



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



GRASP Executive Committee Meeting
26-27 November 2008

Item 4: 2009: Year of the Gorilla

Football for the forests – Bushmeat Awareness Raising

Introduction

2009 has been designated the UN Year of the Gorilla (YOG) by the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and GRASP.

Background

The bushmeat trade is a highly complex issue with few, if any, easy solutions. Gorillas, together with chimpanzees, monkeys, elephants and other species are being hunted to extinction for bushmeat in the equatorial forests of West and Central Africa. Commercialization of the bushmeat trade, with poorly managed and largely uncontrolled harvesting, poses a massive threat to forest biodiversity leading to the decimation of these species.

The decline in forest biodiversity will affect the livelihoods of millions of poor and forest-dwelling people who depend on such forest resources. Furthermore, in the long term, it will cause the collapse of habitats, particularly forest ecosystems that provide important services to humanity.

There have been many initiatives in Africa to address what has been commonly referred to as the 'bushmeat crisis'. Over the past years, various governments and organizations have organized consultations and workshops with various partners and national stakeholders to address this highly complex issue.

Proposal – International Anti-Bushmeat Football Match

Raising awareness among consumers and members of the public is necessary in order to address the growing crisis. In many African communities, as with elsewhere in the world, football players are a source of national pride, and provide a role model for the youth and others. International football team rivalries and athletes with celebrity status draw large television and live audiences and hence can be an excellent conduit for awareness raising and promote behaviour change.

In this initiative therefore, the GRASP secretariat in collaboration with National Football Federations of Nigeria and Cameroon will organize an anti-bushmeat soccer tournament between the Indomitable Lions of Cameroon and Nigeria's Super Eagles to help address the bushmeat crisis through awareness raising. This, in turn, will lead to:

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- Increased awareness on the continued loss of viable populations of gorillas and other apes;
 - Increased awareness of the unsustainability of the bushmeat trade at the local, national and international levels;
 - Highlighting ecosystem and human health ramifications of bushmeat consumption;
 - Behaviour change away from consumption of bushmeat and the illegal trade in animals and towards sustainable alternatives.

We hope that the good example of national football heroes from both countries will encourage illegal poachers, traders and consumers of gorillas and other endangered species to limit their business to legal and sustainably harvested species. This is also a timely activity in support of efforts to increase eco-tourism based on gorilla watching in both countries.

Proposed Dates:

The tournament is planned to take place in Cameroon on 12 August 2009.

Costs:

The total budget presented for this initiative is USD 200,000. We are currently negotiating with both countries to see how TV rights can cover or reduce these costs.