



## Updates from the 2007 Brainstorming

Item 4b (En)

GRASP Executive Committee Meeting  
10 - 11 September 2009

### B. Environmental Peacebuilding

Following a discussion of various brainstorming ideas, the “**Green frontline on Conservation**” was selected among 3 others ideas for consideration and prioritization by the Executive Committee. The “Green frontline idea” was developed in order to provide support to Conservation Managers and Protected Area Authorities. Many regions of Africa and some in South-East Asia have been experiencing political instability for many years.

While competition for natural resources can be a source of conflict, a number of studies and initiatives have shown that sustainable forest ecosystem management can also be a suitable tool for peace-building, regional integration and income generation, in particular in sensitive transboundary areas where other issues such as oil exploitation are more contentious. The example of the Mountain Gorillas in the Albertine Rift of East Africa indicates that by focusing on collaboration around flagship forest dwelling species with a high potential to attract tourism revenue and international attention it is possible to bring together conflicting parties to agree to sustainable ecosystem management while also building bridges to political stability and generating income.

Since the last Executive Committee meeting, GRASP has been developing and fundraising for several projects related to environmental cooperation, most of them involving a transboundary component:

1. **Transboundary natural resource management in the Virungas:** As part of the multidivisional UNEP DR Congo programme, GRASP has been supporting transboundary collaboration in the Virungas since end of 2007 with the organization of a DR Congo Virungas stakeholder meeting in 2008 and through missions/participation in meetings. At the request of the Transboundary Core Secretariat and the International Gorilla Conservation Programme GRASP organized a session on energy at the last regional meeting in Gashora, Rwanda, in August 2009. Experts from SNV, ProAct and CarbonAfrica presented innovative solutions to tackle the firewood and charcoal issue including carbon financing for energy solutions. The results of the discussions will help the UNEP Post-conflict and Disaster management Branch put together a large scale grant proposal on energy. The Transboundary Core Secretariat and Partners are looking into other transboundary resources such as fisheries and timber, this is an area which is underfunded in the current budget and which the UNEP DR Congo programme might consider supporting.
2. **Development of a Conflict-Resolution Strategy in Kahuzi-Biega, DR Congo:** In 2008, GRASP secured funding from the Spanish Ministry for Environment for support to two Protected

Areas in DR Congo, Kahuzi-Biega National Park and Garamba National Park, which are both suffering from insecurity and weak infrastructure. The Kahuzi-biega National Park (PNKB) is of high importance for GRASP since the park contains the only existing continuum from mountain to lowland forest in the Albertine Rift. Before the Rwandan genocide and the influx of Rwandan refugees and armed groups the PNKB accommodated an important gorilla, chimpanzee and elephant population and was a popular tourist destination. Proposed interventions include the development of a conflict resolution strategy and support to monitoring and law enforcement. Due to the security situation these activities have been put on hold and the Spanish Ministry has approved a no-cost extension until April 2010. Despite the current problems, the Spanish government has approved an additional Euro 220,000 in 2009 to continue support to the two endangered great ape habitats. In light of the current security situation, we are reviewing project activities and will concentrate on areas outside the conflict zone to avoid further delays.

3. **Transboundary Natural Resource Management in the Tai-Grebo-Sapo-Cestos ecosystem** between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia: Spanning across the border between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia are remnant fragments of one of the most important ecosystems within the Upper Guinean Forest region. These lowland forests, which have been plagued by years of civil war and conflict, form the largest block of relatively intact tropical rainforest in West Africa. GRASP along with partners in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire are collaborating to help facilitate a country led trans-boundary ecosystem management process. Building on existing institutions and networks, the project intends to initiate a dialogue on a long term process, which among other things, would advance the idea and effective realization of a trans-boundary corridor between two major forest blocks in the Upper Guinean Forest region, Sapo National Park in Liberia and Tai National Park in Côte d'Ivoire. A preparatory mission to Monrovia, Liberia, and Abidjan and Tai, Cdi, was undertaken in June, and a first stakeholder meeting will be held in Abidjan on October 5 and 6. Funding for this initiative comes from the current EC grant and a grant from the Steward Foundation to the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation. This initiative is a matter of urgency as on-going rubber plantation land conversion is threatening the last remaining forests which could form part of a corridor between Tai and Grebo in Liberia.
4. **Transboundary Natural Resource Management in the Mayombe transfrontier complex** shared by Angola, Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Mayombe Forest, part of the Guineo-Congolian biome, forms the southern-western part of the tropical rainforest in the Congo Basin, and the southern margin of the distribution of a large variety of species of flora and fauna in Central Africa. Following decades of, as yet unresolved, political and economic instability, and as a result of high population densities, the Mayombe Forest (at least 2,000 square km) and its ecosystem services are being subjected to a high rate of degradation, mainly through heavy logging and poaching in all four countries.

Since the cessation of UNDP technical support to government biodiversity conservation efforts in Cabinda in 2004, little progress has been made towards a transboundary initiative for forest ecosystem preservation, regional stability and improved human wellbeing. The ratification of the CMS Gorilla Agreement in late 2007 by the majority of the gorilla range states of Central Africa and the development of related action plans has generated renewed momentum for ecosystem conservation in the Mayombe Forest, as some of the populations of gorillas may be migratory. UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) has also recently proposed a tripartite workshop between Angola, the Republic of Congo and the DR Congo to re-ignite transboundary cooperation discussions in the context of Biosphere Reserve management.

Based on the above, GRASP developed a proposal for transboundary collaboration in the Mayombe complex and secured funding from the Norwegian government. This initiative is implemented by UNEP and IUCN. A first stakeholder workshop was held in Kinshasa in April 2009 and resulted in the adoption of a tripartite declaration on transboundary collaboration.

A GRASP initiative on environmental peacebuilding will build on the UNEP Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch in Geneva, and IISD (Institute for Sustainable Development) experiences in Africa and other regions; and the experience of the UNEP expert advisory group on Environment, Conflict and Peacebuilding. The initiative will attempt to reproduce in Mayombe and Cdi/Liberia the success of sustainable ecosystem management between the governments of Rwanda, Uganda and DR Congo, in achieving enhanced cross-border cooperation, ecosystem conservation and community livelihoods, including revenue-sharing.

Within UNEP-GRASP we hope to establish a horizontal programme on transboundary collaboration which would include the aforementioned partners and would add to UNEP's experience and neutrality as a broker to existing efforts. Vice versa, we hope to learn from different projects on the ground and to feed lessons learned into deliberations of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations.