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High-resolution photos: <http://yousend.it/wmjZfR>

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Big boost for wildlife conservation: 23 new SOS projects

Gland, Switzerland, 9 February, 2012 (IUCN) – Beginning in January 2012, top species conservation experts from around the world have determined the allocation of \$US 3.3 million to 23 species conservation projects. Gorillas, cockatoos, and frogs are just a few of the multitude of threatened species that are receiving a helping hand from SOS (Save Our Species), a global species conservation fund initiated by IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), the World Bank and the GEF (Global Environment Facility).

Drawing on species conservation knowledge accrued over decades by IUCN, for the first call for proposals SOS focused on species groups that were completely assessed on IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species™ and already had specific conservation action plans in place. According to IUCN's Red List, one in three amphibians, one in eight birds, and one in four mammals are at risk of extinction in the wild. Nineteen different organizations will use these funds to conserve threatened animal and plant species and their habitats.

"The dire situation facing the world's biodiversity calls for an action and response. SOS is seeking to bring knowledge, expertise and funding together in order to address the plight of threatened species," says **Julia Marton-Lefèvre, IUCN's Director General**. *"Through these exciting projects we hope to show that, if properly implemented, conservation works."*

A high variety of different species is crucial for ecosystem health and SOS aims to conserve a multitude of threatened creatures, focusing on Asian and African mammals, amphibians and birds with the new round of funds. SOS supports a variety of mammal projects such as conservation programmes targeting the critically endangered Cross River Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla diehli*) and Black Rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) in Africa, in addition to the endangered Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*) in Pakistan.

Mammals represent the largest portion of the SOS portfolio, but they are not the only species at risk. SOS also supports bird and amphibian projects, protecting the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*) in Asia; a project to re-introduce the Philippine Cockatoo (*Cacatua haematuropygia*); and an initiative preserving the Golden Mantella Frog (*Mantella aurantiaca*) in Madagascar.

"Ignoring species conservation means ignoring a world in which species are currently disappearing at a rate 100 to 1,000 times higher than normal. The loss of wild plant and animal species is a real threat to human well-being, sustainable development and poverty reduction. In these times of economic turmoil, it would be wise not to further damage nature—our ultimate safety net," says **Jean-Christophe Vié, Deputy Director of IUCN's Global Species Programme and SOS Director**. *"By implementing on the ground conservation action, the projects SOS select help protect entire habitats which both people and wildlife depend on."*

In October 2010, SOS was established with more than \$US10 million in financing commitments in order to build a global coalition to protect threatened species and their habitats. This unique international alliance aims to raise awareness of biodiversity conservation and looks for participation from innovative companies across all industries. Nokia was the first company to join SOS.

"SOS was established to use the charisma of wild animals to explain the role of nature, generate interest in the plight of threatened species, and shed light on the complexity of conservation work," says **Monique Barbut, CEO and Chairperson of the GEF and Chair of the SOS Donor Council**. *"Today, with our core funding we are adding 23 new projects covering a large number of threatened species, including around 60 that will be closely monitored. So far we are on track. The only thing missing now is the private sector's commitment to join our endeavour to save the planet's captivating wildlife before it is too late."*

This decade has been declared by the United Nations as the Decade of Biodiversity. Issues surrounding species survival will be discussed at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Jeju, Republic of Korea, from 6 to 15 September 2012.

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Editor's notes:

More information about SOS and its projects: <http://www.sospecies.org/>

High-resolution photos are available: <http://yousend.it/wmjZfR>

Live studio quality audio interviews are available for broadcasters via our ISDN line (APT/G722). Please call +41 22 999 0115 to book an interview slot.

For more information or to set up interviews, please contact:

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About IUCN

IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges.

IUCN works on biodiversity, climate change, energy, human livelihoods and greening the world economy by supporting scientific research, managing field projects all over the world, and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 1,200 government and NGO members and almost 11,000 volunteer experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 staff in 45 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.

www.iucn.org

About SOS

SOS (Save Our Species) is a global initiative whose objective is to conserve threatened species and their habitats, following priorities identified by the world leading experts in wildlife conservation. Founded by IUCN, the World Bank and the GEF (Global Environment Facility), SOS offers unmatched species expertise and makes grants to the conservation community. The initiative represents an engaging platform for the private sector, offering tangible on-the-ground results from a diverse portfolio of projects. Nokia is the first business partner and SOS is currently looking for more companies across industries to join the initiative and assist in explaining the urgency to protect the diversity of life on earth, on which many depend.

www.SOSpecies.org

About the Global Environment Facility

The GEF unites 182 countries in partnership with international institutions, NGOs and the private sector to address global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives. Today the GEF is the largest funder of projects to improve the global environment. An independent financial organization, the GEF provides grants for projects related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and persistent organic pollutants. Since 1991 the GEF has invested \$9 billion in grants and leveraged another \$40 billion in cofinancing for more than 2600 projects in 165 countries.

www.thegef.org

About World Bank

The World Bank's mission is to help developing countries and their people to alleviate poverty. The World Bank also addresses global challenges in ways that advance an inclusive and sustainable globalization – that overcomes poverty, enhances growth with care for the environment, and creates individual opportunity and hope. To date, the World Bank is the largest international funding source for biodiversity in developing countries.

www.worldbank.org

