

STATEMENT BY THE CAMEROON DELEGATION
PRESENTED AT THE FIRST INTER-GOVERNMENTAL
MEETING ON GREAT APES – KINSHASA , 5-9
SEPTEMBER 2005

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates.

First, we would like to thank the organizers of this meeting for sending out an invitation to us. We would also like to thank the Democratic Republic of Congo for hosting this important event. Lastly we want to thank the Chairman for the honour done to us by giving us the floor to make this statement.

As you may be aware, Cameroon is endowed with a rich diversity of flora and fauna found in the different ecosystems including forest, savanna, marine and mountain ecosystems. In fact, studies carried out permit us to distinguish between the species:

- 409 mammal species including the world's largest and smallest mammals, with 14 of them endemic.
- 165 reptile species.
- 916 bird species with 8 of them endemic and 150 migratory.
- 200 amphibian species with 63 of them endemic.
- Well over 1500 butterfly species.
- 9000 plant species, 156 of which are endemic.

Some of these species are included in the IUCN Red List, because they are threatened with extinction. These include the black rhinoceros, elephant, gorilla and chimpanzee.

The great apes for instance face threats like: poaching for their meat, illegal trade in their young ones, habitat loss, and outbreaks like Ebola and Anthrax.

The Government of Cameroon, preoccupied with these threats, has taken a number of measures to save gorillas and chimpanzees from extinction. These include:

1. The drawing up of legal instruments, for example – The Wildlife Law of 1994, which gives full protection to great apes. In fact, the implementation of this law since its entry into force in 1995 has not only resulted in seizures and confiscations of baby great apes and their meat, but also in concrete prosecution of offenders some of whom have served jail terms.
2. The establishment of protected areas with a high concentration of great ape populations. These protected areas account for 15.8% of Cameroon's total surface area. It is important to note that there are other areas without legal status, which also provide protection for great apes, eg. Sanaga-Yong Chimpanzee Sanctuary, the Mengame Gorilla Sanctuary and Mefou National Park. In addition, a number of trans-boundary conservation initiatives eg TNS (involving Congo, CAR, and Cameroon), and TRIDOM (involving Gabon Congo and Cameroon), will help strengthen our great apes conservation efforts, once they are implemented.
3. The signing, ratification, and implementation of conventions like CBD, CITES and CMS.
4. The involvement of local communities in the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity in general and of great apes in particular.
5. Sensitization and education of the public using the mass media as much as possible.
6. Inventory of great apes in some areas.
7. And most recently, the elaboration and validation of a national action plan for the conservation of great apes, with the assistance of GRASP and WCS.

The elaboration of this document, the second in Cameroon, is eloquent testimony of the importance the government of Cameroon attaches to great apes. It is important to make mention of the fact that one of the priority actions in the document is the development of eco-tourism and other activities which can generate income for local communities. That way, the local communities can be more interested in great ape conservation.

In conclusion, the conservation of great apes in Cameroon is on course, as Government remains committed to their survival.

However, a lot more can be achieved through intensified wildlife law enforcement, sensitization and education of the public and improvement in the livelihoods of local communities amongst others