Executive Summary: Mintom Council Forest Gorilla Heritage Area Action Plan

The Mintom Council Forest, located in the tropical humid forests of Central Africa, is home to the critically endangered western lowland gorilla. Despite its low human population density, the region is experiencing severe gorilla population declines due to poaching, disease, and habitat loss. These threats are driven by both direct factors—such as illegal hunting, the spread of diseases like Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), and deforestation—and indirect factors including bushmeat demand, weak law enforcement, corruption, and unsustainable resource extraction (logging, mining, and agriculture).

This Action Plan outlines a comprehensive strategy to protect and restore gorilla populations in the Mintom Council Forest, structured in three phases:

1. Short-Term Actions (Year 1):

- Recruit local hunters into conservation roles.
- Launch weekly community sensitization events.
- Engage local authorities and volunteers in awareness campaigns.
- Conduct feasibility studies for ecotourism.
- Monitor poaching and the impacts of gold mining.
- Expand conservation education across Mintom communities.

2. Medium-Term Actions (Years 1–3):

- Develop ecotourism infrastructure and identify gorilla viewing sites.
- Install forest road control posts.
- Promote sustainable land-use practices.
- Finalize and implement a forest management plan.
- Strengthen research, data collection, and response to threats.
- Build eco-guard capacity and improve law enforcement efforts.

3. Long-Term Actions (Years 3–5):

- Establish a long-term conservation finance mechanism in collaboration with forestry companies.
- Develop land-use planning with designated conservation and no-hunting zones.

The success of this plan depends on community engagement, strategic planning, inter-agency collaboration, and long-term financial sustainability. By integrating conservation with local development and responsible resource management, the Mintom Council Forest can become a model for gorilla protection and biodiversity conservation in Central Africa.