

**STATEMENT BY HON. ARCADO D. NTAGAZWA, MINISTER OF STATE,
VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE (ENVIRONMENT) OF THE UNITED
REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA AT THE 1ST INTERGOVERNMENTAL
MEETING ON GREAT APES AND THE GREAT APES SURVIVAL
PROJECT (GRASP) KINSHASA DRC 9TH SEPTEMBER, 2005**

Mr. Chairman,

Hon. Ministers,

Dr. Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director, UNEP,

UNESCO Representative,

Mr. Secretary General of GRASP,

Dr. Toshisada Nishida, Executive Director, Japan Monkey Center,

Distinguished Participants,

Members of the Press,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak to you here on behalf of the People and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania. I wish to extend my appreciation to the Government and People of the Democratic Republic of Congo for the warm reception and gracious hospitality accorded to me and my delegation since our arrival in this beautiful city of Kinshasa. We are most grateful for the excellent facilities which the Government has given to this meeting.

Mr. Chairman,

We are gathered here to save the Great Apes community from extinction. This is a real problem which needs urgent solution. It is also a complex problem because of the fact that Great Apes population is decreasing due to hunting, illegal trade and degradation of their habitat. In this regard measures to be taken for the conservation of Great Apes have to address all threats I mentioned above simultaneously. Another unique problem with

these primates is the fact that their population growth rate is slow since they reproduce at least after five years. 227

Mr. Chairman,

It is unfortunate that the Great Apes are found in developing countries where poverty is the biggest problem. People in these regions depend on the natural resources such as forests which provide energy and timber. At the same time the same forests are the natural habitat of the Great Apes . The challenge is thus how to balance the two important needs.

The reality of poverty-driven degradation of the environment is felt throughout the Third World, where the incidence of environmental degradation and poverty is always a cause of untold misery. Environmental degradation in Tanzania, as in other poor countries, is principally a development problem. Its solution must therefore be based on the need to combat poverty and promote development. For the poor, the choice is not to sustain poverty, but to overcome it through economic growth.

Mr. Chairman,

In Tanzania we have only one genera of Great Apes i.e. Chimpanzees. Fortunately most of them are found in protected areas i.e. Gombe, Mahale and Rubondo Island National Parks. A small number of them also occur in unprotected areas in the Albertine Rift Forests fragments, particularly in areas close to Gombe and Mahale National Parks.

In Gombe National Park, there are three Chimp groups, namely Kasekela, Mitumba and Kalande Communities. Currently it is estimated that there are about 85 individuals. In Mahale we have one group of Chimps called "M group". This group has been studied continuously by Japanese Primatologists since 1965. It is estimated that Mahale has between 1,200 - 1,600 Chimps.

The "M – group" alone has 68 individuals. Rubondo Island National Park has a population of around 40 individuals.

Mr. Chairman,

The major threats faced by the Chimpanzees in Tanzania are disease, habitat loss and poaching. Pneumonia, polio and respiratory diseases have been frequently rerecorded in Gombe Chimps since 1966. The disease claimed at least 44 Chimps lives from 1966 – 2002. Habitat degradation through conversion of natural forests to farmland and the resultant insularization of protected areas with Chimps, for example Gombe is another problem. Tanzanians are not known to eat meat from Primates and Chimps in particular. However, with the influx of refugees from the Great Lakes Region countries of Rwanda, Burundi and DRC, most of whom settled in Western Tanzania, the Chimps outside the parks must have suffered a big onslaught for food and medicine. Lasting peace and security plus sustainable development by way of eradicating poverty not forgetting ethical and moral upstanding, these attributes together will guarantee survival of the Great Apes.

Mr. Chairman,

A sustainable conservation strategy of the Great Apes requires involvement of communities close to their habitats. Protecting the Great Apes habitat not only serves them from extinction but also the action has many other environmental advantages. Through this measure, we will be addressing other issues like global warming and desertification. Forests, wherever they are, play an important role of removing carbon-dioxide from the atmosphere and hence reducing the problem of global warming. In Gombe National Park the community adjacent to the park complains of Chimps eating or destroying their crops. So the people developed negative attitude towards their conservation. However the efforts made by the Tanzania National Parks Authority (TANAPA) provides conservation education and outreach

programme in an effort to lessen the hostility of communities against Chimps and conservation in general. These efforts aim to win public support for conservation in exchange for benefit sharing of revenue generated by the parks from tourism.

Mr. Chairman,

In recognition of the fact that Chimps are an endangered species, TANAPA has formulated strict regulations to conserve Chimps. These are provided for in the General Management Plans (GMP) of the two Parks (Gombe and Mahale) that are in the final stages of preparation. Rubondo GMP is already in operation. Chimpanzee research and health monitoring have been included in the GMPs as important activities that will provide information for enhancing the species management.

Mr. Chairman,

Long-term continuous research in Gombe and Mahale National Park has contributed a lot to conservation of the species. The Jane Goodall Institute has ongoing research and conservation projects in and around Gombe National Park, for example TACARE and ROOTS and SHOOTs projects. Recently the Institute has applied for USAID fund to undertake a project titled "Landscape Scale Community Centred Ecosystem Conservation in Western Tanzania". This project would cover the greater Gombe and Mahale National Parks Ecosystems (combined).

The European Union is funding Mahale National Park and the surrounding areas, through an ecosystem approach in a project titled "Mahale Mountains Ecosystem Management Project". One of the major outputs of the project is a General Management Plan for the park and its surrounding areas. The project is being implemented by Frankfurt Zoological Society in collaboration with TANAPA, the beneficiary.

Mr. Chairman,

Tanzania is committed to conserving the Great Apes and also other biological diversity in general. In this regard the country is a party to the Biological Diversity Convention since 1996. We prepared National Biodiversity Country study and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. In this strategy conservation of endangered species has been given high priority.

Mr. Chairman,

As a Range State, Tanzania is ready to cooperate with other partners in this noble effort of ensuring Great Apes survival. Let us together stand against all threats they face. It is my hope that this first meeting has laid down a strong foundation for further action in future. We need to maintain the momentum we gained so far. The Global strategy for the survival of Great Apes to be adopted today needs to be converted into concrete actions by each Range State and the International Community in order to halt and reverse the decline of Great Apes population. My hope and expectation is that we will and shall not render this first Intergovernmental Meeting on Great Apes and the Great Apes Survival Project join the long litany of promises made at fora like this but not kept. Let the outcome of this meeting not join the UN which is more often but rightly criticized for being long on commitments and short on action to end extreme poverty and war for example. Let us and we must match our hitherto fore rhetoric with bold and concrete new tangible action.

I wish this meeting exemplary and continuous success.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.