

UN experts advance plans for West African biodiversity corridor



1 October 2009 – A plan to develop a biodiversity corridor across the border between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia will be the focus of discussions to be held in Abidjan next week in cooperation the United Nations and other organizations.

Hosted by the Ivorian Minister of Environment, Water and Forests, the meeting on 5-6 October is part of a transnational initiative launched by the UN-led Great Apes Survival Partnership (**GRASP**) and the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (WCF).

Among other objectives, the meeting aims to advance the idea of a biodiversity corridor between two large blocks of forest in the Upper Guinean Forest Region: the Sapo National Park in Liberia and the Taï National Park in Côte d'Ivoire.

The area is home to the largest block of a relatively intact tropical rainforest in West Africa, and to more than a quarter of Africa's mammals, including 12 species of primates, important chimpanzee populations, as well as endemic species such as pygmy hippos and forest elephants.

The meeting will bring together representatives of various stakeholder groups from both countries, including senior government officials, forestry and environment ministries, major international donors, development agencies, private sector and research institutions, indigenous populations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

They will discuss environmental conservation goals that simultaneously enhance stability, human security, sustainable development and long-term economic benefits in a conflict-prone region.

The initiative is financed and supported by the European Union (EU), the French Fund for World Environment (FFEM), STEWARD (Thriving & Sustainable Environments for West African Regional Development), and the WCF.

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