



GRASP Scientific Commission Recommendations to ExCom

Item No. 7(En)

GRASP Executive Committee Meeting

10 - 11 September 2009

Recommendation to the GRASP Executive Committee from the GRASP Scientific Commission (to be presented at the next Executive Committee Meeting of GRASP to take place 10-11th September, 2009)

Topic: The illegal trafficking of great apes

- During the last Scientific Commission Meeting held in Leipzig, Germany, in May 2009, the Scientific Commission discussed the issue of the illegal trafficking of great apes (see SC meeting notes).
- Whilst the GRASP Scientific Commission recognizes the progress made by CITES in addressing the issue of the illegal trade in Great Apes since the adoption of resolution Conf. 13.4 on the Conservation of and Trade in Great Apes in October 2004, it notes with concern that the illegal trade in Great Apes remains a persistent problem in certain range and non-range states.
- Habitat fragmentation and destruction, as well as the expansion of road networks into previously remote, difficult-to access areas represent important threats to wild populations. Hunting and capture of great apes in many range states are directly correlated with habitat loss, land conversion and the development of transport networks, and with inadequate enforcement of national and international laws. In some states, this situation is intensifying the domestic illegal trade in great apes which presents the risk of exacerbating the international illegal trafficking of wild-caught individuals.
- It is our belief that if major international smuggling 'routes' are shut down, the incentive of individuals residing in some range countries to partake in the trade may be significantly lessened.
- Egypt has been, and continues to be, a destination country of importance for the illegal international trade in primates, as illustrated in recent reports on the illegal trade of chimpanzees and gorillas from West and Central Africa into Egypt. This has been documented by the CITES Secretariat to its Standing Committee and the CITES Conference of the Parties, and most recently in the Annex of document SC57 Doc.20.
- The trade in, and the conservation of great apes was recently raised at the 58th CITES Standing Committee meeting which took place in July 2009 in Geneva. During this meeting,

Egypt summarized its efforts so far concerning the issue of illegal trafficking of great apes, as follows: Egypt has worked on increasing capacity building, developing its awareness raising program, identifying rescue centers and enforcing the compliance of CITES regulations (Annex of document SC58 Doc. 23). Nevertheless, concerned by the limited progress made to date, several CITES Parties including the United Kingdom and Germany extended their assistance during this meeting to Egypt. Several GRASP Partner NGOs, including the Pan African Sanctuary Alliance (PASA), the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) continue to offer their technical assistance.

- After the 58th CITES standing committee meeting, the scientific commission of GRASP contacted John Sellar, Senior Enforcement Officer of CITES Secretariat, to raise its concern regarding the persistence in the illegal trafficking of great apes and the current situation with Egypt, and asked for his advice on how GRASP could help regarding this issue.

- In view of Mr. Sellar's recommendation, the scientific commission proposes that the Secretariat of GRASP issues a letter of concern to Egypt encouraging Egypt to pursue its current efforts, and extending its assistance to Egypt.

- If the Executive Committee of GRASP agrees to extend its assistance to Egypt through its partnership, this assistance could take 2 forms:

1) direct technical assistance pending on the needs expressed by Egypt and the financial capabilities of GRASP.

2) indirect assistance through the establishment of a committee under GRASP's umbrella comprised of representatives of different CITES parties and organizations that have already extended their technical assistance and advice to Egypt. The aim of this committee would be to facilitate Egypt's efforts in stopping the illegal trafficking of great apes in their country and to advise them on ensuring the welfare and wellbeing of confiscated apes. Such a committee would have to set clear objectives and precise requirements, as well as a timeline for each.

- Finally, in the event that Egypt does not accept GRASP's assistance if extended and does not provide sufficient evidence for improvement within the next 12 months, the GRASP Scientific Commission then recommends that the GRASP Executive Committee seriously considers encouraging CITES Secretariat to issue sanctions against Egypt.

-Evidence for improvement can principally be evaluated at 2 levels:

b) *Law enforcement* measured through records of confiscations, arrests and successful prosecutions for ape trafficking

c) *Management and welfare of the apes* held in Egypt:

- i. Egypt should identify and place a microchip (as referred to in the Annex of Soc 58 Doc 23) on all great apes held in Egypt.
- ii. Egypt should DNA test all great apes for subspecies identification (also as referred to in the Annex of Soc 58 Doc 23)
- iii. Egypt should submit all great ape facilities to unannounced inspections by CITES and outside agencies
- iv. Egypt should publicly identify the facilities designated as CITES rescue centers, and open these centers to international experts