

Rwanda celebrated the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB)

1. Introduction

Rwanda's commitment to regional and global partnerships and active leadership on many fronts has attracted the attention of the global community to recognize and acknowledge her achievements particularly in sound environmental governance and management. It is the growing recognition that attracted United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to choose Rwanda to host WED 2010.

As part of the global events, two key events have been lined up to mark both the WED and the IYB: ***the 2010 Gorilla Naming Ceremony popularly known as Kwita Izina, and an International Conference on Biodiversity.***

The Kwita Izina Gorilla Naming Ceremony is an annual event hosting thousands of international, regional and local visitors in an effort to raise awareness of the plight of Rwanda's endangered mountain gorillas. Each year the birth of newborn gorillas is celebrated in an exciting event at the foot of the Virunga mountain chain.

In line with celebration to mark the World Environmental Environment Day, Rwanda has for the last consecutive 16 years been dedicating ***a National Environmental Week*** which normally begins from 31st May to 5th June on annual basis.

The ***national*** theme for 2010 was ***"Raising global awareness on biodiversity conservation as we give names to our baby gorillas"***. Under this theme the efforts of all those that have contributed to the sustainable use of our environment and to the welfare of our wildlife have been celebrated.

The International Year of Biodiversity was celebrated through raising public awareness of the importance of biodiversity and its protection from underlying threats, as well as the significance of establishing interconnections between biodiversity, conservation and climate change. Furthermore, by celebrating the birth of newborn mountain gorillas we want to use this opportunity to urge Rwandans and international community to engage in environmental protection and bring an end to the loss of biodiversity and look for innovative solutions and approaches to reduce threats to biodiversity including the majestic mountain ranges in which our gorillas live.

2. Key Events that marked the celebration of WED 2010, Kwita Izina Ceremony and International Year of Biodiversity in Rwanda:

Day 0: 28th/05/2010: Press Conference to announce the WED Kwita Izina and IYB activities

Day 1: 29th /05/2010: Community Work (Umuganda), an official launching of World Environmental Day and Kwita Izina week activities highlighting the role of conservation of mountain gorillas. This will be on usual date for "Umuganda " of May 2010. Umuganda takes place each last Saturday of the month.

Day II: 30/05 to 1st /06/2010: WED and Kwita Izina National Cycling Tour

Aim : To sensitize Rwanda citizens on Environmental Conservation through Kwita Izina Cycling Tour to promote a carbon free environment. 70 participants from Rwanda and Uganda in three categories of cyclers were involved : women, men and disabled

Day III- 3rd June 2010: Environment and Conservation Conference and this will focus on “Celebrating the International Year of Biodiversity”

*The Environment and Conservation Conference brought together **over 250 environmentalists conservationists, researchers and development partners** to share experiences and future plans in the conservation of the biodiversity, ecosystem management and green economy and protection of the mountain gorillas as well as other threatened species and their ecosystems. The conference will demonstrate Rwanda’s willingness and ability to play a regional role in environmental management and gorilla conservation and will also be earmarked by the launch of biodiversity policy Wildlife Policy and the post conflict environmental assessment report.*

The following topics were discussed by international guest speakers;

- ❖ Conservation of national parks for green economy*
- ❖ Payment of ecosystem services for sustainable development*
- ❖ Reducing biodiversity loss for future generations*

Day IV, 4th June 2010: Umuganda and Community Projects launching, general public exhibitions/expositions on environmental initiatives and Community party “Igitaramo”

- On 4th June the community work (Umuganda) was carried out with international dignitaries including UNEP Executive Director, Executive Secretary of the CBD while planting trees in Kigali at Nyandungu wetland as a symbolic way to promote a carbon free and green economy. The emphasis was on wetland ecosystem for management and sustainable development.*
- Since 2003 different community projects have been implemented through gorilla revenue sharing and support of Partners with the aim of alleviating poverty.*
- The traditional party called “Igitaramo” whereby different cultural dances are performed is a very exciting event organized by the Rwandan Community. This cultural extravaganza which involved different traditional dances such as superb “Intore dance “and “Ikinimba”, maize roasting, interaction between local communities, authorities and international guests took place in celebration of the new born baby gorillas.*

DAY V, 5th June 2010: World Environment Day & 6th Annual Kwita Izina Ceremony

*5th June marked the first time Rwanda hosted the World Environmental at the global level and this has been celebrated in conjunction with the annual Kwita Izina Ceremony. On this day, the successes of gorilla conservation has been celebrated by giving names to eleven new baby gorillas. The focus was on **“Raising global awareness of biodiversity conservation as we give names to our baby gorillas”** with honoured guests from International and regional Community Rwanda’s leadership, private sector local community, Gorilla Range States, and renowned conservationists and supporters of Kwita Izina*

The choice of names highlights the broad involvement of stakeholders while maintaining the long standing tradition where the rangers propose names according to significant events surrounding the birth of the baby gorillas. All these efforts reinforce the interplay between spiritual wellbeing and cultural diversity which has been a long standing tradition of Rwanda since time immemorial.

This deliberate focus has in the recent past taken on a new and growing dimension in which international players in all facets of conservation are increasingly joining forces with Rwandans at all levels in the annual celebration “Kwita Izina”. This is clearly demonstrated by the range of eminent personalities that were involved in the 2010 naming ceremony as follows

Box 1: Names given to the baby gorilla and groups at the 6th Annual Kwita Izina and World Environment Day 2010

Group 1

1. Her Excellency Mukantabana Rose, Speaker, Deputy Chambers: named the baby gorilla **“Icyamamare”** which means famous.
2. Peter Hanns Werle (The designer of ITB and WTM Stands that has made Rwanda win trophies four times in a row): named the baby gorilla: **“Agatako”** which means Ornament.
3. Clare Richardson, CEO Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International (DFGFI) : named a gorilla group: **“Inshuti”** which means Friend.
4. Kalibata Anaclet, Director General Immigration named the baby gorilla **“Teta”** which means “spoil”
5. Hope Umuziga from Lycée de Kigali- Best primary pupil in 2009 exams: named the baby gorilla **“Amajyambere”** which means development.
6. Lou Houg Climate Hero UNEP Good Will Ambassador: named the gorilla baby **“Wakawaka”** which means sunshine.
7. Uwamahoro Gerladine, the Lucky winner of Kwita Izina National voting competition: named the baby gorilla **“Inyungu”** which means to gain
8. Eric Kakou from on the Frontier: named the baby gorilla **“Isoko”** which means source
9. Dr. B.P Agawal, Best winner from Energy Globe Award: The energy globe awards was hosted in Rwanda and as part of the appreciation he was given an opportunity to name a baby gorilla: named the baby gorilla **“Sabato”** which means Saturday

10. Mr. Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director: Named the baby gorilla **“Umurage”** which means legacy.

Group 2.

1. Gasana Emmanuel (Commissioner General, Rwanda National Police) representing the National security of Rwanda: named the group **“Isabukuru”**
2. Coosje Hoogdoorn, DG Bamboo association - China: Director of the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan: named the baby gorilla **“Murakaza”** which means welcome.
3. Officer in charge of Affairs from DRC, Naming One of the baby gorilla from the group that originally came from DRC-Kwitonda group: named the baby gorilla **“Ighembo”** which means gift.
4. Claire- US Embassy: Strong Partner in conservation. named the baby gorilla: **“Ubuhamya”** which means testimony
5. Manzi Kayihura -President -Rwanda Tours and Travel Association -Private Sector: named the gorilla group **“Agashya”** which means something new or unusual.
6. Viktor Lazlo: Singer Energy Globe award. named the baby gorilla **“Gasore”** which means young male
7. Mukadisi Florence SACOLA Community Association- Communities : named the gorilla group **“Ntambara”** which means war.
8. Don Cheadle-Actor Hotel Rwanda: named the baby gorilla **“Zoya”**
9. Dr. Annette Lanjouw (Director of Conservation of ARCUS Foundation, specialist of Great Apes worked on the mountain Gorillas and Former Country Director of IGCP 1994 - 2003, and actual main actor in IGCP): named the gorilla group **“Ugenda”**
10. Germany delegate: named the baby gorilla: **Karisimbi** which refers to the tallest Volcanic mountain in Rwanda
11. Ignace Rusenga Country representative IFC: named the baby gorilla **“Imbutu”** which means seeds

3. Who was involved

High Officials from Rwanda Government , local community, Hollywood celebrities, high profile conservationists including environmentalists, Energy Globe Awards Winners, and Media Houses (CNN, Reuters, MNT Studio 53, Japan TV, Big Blue Production from South Africa, Rwanda TV and other local medias).

HE The President of the Republic and First Lady honored the celebrations with their presence.

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