

The GRASP Partnership - A Distinctive Approach

Current Priorities

1. Background

The Great Apes Survival Project (GRASP) Partnership was established in 2001 under the auspices of the United Nations to bring a new level of international effort to bear on the conservation of the great apes. The GRASP Partnership draws together most stakeholders involved in great ape conservation under a single broad framework aimed at reducing threats to great apes and their habitat at local, national, regional and international levels. The mandate of the GRASP Partnership encompasses all twenty-three of the great ape range states in equatorial Africa and south-east Asia and provides GRASP with a unique ability to address the problems facing great ape populations at the highest political level.

1.1 Overall goal

The GRASP Partnership has, as an immediate challenge, to lift the threat of imminent extinction facing most populations of great apes. Its mission is to work as a coherent partnership to conserve in their natural habitats wherever they exist wild populations of every kind of great ape and to make sure that where apes and people interact, their interactions are mutually positive and sustainable. GRASP also seeks to exemplify and relieve the threats faced by other kinds of animals, birds and plants sharing the forests where apes survive and to illustrate what can be achieved through a genuine partnership between all stakeholders in fragile ecosystems.

1.2 Distinctive approach¹

The GRASP Partnership unites all the principal institutional actors in great ape conservation – UN agencies, biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements, great ape range state and donor governments, non-governmental organizations, scientists, local communities and the private sector – in an internationally concerted approach to a major extinction crisis.

GRASP is a World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) Type II Partnership, led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The GRASP Partnership is governed by a Council consisting of representatives of all the Partners, assisted by an elected Executive Committee and a Scientific Commission comprised of experts in great ape ecology and conservation. The GRASP Secretariat as the administrative and operational arm of the Partnership is provided jointly by UNEP and UNESCO.

Due to its legal status as a Type II Partnership and its position within the United Nations system, GRASP has a unique and vital role in great ape conservation, above and beyond the efforts of individual actors and organizations. This document aims to clarify the “added value” of the GRASP Partnership to great ape conservation and to highlight the priorities that the Secretariat will facilitate the Partnership to focus on in the short to medium future.

¹ This document has been prepared for the information of participants at the Intergovernmental Meeting on Great Apes and the Great Apes Survival Project (GRASP) and the first GRASP Council Meeting. It is complementary to the *GRASP Partnership Outline Work Plan, 2003-2007* and the *Global Strategy for the Survival of Great Apes and their Habitat*. Building on the above, this document highlights concrete and achievable priority areas for action that the GRASP Secretariat will facilitate the Partnership to undertake.

2. Added value of the GRASP Partnership

The following are the special attributes of the United Nations-led GRASP Partnership and the added value that this dynamic alliance brings to the global great ape conservation effort.

2.1 High-level national and intergovernmental dialogue to generate political will and influence policy for great ape conservation globally.

As a WSSD Type II Partnership, housed within the UN system, the GRASP initiative has the potential to engage governments and intergovernmental organizations in a systematic way that is beyond the reach of individual conservation organizations. The GRASP Partnership's focus on great apes enables it to concentrate exclusively on the threats facing the four taxa, rather than addressing a broad range of conservation issues on a global scale. In this way, GRASP can help to raise great ape conservation up the political agenda in the range and donor states.

2.2 Planning and monitoring at the national, regional and international level to bring the decline of great ape populations to a halt.

As a result of the engagement of all the major stakeholders in great ape conservation, both governmental and non-governmental, with the objectives of the Partnership, GRASP provides a unique framework wherein coherent plans for great ape conservation can be developed and implemented at international, regional, national and population levels. The GRASP Council, Executive Committee, Scientific Commission and Secretariat do not seek to coordinate such efforts, but rather to create an enabling framework within which relevant GRASP Partners can work together to ensure the coherence of their activities.

2.3 Development and promotion of best practices, cooperation and technical support between and among all stakeholders.

The broad and inclusive GRASP Partnership contains a wealth of knowledge and expertise in the form of individuals and institutions. In order to ensure maximum efficiency and avoid the duplication of existing activities, the GRASP Secretariat has the potential to facilitate communication and promote synergies among current initiatives and cooperation between Partners. Greater involvement of range states and local communities in governance and priority setting, development and replication of best practices to address common threats such as deforestation, bushmeat and disease, increased capacities to manage natural and wildlife resources and national law enforcement, transboundary conservation and peace-building initiatives and integrated sustainable development and conservation activities are all areas where the collaborative potential of the GRASP Partnership is a strength to be harnessed.

2.4 Media, information and public awareness to mitigate the threats facing the great apes.

Benefiting from the access to the international media that GRASP can call upon, the Partnership is able to increase both the profile and the scope of great ape conservation-related publicity and awareness raising messages. As the GRASP Partnership can speak for the great apes with a unified and well-recognized voice, it has the clout to provide the communication platform necessary to both inform key decision makers and create innovative and appropriate methods of awareness raising at all levels.

2.5 New and additional funding for great ape conservation.

As an international coalition of organizations from both the private and public sectors, seated within the UN system, the GRASP Partnership is uniquely positioned to leverage previously untapped funds for great ape conservation. The non-partisan status of the GRASP Partnership, afforded by its position in within the United Nations system, provides access to governmental and intergovernmental financial resources hitherto not available for great ape conservation. It is anticipated that the bulk of new and additional funding will

flow through traditional channels such as the Global Environmental Facility, the World Bank Group, the European Commission, bilateral (governmental), United Nations and large corporate donors. The GRASP Partnership is not an attempt to create a major new funding mechanism or institution, nor will it compete with traditional GRASP Partner sources of conservation financing.

3. Current GRASP Partnership priorities

The GRASP Secretariat, under the guidance of the GRASP Executive Committee and Scientific Commission, will facilitate the GRASP Partnership to undertake the following priority activities in the 2005-2007 timeframe. It will do so taking into account the *GRASP Partnership Outline Work Plan, 2003-2007*, the *Global Strategy for the Survival of Great Apes and their Habitat* and the added value attributes detailed above.

3.1 High-level national and intergovernmental dialogue to generate political will and influence policy for great ape conservation globally.

- Priority 1a – to promote international dialogue on great ape conservation at the highest levels among donor and range state governments, institutions and other stakeholders.
- Priority 1b – to strengthen collaboration with the relevant biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements, including CITES, CMS, WHC, CBD and Ramsar.
- Priority 1c – to engage intergovernmental bodies (NEPAD, AMCEN, European Union, ASEAN, etc), international financial institutions (World Bank, IMF, Export Credit Agencies, etc), other relevant multilateral organizations (ITTO, ATO, etc) and UN agencies to include the protection for biodiversity conservation, with a particular emphasis on great apes, as a key factor in establishing programme priorities at national and international levels.

3.2 Planning and monitoring at the national, regional and international level to bring the decline of great ape populations to a halt.

- Priority 2a – to identify priority populations of great apes for conservation and to formulate and begin the implementation of detailed national, regional and international conservation plans for all high-priority populations.
- Priority 2b – to design and initiate a system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of great ape conservation efforts at national, regional and international levels.
- Priority 2c – to work with range state governments to facilitate and assist in the development of national policies to advance the conservation of great apes.

3.3 Development and promotion of best practices, cooperation and technical support between and among all stakeholders.

- Priority 3a – to promote greater cooperation and communication between all stakeholders (including local communities) in governance and priority setting for great ape conservation, through such activities as the:
 - (i) Provision of technical and other support to range state authorities to increase capacity to manage great ape populations and their habitat sustainably
 - (ii) Organization of regional and other law enforcement training activities and workshops for relevant officials and experts to address illegal trade and resource extraction issues.
- Priority 3b – to develop and replicate best practices to address common threats facing the great apes, with a focus on special projects such as:

- (i) Joint initiatives to address deforestation and habitat loss involving governments and representatives of extractive (timber, oil, mining) and forest conversion (plantations, palm oil) industries, with a particular focus on Central Africa and Southeast Asia in cooperation with national ministries, the private sector and multilateral institutions
- (ii) Those that identify and implement effective and adaptable common approaches to unresolved issues such as the bushmeat crisis and interspecies disease transmission
- (iii) Other pilot projects in key fields where the UN-led GRASP Partnership has a competitive advantage such as those with transboundary collaboration, peace-building and integrated conservation and sustainable development opportunities.

3.4 Media, information and public awareness to mitigate the threats facing the great apes.

Priority 4a – to initiate and facilitate interested GRASP Partners to undertake a locally-adapted great ape public information and awareness raising conservation education campaign in priority regions of the African and south-east Asia great ape range states.

Priority 4b – to increase current efforts to present great ape information to key decision makers and staff in relevant national, intergovernmental and donor institutions, the United Nations system and the corporate sector, including dissemination through the media.

3.5 New and additional funding for great ape conservation.

Priority 5a – to raise new and additional funding to achieve the preceding priority actions for great ape conservation from donor governments, intergovernmental and multilateral bodies and large corporate sponsors.

Adhering to the priorities described above, detailed annual workplans will be developed by the GRASP Secretariat, Scientific Commission and Technical Support Teams, and by any GRASP Partner directly involved in the implementation of these priorities through financial support from the GRASP Secretariat.

*Adopted at the 1st GRASP Council Meeting
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