

Statement of

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**For a Hearing Before the
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife**

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1324 Longworth House Office Building, 10 a.m.

Dear Chairwoman Bordallo and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for your kind invitation to testify at this important hearing. While my schedule unfortunately prevents me from speaking in person today, I am grateful for the opportunity to submit this statement in strong support of Congressman George Miller's legislation, HR 4416, "The Great Ape Conservation Reauthorization Amendments Act of 2010."

The Great Ape Conservation Fund created by the Act has supported many successful projects to address the protection of great apes. But there is a great deal yet to be done. Without question, a significantly increased level of funding is required to do this.

As you will undoubtedly hear from the witnesses before you today, the threats to all great apes—gorillas, orangutans, chimpanzees, and bonobos—are many and rapidly increasing. Their habitat, the tropical forests of Africa and Asia, are being destroyed for commercial products such as lumber and minerals and by rapidly increasing local populations who are struggling to survive. Moreover, despite the efforts of many organizations, the unsustainable commercial-scale hunting of great apes and other wild animals for their meat persists.

The conservation community is hard pressed to keep up with these threats. We have found that a multifaceted approach is the only way to move forward. Thus, the Jane Goodall Institute's programs in Africa integrate traditional conservation approaches into a broad range of activities to support local populations, so that they can prosper without harming the chimpanzees' tropical forest habitat—and eventually can become our partners in conservation.

This July will mark the 50th anniversary of the day I first set foot on the shores of Lake Tanganyika in what is now Tanzania to embark on a behavioral study of the wild

chimpanzees of Gombe. The research I began and that others have taken up has taught the world so much, not just about chimpanzees, our closest living relatives, but also about human behavior, the transmission of diseases like HIV, how to help women in developing countries and address population pressures, how to resolve the perceived conflict between humans and nature, and much more. In short, our work has resulted in more stable communities that can resist the kinds of destabilizing influences so prevalent in the developing world. All of this from one young woman armed with binoculars following some chimpanzees through the forests of Tanzania.

And there is another important issue. As a result of our efforts to save the chimpanzees of Gombe, we have learned a great deal about what it takes to prevent the destruction of tropical forests. Of particular importance is the fact that the most effective and cheapest way to reduce emissions of CO₂ is to protect and restore these forests. These efforts, therefore, contribute significantly to addressing climate change.

My point is this: The plight of the chimpanzees and the other great apes in far away Africa or Asia, while it may seem at first glance to be unrelated to the lives of people living in America, actually should concern us all. The continued existence of the great apes and their forest homes has very real benefits to humankind—to our health, our environment, even our safety. Please consider this as you decide whether to support this important legislation.

Finally, it is morally important that we strive to protect those beings who are more like us than any others living today. There is still much to learn about their fascinating lives and different cultures. Future generations will not easily forgive us if we allow the great apes to become extinct on our watch.

Thank you for allowing me to contribute to this hearing. I commend Congressman Miller for taking the lead on this legislation and Chairwoman Bordallo for calling this hearing so that I and others could explain why it is so important.

With kind wishes, I am respectfully

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