



June 2007 update from the GRASP Secretariat

News and Announcements

New GRASP Partners – Two new partners were admitted into the Partnership on 3 May 2007 at the Meeting of the Executive Committee. The John Aspinall Foundation was admitted as a Category E Partner, and the Humane Society International – Australia (HIS-A) was admitted as a Category H Partner. For a complete list of GRASP Partners, please visit: <http://www.unep.org/grasp/Partners/index.asp>

GRASP Scientific Commission – Elections will be completed soon. The deadline for nominations for representatives from the four sub-regions was 31 May 2007, and for the members from the IUCN Section on Great Apes, will be June 30th. Once the new Commission is finalized, a complete list of members and their contact information will be distributed to the Partnership.

Insecurity in Mt. Tshiaberimu area of the Democratic Republic of the Congo – recent incidents in this area have led to increased insecurity in the region, with one ranger killed, one injured and one ranger station looted. Local GRASP NGOs are collaborating with Congolese wildlife and army authorities and UN Peacekeepers (MONUC) to work with the Mai Mai rebels towards re-establishing security.

UPDATE - Uganda forest give-away situation – Much attention and news of late has focused on the plans of the Ugandan government to de-gazette the forest reserves of Mabira and of Bulago Island. Members of the GRASP Executive Committee signed a letter to the Ugandan Government expressing their concern at this possible conversion of forest land. This letter added to already intense pressure from civil society, international groups, and scientists, to reverse this decision. GRASP has recently been informed by the range state representative from Uganda, Moses Mapesa, that Cabinet has decided to seek alternatives to converting Mabira forest, and that the company BIDCO has withdrawn its interest in the forest reserves on Bulago Island.

New Faces at UNEP and UNESCO

- Ibrahim Thiaw joined UNEP in February 2007 as Director of the Division of Environmental Policy Implementation, the division in which the UNEP GRASP Secretariat is based. Mr. Thiaw was previously the Acting Director General of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and, before that, the Director of IUCN's West Africa Office. Since taking up his position at UNEP, he has already represented GRASP internationally, and participated in key GRASP meetings.
- Noeline Raondry Rakotoarisoa has been appointed Programme Specialist in Ecological Sciences at UNESCO in Nairobi and will act as liaison between UNESCO and UNEP Nairobi. She comes to Nairobi from the UNESCO office in Senegal and took up her position in May 2007.

Missions

GRASP CITES Mission - A joint technical mission to Thailand and Cambodia by John Cellar (CITES) and Melanie Virtue (UNEP/GRASP) took place 22-28 April 2007 to investigate the illegal trade in great apes, as part of the implementation of the resolution on the conservation of and trade in great apes, adopted by CITES in October 2004 (CITES Res. Conf. 13.4). The complete mission report can be found online at www.unep.org/grasp

Workshops and Meetings

GRASP Brainstorm Meeting - The Chair of the GRASP Executive Committee, Moses Mapesa, called a Friends of the Chair meeting 30 April – 1 May 2007. Its purpose was to take stock of GRASP's direction, and to deliberate on several areas of focus to help improve implementation of the GRASP "Programme of Action". The GRASP team had developed several ideas of initiatives which GRASP might like to pursue,



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leading up to this meeting. These were discussed at the brainstorming session, as well as new initiatives presented by participants, and include:

1. GRASP Global "Great Ape-Friendly" Certification
2. Green "Great Ape Tax" for Tropical Forest Conservation
3. Great Apes as Ambassadors of Peace and Development
4. Incorporation of Great Apes and Conservation into Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
5. Great Apes and Climate Change
6. UN Global Fund for Great Ape Conservation
7. GRASP Fortifies the Green Frontline of Conservation
8. Guardians of the Great Apes

GRASP Executive Committee Meeting - met in Nairobi on 2-3 May 2007. Topics of discussion included:

- Future directions of GRASP, taking into account the ideas generated during the brainstorming meeting
- The next GRASP Council Meeting
- Elections of the Scientific Commission
- Development of a GRASP business plan
- Development of GRASP monitoring and reporting mechanisms

During the meeting:

- France offered to host a GRASP Donor Conference in October 2007. The Committee welcomed this offer with enthusiasm and assigned an organizing committee.
- All members of the Executive Committee signed a letter to the Ugandan Government expressing their concern at the possible conversion of forest land on Bulago Island in Lake Victoria and in Mabira forest in the Central region of Uganda.

Meeting Minutes will become available on-line shortly at:

http://www.unep.org/grasp/Meetings/executive_committee_meetings.asp

Other Meetings

- GRASP chief-consultant Ian Redmond and UK representative Eric Blencowe met with UK Biodiversity Minister H.E. Barry Gardiner on 22 March 2007 to discuss the importance of UK funding for GRASP, and the role that the UK can play in encouraging other donor countries to match such funding. Other topics of discussions included bushmeat, alternative protein sources and livelihoods as well as the need to recognize carbon credits for avoided deforestation.
- The UNEP/GRASP team met with representatives from UNDP Liberia in Nairobi on 12 April 2007 and discussed the implementation of the GRASP Programme of Work in Liberia, including UNDP support to GRASP initiatives, improvement of Liberia participation in CITES, capacity building, trans-boundary cooperation and the bush meat and timber trades.
- The UNEP/GRASP team met with Paul Elkan from the Wildlife Conservation Society on 18 April 2007 to discuss collaboration on addressing the bushmeat and live ape trade in the South of Sudan, as well as share information on great ape conservation activities in the Republic of the Congo, including eco-tourism potential of the region.
- The UNEP/GRASP team met with Zoe Chafe from the Worldwatch Institute on 18 April to discuss alternative energy and carbon offset projects.
- The UNEP/GRASP team met with Ofir Drori, from the Last Great Ape Organization (LAGA) on 11 May 2007 to discuss the upcoming enforcement workshops that LAGA is planning to hold in Republic of Congo and Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as collaboration on addressing the chimpanzee trade in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Director of the Division of Environmental Policy Implementation, UNEP, traveled to Washington 16-18 May and met with GRASP Partner NGO representatives from the Bonobo Conservation Initiative and the Jane Goodall Institute.



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- UNEP and UNESCO GRASP representatives met with Malaysian officials from the Sabah Forestry Department (SFD) and private carbon companies in Paris May 29-30 to discuss and identify innovative financing mechanisms and sustainable forest management practices, that will ensure the long-term survival of orangutans and other tropical forest wildlife, with an initial focus on the Ulu Segama-Malua Forest Reserves in Sabah.
- GRASP Patron Dr. Richard Leakey gave a lecture at the Royal Geographic Society in London on 31 May 2007 entitled "Climate Change and the future of great apes – Can anything be done?" The event was held in partnership with the Orangutan Foundation (UK).

Technical Support Team

International Conference on Deforestation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – This conference on the sustainable management of forests in DRC was hosted by Belgium in Brussels on 26-27 February. GRASP chief-consultant Ian Redmond, UNESCO GRASP focal point Samy Mankoto, and NGO Partners participated in this conference and discussed great ape priorities and forest finance mechanisms with the new Minister of the Environment from DRC, H.E. Pembe Bokiaga Didace and the Belgian Minister for International Cooperation, H.E. Armand de Decker and briefed all present on GRASP activities.

Global Ecotourism Conference 2007 - GRASP chief-consultant Ian Redmond and GRASP NGO Partners participated in this conference held in Oslo, 14-16 May 2007 as a follow-up to the World Ecotourism Summit of 2002. Great ape tourism issues and potential workshops, the role of documentaries in promoting ecotourism, and the importance of avoided deforestation for ecotourism destinations were discussed at several workshops, and during meetings with the Minister of Tourism from Costa Rica, H.E. Carlos Benavides, and the Chief of Sustainable Development of Tourism at the UN WTO, Eugenio Yunis, among others.

Trans-boundary Collaboration Workshop – A trans-boundary collaboration workshop on great ape conservation in the shared natural resource areas of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire is planned for later this year in 2007. This location was chosen in consultation with scientists and NGOs to determine potential pilot areas for workshops, addressing feasibility of sites and identification of potential collaborating partners.

This update covers the period Feb-May 2007