

Treaty: last chance to save great apes

A treaty signed during the weekend in the Democratic Republic of Congo reportedly might be the world's last chance to save great apes from extinction.

The agreement is designed to slow the loss of great apes and their forest habitats and to secure their existence.

Great apes are humankind's nearest genetic relatives, but they are nearing extinction.

The agreement presents an opportunity to halt the slaughter of the great apes -- gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos (pygmy chimpanzees) and orangutans -- which, at its present rate, would render them extinct within a generation, the Independent reported.

If the treaty proves successful, it would help fight the world's greatest environmental problem after global warming: the mass extinction of living species.

The treaty marks the first time a group of rich donor countries has publicly recognized the unique cultural, ecological and economic importance of the four great ape species, which share up to 98.5 percent of human's DNA, the Independent said.

Currently, great apes are suffering from deforestation, illegal logging and mining, captive-animal trade, hunting, and, most recently, from emerging diseases such as the Ebola virus.

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