



**Great Apes Survival Project**  
**Projet pour la survie des grands singes**  
**GRASP**



**GRASP Executive Committee Meeting**  
**26-27 November 2008**

**Item 2: Updates from the 2007 Brainstorm**

**B. Environmental Peace-building**

Following a discussion of various brainstorming ideas, the “**Green frontline of 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:** GRASP secured in 2007 emergency funding from the Executive Director of UNEP to respond to the crisis in the Virungas. As part of the multi-divisional UNEP DR Congo programme, a stakeholder workshop was held in Goma on April 7 and 8. The purpose of the workshop was to bring together peacekeeping, humanitarian, development and conservation groups to identify existing synergies and opportunities to enhance continuity and linkages between these actors and their respective efforts in the DRC. Participants discussed problems, potential solutions, and UNEP’s role in a participatory process. All partners agreed that there is a disconnect between the various stakeholder interest groups working in the DRC and encouraged UNEP to assume the lead role in facilitating and formalizing an ongoing stakeholder dialogue.

GRASP also participated in a ministerial meeting on the Conservation of the Greater Virunga Region, which was organized by the Transboundary Core Secretariat and the US Department of State in July 2008 and has since then discussed with partners and



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the State Department how UNEP, and specifically GRASP could support the implementation of the 10 years Transboundary Strategic Plan.

2. **Development of a Conflict-Resolution Strategy in Kahuzi-Biega, DR Congo:** GRASP secured funding from the Spanish government 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. GRASP convened a Kahuzi-Biega stakeholder meeting on July 13 and invited the Protected Area Authority ICCN and its conservation partners. The workshop participants first analyzed the conservation priorities identified in the draft management plan and then discussed which specific activities could be implemented with financial support from the Spanish government. GRASP activities will include the development and implementation of a conflict resolution strategy, apart from rehabilitating the park's infrastructure and organizing surveys in the lowland sector which has not been visited by park rangers since 1994.
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. To kick-start the initiative, GRASP is holding trans-boundary workshop in 2009 to bring together relevant stakeholders and begin laying the foundation for an integrated, long term trans-boundary dialogue. Funding comes from the current GRASP EC grant, further fundraising efforts will be needed to ensure sustainability of the project.
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 subjected to a high rate of degradation, mainly through heavy logging and poaching in all four countries.



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However, 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 gorilla 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 the 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. The first phase will begin in early 2009 and will include a consultancy study on previous transboundary activities, gap analysis and stakeholder analysis. In parallel, it is planned to conduct a study on forest energy. Firewood and charcoal are a major threat to the remaining forest fragments, and we hope to conduct a technical study on potential alternatives and will be linked to a similar study in North/South Kivu. Forest energy will be one issue we hope to discuss at a regional level, other "transboundary" natural resources will follow later.

GRASP initiative on environmental peace-building 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, the experience of the UNEP expert advisory group on Environment, Conflict and Peacebuilding and will attempt to reproduce in Mayombe and Cdl/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 UNEPGRASP we hope to establish a horizontal programme on transboundary collaboration which would include the aforementioned partners and would add 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 the lessons learned into the deliberations of the UN Department of Peace Keeping Operations.