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## Actor Don Cheadle named UN Goodwill Ambassador for environment



Actor Don Cheadle at UN Headquarters in December 2006

5 June 2010 – Actor Don Cheadle was today appointed as Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations environment agency during a ceremony in Rwanda to mark the World Environment Day.

The appointment was announced by the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)) in the Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda, the global host of this year's [World Environment Day](#) (WED). Mr. Cheadle also took part in the traditional Kwita Izina gorilla-naming ceremony.

The renowned actor's trip to Rwanda was especially meaningful given his ties to the country through his Academy Award-nominated role in the 2004 film "Hotel Rwanda" in which he portrayed a hotel manager who saved hundreds of lives during the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

"It is an honour to welcome such an icon as Don Cheadle to this important role. UNEP does not appoint Goodwill Ambassadors lightly. Through his humanitarian work and his passion for the environment, Mr. Cheadle will raise green awareness among millions of people around the planet and draw attention to ways we can deal with issues like pollution and environmental-based conflict," said Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director, who joined Mr Cheadle in the event, which was also attended by Rwandan President Paul Kagame.

Mr. Cheadle has a strong record of humanitarian and environmental advocacy, including work on clean energy and active campaigning for genocide victims. In

2009, he appeared in the UN Seal the Deal! campaign's public service announcement on climate change.

"I would love it if we were able to live in a world which is in harmony with its environment. But it is money over people, money over environment, money over everything. We need to educate people on the environment and draw clear connections now – it is not disparate pieces, it really is a chain of life. We have to connect the dots. I am surprised the environment is not at the top of the agenda. What is more important than clean air and a healthy planet? I hope this designation as UNEP Goodwill Ambassador will give me the opportunity to motivate the public to take action and bring people together to tackle environmental challenges," said Mr. Cheadle.

In his capacity as UNEP Goodwill Ambassador, Mr. Cheadle will use the influential voice of the entertainment industry to mobilize the public to embrace more sustainable lifestyles, promote the greening of the entertainment industry and other sectors, and take part in UNEP public outreach initiatives.

Mr. Cheadle joins the ranks of the other distinguished UNEP Goodwill Ambassadors, Brazilian super model Gisele Bündchen, French photographer and environmentalist Yann Arthus-Bertrand and Indian cricket star Sachin Tendulkar.

During the much-anticipated and widely acclaimed traditional Kwita Izina baby gorilla naming ceremony, this year's People's Choice name, "Zoya", which was chosen online by around 3,400 people around the planet, was announced by Mr. Cheadle.

"WakaWaka", the name given to another baby gorilla, was selected by children from around the world in a global online competition. The name was announced by UNEP Climate Hero and acclaimed wildlife photographer Luo Hong. WakaWaka means "to light up" in Swahili.

In a related development, schoolchildren and villagers across Rwanda will receive solar power and more than \$85,000 will go to gorilla conservation as part of the lasting legacy of World Environment Day 2010.

Inspired by the Rwandan Government's pursuit of a low-carbon, green path to economic development, energy company Philips is also supporting UNEP's WED Legacy Initiative with a donation of 300 solar home systems.

Fifty of the systems will go to the Rubaya village in Rwanda's Gichumbi district, a pilot village of a joint poverty and environment project between UNEP and the Government of Rwanda. The rest will be distributed to benefit schoolchildren in rural villages where there is no power, enabling them to do their homework and complete their education.

To raise the money for gorilla conservation, UNEP has been contributing \$10 through the "Take a Stand for the Gorilla" initiative for every activity or positive environmental action organized and registered on the WED website.

As a result of the thousands of activities organized around the world by individuals, communities, non-governmental organizations, businesses and governments, UNEP's WED Legacy fund drive has raised a total of \$50,000, with all the funds going to the Volcanoes National Park.

In addition, more than \$35,000 was generously contributed to the WED Legacy Project by UNEP partners inspired by the initiative.

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