

Minutes of the 4th GRASP Executive Committee Meeting
26-27 November 2008
FAO, Rome, Italy

Attendance:

Members and Observers:

Aggrey Rwetsiba	Chair and Range State representative (East Africa)
Aboubacar Oulare	Range State representative (West Africa)
Mark Baxter	Donor country representative (UK)
Ashley Leiman	NGO representative (OFI)
Roseline Beudels	MEA representative (CMS)
Melanie Virtue	Secretariat (UNEP)
Johannes Refisch	Secretariat (UNEP)
Serge Wich	Chair, Scientific Commission
Ian Redmond	GRASP Chief-consultant and member of Technical Support Team
Leonie Gordon	PhD student

Apologies:

Pascal Ngoy	Range State representative (Central Africa)
Tonny Soehartono	Range State representative (Asia)
Claude-Anne Gauthier	Donor country representative (France)
John Sellar	MEA representative (CITES)
Matthew Hatchwell	NGO representative (WCS)
Noëline Raondry Rakotoarisoa	Secretariat (UNESCO)

1. Adoption of the previous minutes and agenda

- Previous minutes adopted without change.
- Agenda adopted with one modification. Next meeting of GRASP Council added as full agenda item.

ACTIONS

1. **Secretariat to send hard copies of *Plan it for the Apes: GRASP Activity and Finance Plan* to all members**

2. Follow-up to the 2007 Brainstorm

The Brainstorm meeting in March 2007 produced four possible areas of focus: *Great Apes and Climate Change*; *Global fund for Great Ape Conservation*; *Fortifying the Green frontline of Conservation*; and *Guardians of the Great Apes*. The secretariat has concentrated its efforts on two, which were presented to the committee.

a) Climate Change (including REDD)

The secretariat gave a brief update on all the activities relating to Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), focusing particularly the UNEP pilot project planned in four countries. The detailed report can be found at www.unep.org/grasp/docs/excom_2008_brainstorming_climate_change.pdf.

ACTIONS

2. Secretariat to make REDD and HCVF reports available to Ex Com members

b) Environmental Peace-building

The secretariat gave a brief update on all the activities relating to UNEP's recent activities on environmental peace-building, focusing particularly on our activities as part of the UNEP DR Congo programme. The detailed report can be found at www.unep.org/grasp/docs/excom_2008_brainstorming_peacebuilding.pdf. The secretariat plans to expand activities on trans-boundary collaboration to other areas in Africa.

The committee expressed its strong support for each of these initiatives.

3. Update on CMS Gorilla Agreement and Year of the Gorilla

The consultant to the Convention on Migratory Species, briefed the meeting on progress on the Gorilla agreement, which was negotiated in October 2007, and entered into force in June 2008. The first meeting of the parties was to be held in the following days, the report of which is available separately.

The secretariat provided additional information on UNEP's activities in support of both the Gorilla Agreement and the 2009 Year of the Gorilla, in particular the proposed friendly football match between Cameroon and Nigeria to raise awareness on bushmeat among the citizens of both countries as well as the region, who are or might consider becoming consumers of ape meat.

There was extensive discussion on the football match, the consensus of which is that it's a excellent idea, but UNEP must ensure that the costs are contained, and ensure maximum revenues from TV rights and the like be used to cover costs, then go towards gorilla conservation projects. The scientific commission stressed the importance of monitoring the success of the initiative, for example with pre and post match surveys of target population.

Ian Redmond informed that he has been made a CMS Ambassador for YOG, and may undertake a televised journey of the range states during 2009.

ACTIONS

3. Secretariat to keep Ex Com updated on progress of soccer match, including monitoring plan.

4. Report of the Secretariat

UNEP presented the report of activities of the secretariat undertaken since the last meeting. (Detailed report can be found at www.unep.org/grasp/docs/excom_2008_secretariat.pdf). Discussion concentrated on the activities funded by the European Commission project. It was felt that each of the project partners would benefit from learning more about the progress and results to date of each of the other projects.

ACTIONS

4. Secretariat to send 2nd EC project progress report to all project partner NGOs, and make available to the wider partnership online.

5. Report of the Technical Support Team

Ian Redmond updated the Committee on the work of the TST, which is funded through the UNEP European Commission grant and administered through the Born Free Foundation. (detailed report can be found at www.unep.org/grasp/docs/excom2008_tst_report.pdf).

ACTIONS

- 5. Future TST reports to follow the PoA format**

6. Report of the Scientific Commission

The scientific commission chair presented a verbal report of its activities since its establishment in mid 2007. The group of 11 members, some of which were also members of the previous interim scientific commission, is working by email but plan a meeting sometime in early-mid 2009. Recent as well as proposed activities include: site selection process for UNEP REDD project, updating maps for the French version of the World Atlas on Great Apes, workshops in Gabon, Sierra Leone, and Indonesia on survey methodologies, and (input into??) the IUCN guidelines on reduced impact logging in West Africa.

There was further discussion on the fact that not all secretariat decisions are presented to the scientific commission. It was explained that the secretariat also has to operate as a unit in the host organisation, and that sometimes decisions will be made for institutional reasons.

It was agreed that the scientific commission does not need a detailed work-plan of its own, as its major role is to advise on secretariat and TST activities.

ACTIONS

- 6. Scientific commission chair and secretariat to find suitable date and location then organise meeting of the scientific commission by mid 2009.**

7. Adoption of Secretariat Workplan

UNEP presented the secretariat workplan, which was adopted after discussion covering two main issues:

- The rate of implementation of the UNEP managed European Commission project: Ashley Leiman expressed concern that UNEP is currently two quarters behind in disbursements to some partners, causing difficulties for implementation in the field.
- GRASP activities in West Africa: the West African representative expressed concern that there are many activities ongoing or planned for the Congo Basin, while there are few in West Africa. The secretariat and scientific commission explained how the two CMS Gorilla initiatives, as well as the UNEP and wider REDD activities did currently skew activities in favour of Congo Basin at the expense of the other three regions. However, the group noted the projects ongoing and planned in Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. It was agreed that it would be desirable to organise a meeting of West African focal points to review the West African Chimpanzee plan and re-energise the focal points, if funds are available.

ACTIONS

7. **Secretariat to follow-up with UNEP finance staff on EC payments, as a matter of urgency.**
8. **TST and West Africa FP, with assistance from secretariat, to work together to prepare a draft budget for a modest FP meeting in Guinea, and provided funding is available, organise such a meeting within 2009.**
9. **Secretariat to enhance communication with the Ex Com and wider partnership throughout the year.**

8. Adoption of Technical Support Team Workplan

Ian Redmond presented the TST workplan which was adopted after discussion clarifying the relationship between the TST and the scientific commission, as well as the fact that the TST role has evolved over time and will continue to do so. It was agreed to that TST should prioritize its most important activities.

ACTIONS

10. **TST to provide UK with briefing on the proposed ecotourism initiative**

9. Admission of new partners

- The Great Ape Trust of Iowa, Traffic (both category E) and ProWildlife (category H) were approved as new partners.
- Chimbo, African Conservation Foundation, and Endangered Species International were all requested to provide further information, including confirmation of being working in great ape conservation for over 2 years, as well as provide references from existing partners.

ACTIONS

11. **Secretariat to inform new and prospective partners accordingly**
12. **Secretariat to improve Partnership application forms on website, to ensure all prospective partners are aware of and comply with the partnership criteria which forms the annex to the Rules of the Partnership.**

10. The Next GRASP Council Meeting

The secretariat provided an overview of the current issues relating to the next meeting of the GRASP Council, which was considered at length at the previous Ex Com meeting.

There was extensive discussion on the pros and cons of having a meeting in the near future. All agreed that it is important for the cohesiveness of the partnership to bring everyone together from time to time. However all agree that its expensive and must have a compelling agenda to warrant raising and spending funds on such a meeting rather than on direct conservation activities.

The committee decided the following:

- The Council will meet in 2010 and will be tied to the theme of the 2010 targets on biodiversity, as well as the Year of Biodiversity.
- If possible it should be held back to back with a 2010 related meeting, such as CBD CoP 10, 18-29 October, Nagoya, Japan, or CITES CoP 15, 16-28 January, Doha, Qatar, (or maybe IPS congress 12-18 September, Kyoto, Japan).
- The secretariat shall try to find a host interested in supporting the meeting.

- The secretariat will seek contributions from all partners, including range states and NGOs, for example meeting their own costs and/or sponsoring other delegates as is done for many convention meetings.
- The secretariat will communicate to the partnership our decision and rationale
- We will look at the possibility of using existing planned meetings to promote the GRASP Partnership in the interim, including, having regional NGO or RS meetings where possible.
- The Council meeting will be a major agenda item at the next Ex Com meeting, at which, we may consider establishing a sub-committee to organise the Council meeting. The secretariat will define duties, fundraising needs and potential host governments.

ACTIONS

13. **Secretariat to identify planned meetings with which the next Council meeting could be co-hosted.**
14. **Secretariat to make cost estimate of meeting, and fundraising plan.**

11. Next meeting of the Executive Committee

- The Committee agreed to hold the next meeting around May-June 2009, with September – October as a fallback option. Secretariat to determine venue, including the possibility of London, Paris, Geneva and Nairobi.

ACTIONS

15. **Secretariat to organise next Ex Com meeting as directed**

12. Any Other Business

- Mabira Forest, Uganda
Aggrey Rwetsiba updated the committee on the status of the Mabira Forest in Uganda, which was a subject for discussion and action at the last meeting. It would appear that the concerted action from NGOs and the international community has influenced the government to be more conservative regarding forest give-aways.
- Bushmeat
Serge Wich raised the issue of bushmeat and wondered if we should all be doing more to combat the problem. We discussed the current and past activities undertaken, and resolved that during Year of the Gorilla, all parties would endeavour to undertake as many relevant activities as possible.
- Secretariat Capacity
The committee noted that the workload of the secretariat is increasing while the staffing is if anything, declining. There was general concern expressed that the effectiveness of the secretariat has been diluted somewhat by staff undertaking non-partnership activities, that in effect, the secretariat was being pulled too far into UNEP core activities. The committee asked that the secretariat raise this issue with UNEP management.

- Emergency Fund for Great Apes
Serge Wich raised the issue of establishing an emergency fund for great apes, now that the Conservational International one is nearly depleted. Secretariat explained the history of GRASP attempts to establish such a fund, either with CI or another NGO, which proved not worthwhile, given UNEP's difficulty in administering such a fund. It was noted that WildlifeDirect fills a major part of this niche now, but requires regular attention for recipients to be successful. It was also noted that UNESCO established the MAB Award to Young Scientists on Great Apes to fill part of this niche.
- GRASP Evaluation
Serge Wich asked whether GRASP would be evaluated, and if so, how. Johannes explained the history and current (almost complete) status of the GRASP monitoring tool. The issue of an external evaluation of GRASP was left for another day.
- Expanding the Partnership
Ian Redmond enquired about expanding the partnership to include new members, such as UNDP and the World Tourism Organisation. Aboubacar Oulare suggested mining companies. However it was agreed that we don't want a paper partnership, but one of committed members who see a clear role for themselves within it. When potential partners are committed to joining GRASP, then concrete activities often result, such as with RAMSAR. As the secretariat is already overstretched, the committee agreed not to pursue other organisations to join, unless there were pressing reasons.

Ashley Leiman brought up the issue of partner commitment and reminded the committee of the idea of asking partners to submit annual reports on their GRASP related activities, as part of their commitment to GRASP.

It was agreed that one question should be added to the prospective partners' application form, asking "Why do you want to become a member, and how will you contribute to the Partnership".

ACTION

- 16. Secretariat to inform UNEP management of committee's concerns regarding secretariat time**
- 17. Secretariat to add question to partners' application form**