

First Intergovernmental Meeting on Great Apes  
and first meeting of the Council of the Great Apes Survival Project  
Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 5-9 September 2005

CITES AND THE CONSERVATION OF AND TRADE IN GREAT APES

1. This information document has been prepared by the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Introduction

2. CITES is an international agreement between Governments. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. All great ape species are included in Appendix I of the Convention. The practical effect of such a listing is that international commercial trade in wild-taken great apes is prohibited. Authorized international movements of great apes tend to be for breeding and other non-detrimental scientific purposes, CITES further requires the importer of live animals to be able to house and care for them appropriately.
3. All great ape range States are Parties to CITES, except Angola.
4. The amount of legal trade in great apes is very limited and it is the illicit trade for the purposes of bushmeat, the exotic pet trade and the unlawful acquisition by 'zoos' or places of public entertainment that poses the greatest threat with regard to CITES. Whilst clearly of greater importance for the long-term conservation of these species, other issues such as habitat loss, disturbance from humans and diseases are not issues that can be addressed under CITES.
5. There have been a number of high-profile instances of illicit trade in specimens of great apes in recent years, including the illicit import to Malaysia of gorillas and the illicit import into Cambodia and Thailand of orangutans. The investigations into some of these cases have yet to be concluded.
6. Illicit trade in great apes commonly involves cross-border smuggling, can involve the forgery or abuse of CITES documents and sometimes involves corrupt behaviour by government officials.
7. The CITES Secretariat has been a GRASP partner for several years and it currently represents other biodiversity-related conventions (Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention on Migratory Species and World Heritage Convention) on GRASP's interim executive committee.

Recent activities

8. At its 13th meeting (Bangkok, 2004), the Conference of the Parties to CITES adopted Resolution Conf. 13.4 (Conservation of and trade in great apes). A copy is attached. The Resolution encourages the Parties to take a number of measures to improve great ape conservation. It

makes reference to legislation, enforcement and the use of great apes, and encourages close working relationships with GRASP. The Standing Committee of CITES is directed to review implementation of the Resolution at each of its meetings.

9. At its 53rd meeting (Geneva, June/July 2005), the Standing Committee considered ways in which CITES could contribute practically to the conservation of great apes and combat illicit trade in these species. It agreed on two ways in which this might be addressed.
10. CITES has a history of using technical missions to range and consumer States to assess implementation of the Convention and to make recommendations for its improvement. The Committee agreed that the CITES Secretariat, in conjunction with the GRASP Secretariat, should undertake a technical mission to Asia to study the illicit trade in orangutans, which appears to have a highly organized structure and to involve significant numbers of animals of this species. The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has provided funding for such work. It is intended that this mission will be undertaken before the end of 2005.
11. In recent years, the Conference of the Parties to CITES has endorsed the concept of CITES Enforcement Task Forces. Facilitated by the Secretariat, such task forces are intended to bring together experts from relevant countries to design strategies to combat illicit trade, to increase the networking between Parties and relevant organizations and to improve the coordination of international investigations. The Committee agreed that the Secretariat should investigate the possibilities for establishing, in 2006, a CITES Great Ape Enforcement Task Force.
12. Through Resolutions of the Conference of the Parties, CITES has developed a rather unique mechanism to help implement the Convention properly and to correct situations where Parties do not meet their obligations under it. The Secretariat has acquired a wealth of information on how to implement the different aspects of the Convention. In addition to capacity building and training, however, a remedy of last resort, where there is a serious lack of implementation of the Convention, can be a decision by the Parties to recommend that trade in CITES specimens with the country concerned be suspended to allow time for the problem to be resolved.

### Conclusion

13. CITES is committed to the conservation of great apes and willingly offers its experience, especially in enforcement-related matters, to GRASP. It believes the first Intergovernmental Meeting on Great Apes and the establishment of the Council of the Great Apes Survival Project are major steps forward in the conservation of these species. Representatives of the CITES Secretariat will be present at the meeting and will be very happy to answer any questions that participants may have in relation to CITES and great apes.

## Conf. 13.4 Conservation of and trade in great apes

CONSCIOUS of the special importance of great apes, not only from a cultural and scientific point of view and as part of our natural heritage, but also as mankind's closest living relatives;

CONCERNED that wild populations of great apes [all subspecies of the gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*), chimpanzees (*Pan spp.*) and the orang-utan (*Pongo pygmaeus*)] in Africa and Asia are threatened by the combined effects of trade in live animals, poaching for bushmeat, disease and habitat loss caused by disturbance, fragmentation and destruction;

CONCERNED that almost all great ape populations continue to decline drastically;

AWARE that chimpanzees are now reported to be extinct in at least four of the 25 countries they once inhabited, that the Sumatran orang-utan (*Pongo pygmaeus abelii*) and three populations of gorilla are classified by IUCN as 'Critically Endangered' and that the other species and subspecies of great apes are classified as 'Endangered';

RECALLING that all great ape species are included in Appendix I of the Convention;

CONCERNED that illegal trade at international and national levels has been stimulated by opening up of forest habitats, increasing demand for ape meat, especially from urban populations both in range and non-range States and continuing global demand for live specimens, particularly juveniles;

COMMENDING efforts already made in a number of range and non-range States to tackle poaching and illegal trade, including repatriation of seized live specimens to the country of origin;

RECOGNIZING the need for international support to assist the 23 range States in protecting great ape populations, their habitats and related biodiversity resources;

RECOGNIZING also the need for technical guidance to assist all Parties in preventing illegal trade in live specimens and parts and derivatives of great apes, including the confiscation and subsequent treatment of live animals;

NOTING that the World Summit on Sustainable Development Great Ape Survival Project (WSSD GRASP) Partnership led by UNEP and UNESCO draws on the scientific expertise of the IUCN Species Survival Commission, and brings together range and non-range States, international conventions (including CITES and the Convention on Biological Diversity), and a range of global and national non governmental organizations;

NOTING further that GRASP convened an Inter-Governmental Preparatory Meeting at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France, from 26 to 28 November 2003, to set the agenda for an inter-ministerial meeting to be held in Africa in early 2005;

AWARE of work to prepare and adopt National Great Ape Survival Plans (NGASPs) and their role in building capacity in range States;

NOTING the work undertaken by the CITES Bushmeat Working Group and other initiatives;

NOTING that the Ministerial Declaration made at the Ministerial Conference on Africa Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (AFLEG) at Yaoundé, Cameroon, on 16 October 2003, included *inter alia* an expression of intention to establish and strengthen laws and regulations for hunting and bushmeat trade in and around forest industry concessions and across borders, and to work through sub-regional as well as regional task forces on forest law enforcement and governance;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

URGES all Parties to:

- a) adopt and implement comprehensive legislation to protect great apes, which includes:
  - i) a prohibition of all international trade for primarily commercial purposes, including sale, display, purchase, offer to purchase and acquisition for commercial purposes of wild-caught specimens of great apes; and
  - ii) deterrent penalties aimed at eliminating illegal trade in great apes and parts and derivatives thereof;
- b) strengthen enforcement controls, including anti-poaching measures in great ape habitats and anti-smuggling measures at international borders;
- c) limit the international use of great apes to nationally approved zoological institutions, educational centres, rescue centres and captive-breeding centres in accordance with CITES; and
- d) promote the protection of great ape habitats, including cross-border cooperation between neighbouring range States for the management of contiguous habitat, and to take appropriate action to restore such habitats where they have become fragmented or diminished in quality;

DIRECTS the Secretariat to:

- a) work closely with Parties, and as a member of the GRASP partnership, to develop and implement measures, including legislative and enforcement measures and regional and sub-regional initiatives, to halt or reduce and ultimately eliminate illegal trade in great apes;
- b) assist range States in the implementation of NGASPS where these include measures aimed at eliminating illegal trade; and
- c) report to the Standing Committee on the implementation of this Resolution at each of its regular meetings;

DIRECTS the Standing Committee to:

- a) review the implementation of this Resolution at each of its regular meetings on the basis of the Secretariat's reports;
- b) consider other measures such as technical missions, organized in cooperation with GRASP and other appropriate partnerships, followed by political missions if necessary; and
- c) report at each meeting of the Conference of the Parties on the implementation of this Resolution, with any recommendations for further action;

URGES the Secretariat, the Standing Committee and the Animals Committee to work closely with GRASP, and to explore and implement other measures through which the Convention can contribute to the conservation of great apes and to the promotion of public awareness of the threat posed to great ape populations by illegal trade;

URGES all range States, other Parties and relevant organizations to join the GRASP partnership;

CALLS UPON all Parties to other relevant multilateral agreements, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals, to cooperate with GRASP and other appropriate partnerships in developing a common strategy to conserve great ape populations;

CALLS UPON all governments, intergovernmental organizations, international aid agencies and non-governmental organizations, as a matter of urgency, to assist the range States in any way possible in supporting the conservation of great apes including:

- a) the provision of funding;
- b) assistance with enforcement, training, capacity building and education;
- c) population monitoring, and the gathering and exchange of scientific, technical and legal information and expertise;
- d) habitat management and restoration;
- e) mitigation of conflict between humans and apes; and
- f) the development of projects which deliver tangible benefits to local communities such as alternative sources of protein;

and to stop illegal trade in specimens of these species in order to ensure the long-term survival of all populations in the wild, particularly by working through GRASP and other appropriate partnerships and through measures taken to implement this Resolution; and

CALLS UPON the Secretariat to collaborate with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in relation to the conservation of great apes, in particular developing measures relating to *in situ* conservation and to make recommendations relevant to CITES to the Standing Committee for consideration.