

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is indeed a great honour and pleasure to have Doctor Jane Goodall with us tonight. As we all know, she is a very distinguished conservationist and so much more.

She is a scientist who challenged previous conceptions and observed primate behaviour which had never been studied before. She is an activist, tirelessly fighting for environmental protection and animal wellbeing. She inspires young people all over the world in conserving biodiversity. Her example has encouraged many women to embrace a scientific career.

It is also a pleasure to be here tonight in the beautiful Museum of Natural Sciences and in the Institute where many scientists work every day to learn more about Nature. Personally, this is also a very special place for me. I have been coming here since I was a child. It is also here that is based the King Leopold III Fund for Nature Exploration and Conservation created by my late father more than 40 years ago of which I am president.

During that time, we have supported numerous scientific researches on all species of great apes. The majority of them conducted by women most probably inspired by the career of Dr Goodall. We have also financed projects of conservation in Africa among which the Virunga park in the D.R.Congo. I have myself co-produced and written a documentary on the remarkable work done to protect biodiversity as well as aiding the local communities.

In the D.R.Congo like in Burundi and in many other places in the world, conservation today cannot be sustainable without taking care of the local communities who are living all around protected areas struggling for food, water, and energy. They need to be part of the process, they have to be consulted: this is a basic human right which have been violated for centuries.

They have suffered during colonial times, they are suffering today fighting multinational companies wanting to grab their land and sometimes conservation projects as well. They have to be listened too

because most of the time their wisdom and knowledge of the natural world is precious.

They have to benefit from an economic development which offers job opportunities, education and healthcare. In addition to improved life conditions, this will reduce the appeal of poaching and trafficking the natural resources. It is also the philosophy of the Jane Goodall Institute. Nothing can be more rewarding than seeing a former child soldier working on the project to restore natural habitats and protecting the environment.

This is the inspiring and important project for Nature in all its aspects and components, humans and animals, which the ***Jane Goodall Institute*** is sharing with us tonight. Reforestation will restore chimpanzee habitat, help fight climate change and also bring benefits to the communities.

This model can be reproduced all over the world, alleviating poverty and fostering security in highly dangerous areas.

Thank you Doctor Jane Goodall for your incredible example of constant efforts to better the world. Thank you all for your support tonight.

H.R.H. Princess Esmeralda of Belgium  
President of the King Leopold III Fund for Nature Exploration and Conservation