upon* the UN and the International Community to help bring about an end to the conflicts in gorilla range states,
23. *Call upon* the international community to acknowledge that the illegal exploitation of resources by identified actors within protected areas can contribute to violating human rights,
24. *Urge* the United Nations to expand their peacekeeping mandates to include the protection of the integrity of biodiversity with special attention to highly endangered species and their habitats, and include environmental advisors (eco-officers) within their missions,
25. *Recommend* enforcement of existing conventions to ensure adequate protection of valuable natural resources during times of conflict (e.g. The Hague Convention 1954 & 1999, and The World Heritage Convention),
26. *Further recommend* that existing conventions be adapted to include the protection of natural sites during times of armed conflict,
27. *Remind* humanitarian agencies and NGOs to implement and enforce existing environmental guidelines and develop additional codes of conduct where necessary,
28. *Express our appreciation* for the commitment, bravery and sacrifice made by park rangers working to save gorillas and their habitats during periods of armed conflict,

Disease

29. *Endorse* the following measures as actions critical for protecting gorilla populations:
 - i. Enforcing strict rules concerning good hygiene practices for all people entering gorilla habitat including, but not limited to, field workers and tourists,
 - ii. Expanding ecological surveillance and health monitoring throughout the gorilla range,
 - iii. Recommending public health and education programmes for human communities sharing gorilla habitat to prevent disease transmission at the human – wildlife – livestock interface,
 - iv. Promoting more extensive research on diseases relevant to gorilla health, including building local capacity and improving local health infrastructure to ensure the rapid identification of zoonotic diseases,
 - v. Pursuing timely yet safe and ethically reviewed prophylactic strategies and treatments for the mitigation of gorilla health threats,

- vi. Recommending the development of vaccination strategies to reduce the infection rates of gorilla populations when critical for their survival. For example, to support feasibility studies to deliver anti-Ebola vaccines to the great apes, whether by darting or via a passive medium (food baits),
- vii. Urging authorising national bodies to issue, in a timely manner, CITES and other permits for non-commercial scientific samples that address gorilla disease control, containment, or diagnosis,

Ecotourism

30. *Emphasise* that conservation and poverty alleviation are complementary goals in any gorilla tourism site,
31. *Urge* that gorilla tourism sites establish a fair revenue sharing system between conservation / protected area management, local communities and private sector partners,
32. *Encourage* stakeholders, including donor states, to facilitate the transfer of skills and experience from successful gorilla tourism projects to other sites where ecotourism is being considered or implemented, and to share these findings within the wider conservation community,
33. *Recommend* that IUCN best practice guidelines for great ape tourism be followed in the assessment, planning and implementation of gorilla tourism at any potential site to minimise negative and maximise positive impacts,

Monitoring & research

34. *Encourage* the collation of data on the spatial distribution of factors threatening gorillas, such as natural resource density, to inform stakeholders and create awareness,
35. *Encourage* applied research focussed on practical management, planning and monitoring issues affecting gorillas, their habitats, associated local stakeholder and development matters, prioritising research that will benefit gorilla conservation,

Awareness raising

36. *Invite* stakeholders to mobilise, sensitise and involve rural communities living adjacent to or inside wildlife conservation areas in order to improve awareness and local action to conserve gorillas,
37. *Emphasise* that the conservation of gorillas in the wild must also be the primary goal at zoological institutions who breed and study gorillas and display them to the public, and request all zoological institutions to establish or strengthen links with projects to conserve gorillas in the wild,

Land use planning

38. *Urge* the international donor community to assist range states in reducing the poaching and consumption of gorillas and the destruction and degradation of their habitat, through the provision of financial and technical assistance to support the following areas of work:

- i. Establishment and sustainable management of new and existing protected areas,
- ii. Establishment and sustainable management of CBNRM,
- iii. Establishment of integrated national and landscape level land use planning processes,

Final Recommendations

39. *Urge* the international donor community to prioritise funding for projects benefiting gorillas and their habitats,
40. *Further urge* the international donor community to increase funding, within the context of poverty alleviation, which benefits the conservation of biodiversity, including gorillas,
41. *Highlight* that efforts to support gorilla conservation should be coordinated and harmonised at local, national and international levels, and should fully take into account the complexity of the situation marked by conflicting use of resources,
42. *Appeal* to the international community to support these efforts, whether by financial, “in-kind” contributions, personnel, logistic or political means, by joining forces to save the last strongholds of the gorilla.

Conclusion

In respect of the above recommendations, intentions and actions set out in the Frankfurt Declaration, we, the participants of the Gorilla Symposium, pledge to do everything in our power to ensure the long term survival of all species of gorilla, and encourage range states, other states, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and individuals to join us in this endeavour.

Frankfurt am Main, 10 June 2009