



UNEP



INTERPOL

A RAPID RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

THE LAST STAND OF THE GORILLA

ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME AND CONFLICT IN THE CONGO BASIN



THE LAST STAND OF THE GORILLA

A RAPID RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

With the rate of poaching and habitat loss, gorillas in the region may disappear from most of their present range in less than 10–15 years from now.



The fate of the great apes is closely tied to ours as they inhabit some of the last remaining tropical rainforests – ecosystems that not only assist in supplying water, food and medicine but also play a global role in carbon sequestration and thus combating climate change.

This report, based on evidence submitted to the UN Security Council, field investigations, interviews and scientific data indicates that the gorillas in the Greater Congo Basin are at even greater risk than expected less than a decade ago.

Illegal mining, logging, charcoal and a rise in the bushmeat trade are intensifying pressure on great apes including gorillas. In 2002, UNEP assessed that 10% of gorilla habitat would remain by 2032, but this now appears to be too optimistic given the current trends.

With the rate of poaching and habitat loss, gorillas in the region may disappear from most of their present range in less than 10–15 years from now.

The scale of the extraction of minerals from gorilla habitat in DRC, largely orchestrated by militias, and the smuggling of natural resources from the wider Congo Basin to Asia and Europe may represent several hundred million dollars annually in terms of illegal income.

Tragically 190 park rangers have been killed in one park alone while defending gorillas and their habitat.

Not all the news is bad: New protected areas have been created, international cross boundary collaboration on environmental crime and improved management of some protected areas in the region are scoring some successes: The critically

endangered mountain gorillas in the Virungas are on the rise again.

In order to widen these successes, improve human security and secure the future of the gorilla there is an urgent need to further strengthen this collaboration, including with and between countries and companies who are recipients of these natural resources.

UNEP therefore welcomes the evolving, cross-boundary collaboration between INTERPOL and the UN including the UNEP-linked Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species: Welcomes too the strengthened relationship between UNEP and UN peacekeeping operations in the region.

Securing the necessary funds to support law enforcement and trans-boundary collaboration on environmental crime is a responsibility for all countries in the Greater Congo basin and beyond including in Asia, Europe and North America.

The opportunities are many: Tackling poverty by minimizing the theft of natural resources and maintaining the multi-billion ecosystem services of the tropical forests while reversing loss of economically and culturally-important wildlife in this, the UN International Year of Biodiversity.

Achim Steiner

UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director

Gorillas, the largest of the great apes, are under renewed threat across the Congo Basin from Nigeria to the Albertine Rift: poaching for bushmeat, loss of habitat due to agricultural expansion, degradation of habitat from logging, mining and charcoal production are amongst these threats, in addition to natural epidemics such as ebola and the new risk of diseases passed from humans to gorillas.

Alarming, parts of the region are experiencing intensified exploitation and logging of its forest, in some cases even within protected areas. In the DRC, many of these activities are controlled by militias illegally extracting natural resources such as gold, tin and coltan as well as producing charcoal for local communities, urban areas, camps for people displaced by fighting and sometimes even to communities across the border. These militias are located, motivated, armed and financed directly by this illegal extraction of minerals, timber and charcoal. A network of intermediaries including multinational companies or their subsidiaries, neighboring countries and corrupt officials, are involved in the transportation and procurement of resources which stem from areas controlled by militia, or for which no legal exploitation permission exists.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Strengthen MONUC by expanding its mandate to secure full control of border crossings, by any means necessary, with regard to the export of illegally exploited natural resources, that are financing the conflict, in full collaboration with and assisting the national customs authority to intervene and halt trans-national environmental crime, in close coordination with appropriate national and international bodies.

2 Enhance support for close coordination and trans-boundary collaboration among parks in DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya, including coordination with MONUC, the Lusaka Agreement Task Force and relevant law enforcement agencies.

3 Mobilize resources for trans-boundary collaboration and coordination, including all aspects of transnational environmental crime and investigation from source to end-user outside the region – including investigations of complicit companies in recipient countries, especially but not limited to the EU, USA, People's Republic of China and the rest of Asia – in order to monitor the origin and halt the purchase of illegally exploited and smuggled minerals and timber from the Congo Basin.

4 Mobilize funding for judicial training and cross-boundary training of judicial staff in national and transnational environmental crime in gorilla range states to assist in bringing successful prosecutions.

5 Strengthen long term training programmes in law enforcement for park rangers and wildlife managers across the region including those working outside of parks, for example in community reserves, with particular reference to anti-poaching, monitoring, scene of crime investigation and intelligence gathering.

6 Promote the essential role that local, national and international law enforcement and anti-corruption plays in ensuring the success of rainforest protection and climate mitigation efforts under REDD+ and source specific finance for these measures through UNEP, UNODC, LATF and INTERPOL.

7 Establish a fund for supporting trans-boundary investigation and collaboration on trans-national environmental crime.

8 Strengthen the collaboration of UNEP, UN office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), UN Department of Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO), CITES, World Customs Organization (WCO) and INTERPOL on trans-national environmental crime – including illegal trade in valuable natural resources such as minerals, wood products and wildlife – by, for example, secondment of experienced officers to help investigate cases and bring about prosecutions.

9 Support the need for strengthened funding for gorilla research and survey data. The report, compiling some of the most recent data and information from a variety of sources, clearly highlights the lack of accurate survey data in parts of the regions within the 10 gorilla range states.



www.unep.org

United Nations Environment Programme
P.O. Box 30552 - 00100 Nairobi, Kenya
Tel.: +254 20 762 1234
Fax: +254 20 762 3927
e-mail: unep@unep.org
www.unep.org

