



SADC TFCA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AND SUMMIT OF SADC HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT



19 - 23 MAY 2025

HARARE

ZIMBABWE

ABBREVIATIONS

CAMPFIRE:	Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources
CBNRM:	Community Based Natural Resources Management
CITES:	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora
COP:	Conference of Parties
EU:	European Union
DRR:	Disaster Risk Reduction
GIZ:	German Society for International Cooperation
HWC:	Human Wildlife Conflict
ICP:	International Cooperating Partners
IFAW:	International Fund for Animal Welfare
IUCN ESARO:	International Union for Conservation of Nature: East and Southern Africa Regional Office
KAZA-TFCA:	Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Areas
KfW:	Federal Republic of Germany Investment Bank
LEAP:	Law Enforcement and Anti-poaching
MPA:	Marine Protected Areas
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organization
PPF:	Peace Parks Foundation
RAIP:	Regional Agriculture Investment Plan
SADC:	Southern Africa Development Community
TFCA:	Transfrontier Conservation Areas
TWIX:	Trade in Wildlife Information Exchange
WWF:	World-Wide Fund for Nature
ZPWMA:	Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority

OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE AND SUMMIT

The first ever SADC Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) Conference and Summit, held in Harare, Zimbabwe, from May 19-23, 2025, celebrated 25 years of regional cooperation under the theme ***"SADC TFCAs: 25 Years of Cooperation for Regional Integration and Sustainable Development,"*** it brought together SADC Member States, International Cooperating Partners and local communities to advance biodiversity conservation, community engagement, and sustainable financing for TFCAs.

DAY 1: OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE

The event opened with welcome remarks from Zimbabwe's Ministry of Environment, followed by remarks from the Federal Republic of Germany, European Union, World Wildlife Fund, Peace Parks Foundation and a Keynote address by SADC Secretariat stressing the importance of integrated management of transboundary landscapes.

Remarks called for stronger cooperation and partnership among stakeholders in wildlife conservation to foster integrated and effective management of transboundary landscapes and seascapes by ensuring that they thrive for future generations. Specifically, the remarks spoke to:

- The recognition of 13 TFCAs and their role in expanding protected areas, boosting local economies, and enhancing regional security.
- Emphasis on innovative solutions for climate change, human-wildlife conflict, and large-scale conservation, prioritizing community involvement.
- Member States and stakeholders urged to forge stronger collaboration, political commitment, and innovative financing to ensure sustainable development of the TFCAs.
- TFCAs were highlighted as vital corridors connecting ecosystems, cultures, and economies.
- Acknowledgement and recognition of Germany's 25-year support in capacitating SADC TFCAs.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE

The objectives of the conference were:

- i. Evaluate the progress achieved over 25 years of implementing the SADC TFCA Programme.
- ii. Reaffirm commitments from International Cooperating Partners to advance TFCA development, with a focus on sustainably enhancing the TFCA Financing Facility.
- iii. Bolster political support and strengthen dedication to the SADC TFCA Programme.



Dignitaries following proceedings during the official opening of the conference

PLENARY SESSIONS ON DIFFERENT THEMATIC AREAS COVERING A WIDE RANGE OF CONSERVATION ISSUES

i. Launch of the TFCA website

A SADC TFCA website was launched at the summit with several key objectives, including:

- **Raising Awareness:** It educates the public about threats to wildlife, such as habitat loss, poaching, and climate change, fostering a deeper understanding of biodiversity and ecosystems and adaptive management.
- **Engaging Communities:** Provides a platform to connect with individuals, organizations, and volunteers and encouraging collective action towards conservation.
- **Sharing Knowledge:** It offers resources like articles, videos, and data on species, conservation strategies, vacancies, and success stories, empowering people with actionable information.

ii. Transfrontier Conservation Areas at 25

The plenary was held in celebration of the 25th anniversary of TFCAs in Southern Africa, highlighting their role in biodiversity conservation and cross-border cooperation. It focused on improving transboundary biodiversity management through TFCAs. Discussions covered key achievements such as restored wildlife migration routes, marine conservation, and the promotion of eco-tourism, while also addressing existing challenges. The session emphasized the importance of continued collaboration and the creation of additional TFCAs to benefit local communities and protect shared natural resources.

iii. **Transboundary Conservation and Regional Cooperation**

The plenary centered on managing TFCAs in the SADC region, emphasizing regional cooperation, community involvement, and scientific research. Key points included improving governance, building local community capacity, and integrating socioeconomic factors into conservation strategies. Successful community conservancies were highlighted, alongside challenges in cross-border conservation. The discussion stressed renewed collaboration on rhino conservation and using scientific data for policy and management. TFCAs should balance conservation with local community needs as integrated landscapes.

iv. **TFCA enabling improved rural livelihood**

The plenary highlighted the following observations as obtaining in the rural communities across the SADC TFCAs:

- **Role of Rural Communities:** Rural communities rely heavily on natural resources for their livelihoods, underscoring the importance of their involvement in the sustainable management of TFCAs. There's a need for increased financial resources for capacity building and skills development to empower communities and help them benefit from TFCAs' decision-making processes.
- **Improvements in Community Livelihoods:** Communities in TFCAs have seen improvements through eco-tourism, employment, sustainable resource use (especially via Community-Based Natural Resource Management-CBNRM), cross-border trade, infrastructure development, and alternative livelihoods (e.g., beekeeping, climate-smart technologies).
- **Need for Legal and Policy Support:** The importance of strong legal frameworks to secure benefits and rights, cross-border policy harmonization (particularly in tourism and conservation), and investments in Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) mitigation strategies (e.g., insurance and compensation) were emphasized. Additionally, strong political will is necessary for success.

Key Challenges

The following challenges were also recognised as significant on the TFCA landscapes:

- **Human-Wildlife Conflict:** Posing risks to livelihoods and safety.
- **Limited Community Participation:** Restricts local involvement in decision-making.
- **Land Access Issues:** Hinders community benefits from TFCAs and what they stand for.
- **Policy Inconsistencies:** Misaligned regulations across borders complicate management.
- **Funding Gaps:** Insufficient resources for capacity building and infrastructure.
- **Climate Impacts:** Threaten ecosystems and livelihoods dependent on natural resources.

Recommendations:

- **Legal Frameworks:** Establish policies to secure community rights and benefits.
- **Cross-Border Collaboration:** Harmonize tourism and conservation policies between countries.
- **Human Wildlife Conflict Mitigation:** Invest in insurance and compensation schemes to address conflicts.
- **Strong Political Will:** Essential for effective implementation and support of TFCA initiatives.

v. Review of Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP 2017-2022) and its implementation

The presentation on the review of Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP 2017-2022) and its implementation RAIP (2017-2022) indicated that the plan has the following Priority Programmes which it was reviewed on.

- i. **Enhanced Sustainable Agricultural Production, Productivity, and Competitiveness:** Focused on improving agricultural output and efficiency.
- ii. **Improved Regional and International Trade and Market Access:** Promoted trade and market access for agricultural products.
- iii. **Improved Private and Public Sector Engagement and Investment:** Strengthened investment in agricultural value chains.
- iv. **Sustainable Development & Management of Environment:** Emphasized conservation of wildlife and transboundary natural resources.
- v. **Improved Legal Frameworks and Collaboration:** Enhanced agriculture-related sectoral programme collaboration.

The review of the programme indicated that RAIP 2017-2022 achieved significant milestones, including the establishment of regional systems for vulnerability assessment, seed regulation, and fisheries management, but faced challenges like limited national policy integration and funding constraints. The RAIP 2023-2030 builds on these lessons, aligning with the Kampala Declaration (2026-2035) to promote sustainable agriculture, food security, and resilient agri-food systems. Its implementation plan emphasizes policy alignment, stakeholder engagement, and robust M&E to ensure effective execution and impact across the SADC region.

vi. TFCAs facilitating better transboundary biodiversity management

Transfrontier Conservation Areas are critical for preserving biodiversity, managing shared natural resources, and promoting inclusive, equitable development across borders. Strengthening governance in these areas is essential for long-term conservation success and regional cooperation.

Current Challenges

Despite their importance, TFCAs are facing several significant challenges:

- Cross-border coordination among multiple jurisdictions is often complex
- Human-wildlife conflict affects communities and conservation efforts
- Climate change threatens ecosystem resilience
- Poaching and illegal wildlife trade undermine conservation gains
- Unsustainable resource use continues to degrade biodiversity
- Limited sustainable financing hampers effective management and monitoring

Strategic Priorities Moving Forward

To address these challenges and enhance the effectiveness of TFCAs, the following actions were recommended:

- Strengthen regional frameworks, coordination, and political will
- Promote joint monitoring and cross-border data sharing
- Ensure genetic connectivity for key species across borders
- Develop a stronger, unified response to biodiversity threats
- Manage TFCAs as integrated landscapes with multiple land uses

Key Messages and Recommendations

- Political commitment is essential to drive progress
- Ensure inclusive stakeholder engagement in planning and implementation
- Institutionalize transparent mechanisms for community involvement
- Strengthen law enforcement in protected and conserved areas
- Prioritize science and research to inform conservation decisions
- Use data-driven planning for species and ecosystem management
- Secure sustainable financing, including rhino conservation and joint monitoring
- Develop practical solutions for HWC, including relief mechanisms for affected communities

vii. Marine Transboundary Conservation areas in SADC

The plenary gave an overview of the need for cooperation, legal alignment, local involvement, and sustainable management options for SADC coastal and marine ecosystems marine conservation in the SADC region within the framework of biodiversity, food security, and economic development for TFCAs. It was highlighted that establishing Marine TFCAs promotes better ocean governance and protects marine habitats. They also support the blue economy and foster cooperation between neighbouring member states.

The plenary established the following parameters as key in successful establishment marine TFCAs

a) Political and Legal Support:

- Political will is essential for overcoming challenges in establishing marine TFCAs, including aligning legal and policy frameworks across countries.
- Inclusive planning is needed, considering local community benefits, job creation, and proper representation in decision-making.

b) Tools for Conservation:

- Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and marine spatial planning are essential tools to protect marine ecosystems. MPAs restrict harmful human activities, while spatial planning guides sustainable resource use.
- Transboundary MPAs are aimed at creating connected networks of protected areas across countries, with a focus on preserving key habitats.

c) Management Models for TFCAs:

- **Transboundary management:** Shared responsibility across countries.
- **Pseudo-transboundary management:** Partial cooperation across borders.
- **Community-based management:** Local communities lead management efforts.

Challenges:

- **Legal and Institutional Harmonization:** Member States must align their laws and policies for easier cross-border cooperation.
- **Balancing Conservation and Resource Use:** Protecting ecosystems while allowing sustainable resource use is crucial.
- **User Conflicts:** Industries like fishing, tourism, and shipping may have conflicting interests.
- **Knowledge Gaps and Skills Shortages:** There's a need to address gaps in marine conservation knowledge.
- **Population Growth and Limited Funding:** Increasing human populations and scarce funding put pressure on marine resources.
- **Governance Transparency and Donor Dependency:** Concerns about fund management and reliance on external donors.

Current Status:

- No full marine TFCAs exist yet, although two areas include coastal zones.
- MPAs have helped improve fish populations but lack connectivity between regions.
- Programs like TWIX and PROFISHBLUE support data sharing, illegal fishing prevention, and transboundary stock assessments.

Recommendations:

- Expand MPA networks and use marine spatial planning to protect 15-30% of critical marine habitats.
- Engage all stakeholders (governments, local communities, NGOs, etc.) in planning and managing TFCAs to ensure inclusiveness.
- Use marine spatial planning to resolve conflicts between different ocean users and manage resources sustainably.
- Integrate TFCAs with the blue economy to promote sustainable resource use.

viii. Law Enforcement and Anti-Poaching (LEAP) Strategy

The plenary provided key provisions of the SADC Law Enforcement and Anti-Poaching (LEAP) Strategy (2022–2032) Strategy highlighting actionable recommendations and the pivotal role of collaboration and community engagement in combating wildlife crime. The strategy is a framework aimed at combating wildlife crime and fostering sustainable conservation through cross-border collaboration, data sharing, and community involvement. Below is a structured summary and analysis of the key points, progress, challenges, recommendations, and insights from the meeting, addressing the core components and outcomes of the LEAP Strategy.

Progress in Implementation of the SADC LEAP Strategy

- **Implementation Success:**
 - Twelve SADC member states reported progress, with some achieving significant reductions in poaching incidents for iconic species.
 - Notable increases in ivory seizures and higher prosecution rates in several countries.
- **Collaborative Mechanisms:**
 - SADC-TWIX and TFCA structures have facilitated joint law enforcement operations, improving seizure reporting and communication.
 - The introduction of a dedicated app has streamlined inter-agency coordination.
- **Country-Specific Achievements:**
 - **Namibia:** Established a wildlife protection division and adopted multi-stakeholder approaches, including community forums to address illegal succulent harvesting.
 - **Botswana:** Leveraged 30 years of CBNRM to ensure equitable resource access and household benefits.

- **Zimbabwe:** Promoted community ownership through the CAMPFIRE program, recruiting locals for park management and engaging youth via Junior Ranger programs.

Challenges

- **Data Fragmentation and Trust:**
 - Lack of trust among agencies and fragmented data systems hinder effective information sharing.
- **Resource and Funding Constraints:**
 - Limited budgets and resources impede the implementation of LEAP initiatives.
- **Inter-Agency and Community Engagement:**
 - Poor cooperation between agencies in some regions.
 - Limited community involvement in certain areas undermines conservation efforts.

Recommendations For Member States:

- National Progress and Funding:**
 - Submit regular national progress reports to track LEAP implementation.
 - Increase budget allocations for LEAP activities and explore innovative financing mechanisms.
- Strengthen Task Forces:**
 - Enhance multi-agency and cross-border task forces, building on TFCA successes.
 - Establish cross-border community forums to foster collaboration.
- Community Engagement:**
 - Treat communities as equal partners in law enforcement and livelihood improvement.
 - Promote community awareness and human-wildlife coexistence programs.
- SADC-TWIX Participation:**
 - Encourage all member states to join and actively participate in SADC-TWIX.
 - Nominate grassroots enforcement officials to strengthen the initiative.

e. Judicial and Legal Frameworks:

- i. Enhance judicial training and legal frameworks to improve prosecution rates.
- ii. Intensify anti-corruption measures to address a key driver of wildlife crime.

Recommendations for SADC Secretariat:

a. Funding Mobilization:

- i. Secure funding through International Cooperating Partners (ICPs) aligned with LEAP priorities.
- ii. Identify and promote innovative financing mechanisms to support LEAP initiatives.

b. Regional Collaboration:

- i. Strengthen regional coordination and support for TFCA structures and SADC-TWIX.

ix. Disaster risk reduction: the role of TFCAs

The plenary focused on integrating disaster risk reduction (DRR) with biodiversity conservation in TFCAs emphasizing risk-informed decision-making to address conservation goals and future threats, particularly fire risk management in Transboundary Freshwater Ecosystems. Key discussions highlighted the socioeconomic value of TFCAs, academia's role in advancing risk-informed approaches, and progress in disaster management, such as KAZA's integrated plans and elephant monitoring database. Multi-stakeholder engagement was deemed critical to tackle interconnected environmental and climate challenges.

The plenary outlined the following considerations for Integrating Risk-Informed Development in TFCA as key:

- Risks (e.g., climate change, drought, human-wildlife conflict) are systemic and interconnected, requiring a multidisciplinary, transnational approach.
- A paradigm shift in development planning is needed to embed risk considerations at every stage for sustainable, resilient outcomes benefiting conservation and communities.
- Comprehensive situational analyses (e.g., SWOT, diagnostic tools) are essential for transboundary conservation planning.
- The 2022 SADC TFCAs value proposition positions TFCAs as nature-based solutions to enhance ecosystem resilience and functionality.

The following issues represent the next steps in advancing DRR in the region.

a) GIZ to Coordinate a Strategic Discussion with KAZA Secretariat:

- GIZ will organize a meeting with the KAZA Secretariat to understand the requirements needed in the development of a DRR framework. The meeting will allow GIZ to identify synergies, gaps, and opportunities for collaborative action and resource mobilization on development of DRR within the SADC region.

b) ZPWMA to Integrate Corridor Mapping into Planning:

- ZPWMA urged to incorporate ecological corridors mapping into their operational and planning processes.
- This mapping will help identify key wildlife movement routes and areas of high human-wildlife conflict, enabling targeted interventions to reduce conflicts and promote coexistence.

c) SADC to Elevate Environmental and Wildlife Issues in DRR Forums:

- The SADC Secretariat urged to ensure that environmental sustainability and wildlife conservation are prominently featured in regional climate outlook forums and DRR planning sessions.
- This includes encouraging member states to incorporate ecosystem-based DRR approaches in their national strategies.

d) TFCA Practitioners to Engage Broader Sectoral Platforms:

- Practitioners working in TFCAs urged to actively participate in multi-sectoral platforms such as agriculture, water, infrastructure, and tourism forums.
- The goal will be to advocate for integrating conservation principles and practices across sectors that directly or indirectly impact protected buffer zones.

e) TFCA Managers to Conduct Integrated Risk Assessments:

- Managers overseeing TFCAs urged to conduct thorough and integrated risk assessments that include a range of threats such as wildfires, droughts, floods, and human pressures.
- These assessments will inform the design and implementation of targeted mitigation and preparedness measures, tailored to each TFCA's specific vulnerabilities.

x. Fire Risk Management in TFCAs

The session addressed fire risk management in Transboundary Freshwater Ecosystems, focusing on the Maluti Drakensberg area. Key points included the ecological role of fire and the challenges posed by community-driven uncontrolled burning. Panelists stressed the need for education and collaboration to balance these aspects. The group agreed that conducting a risk assessment is a crucial first step and planned a follow-up meeting to explore lessons from other regions.

xi. IFAW-Zimbabwe Wildlife Event Live Stream

Hosted by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, the event focused on elephant conservation, habitat connectivity, and community-led strategies across Southern and East Africa. Despite early technical difficulties, the multilingual panel included experts in ecology, economics, and anthropology, who described their collaborative work as a “polygamous marriage” of disciplines.

Below is an outline of the key highlights from the IFAW session.

- **Elephant Population Trends:**

A 25-year study showed stable or growing elephant populations in large, protected areas. However, the need for wildlife corridors is critical to support genetic diversity and reduce human-elephant conflict.

- **Elephant Movement and Water Access:**

Elephant tracking in the Hwange landscape revealed how land use and water availability shape their movement. Upcoming water infrastructure could significantly change behavior patterns, requiring continued research.

- **Community-Led Conservation:**

Involving communities in conservation, especially in TFCAs, was shown to be effective. Examples from Kenya demonstrated how tools like predator-proof enclosures and water management promote coexistence.

- **Connectivity Toolkit:**

A four-step framework (baseline data, land cover, habitat suitability, and connectivity modeling) was shared, with application in the Mozzola landscape. It integrates ecological and infrastructure data with elephant movement.

- **Policy and Governance:**

Recommendations included formally recognizing community territories, involving locals in decision-making, and compensating for human-wildlife conflict, shifting conservation toward community ownership.

- **Integrated Landscape Approach:**

Speakers stressed the need to balance ecosystem recovery with local

livelihoods, citing major finance wins like \$42M in Angola and \$90M in Botswana for biodiversity and resilience.

- **Innovation in Engagement:**

Tools like early-warning systems alert communities to elephant movements, while art and music were celebrated for raising conservation awareness and emotional connection.

DAY TWO: MINISTERIAL MEETINGS (MINISTERS OF ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND TOURISM) AND CONTINUATION OF PLENARY SESSIONS

i. SADC Tourism and Visa Coordination

The SADC meeting on Tourism and Visa Coordination reviewed and amended decisions, focusing on filling vacant positions in the tourism coordinating unit through secondment due to budget constraints. Ministers noted ongoing implementation of decisions, with a request for future actions to seek prior approval. Zimbabwe's informal ratification was acknowledged, pending formal submission. Updates on the blue economy strategy included fast-tracking appointments and forming a working group.

ii. Climate Initiatives and Global Partnerships

The meeting focused on climate change and environmental initiatives, highlighting South Africa's inclusion of the Great Green Wall as a key G20 summit project to combat desertification, land degradation, and drought. Discussions also covered developing regional guidelines for coastal climate-resilient infrastructure and launching a regional blue carbon initiative for conserving coastal and inland wetlands. Outcomes from COP16 in Riyadh were noted, including the establishment of the Riyadh Global Partnership and the International Drought Resilience Observatory, though no consensus was reached on a drought protocol.

iii. Joint Ministerial Meeting Agenda Review

A meeting was held on preparations for a joint ministerial meeting scheduled for June 25, 2025, covering forced displacement, fragility mitigation, and climate resilience. Officials reviewed and updated the meeting records to correct dates and wording. They also planned the next day's agenda, which includes a morning report from the TFCA Conference and a ministerial session to discuss various reports and agenda items. Special attention was given to following proper procedures for conference recommendations, especially those involving financial matters.

iv. Sustainable Conservation Finance Solutions

The Sustainable Finance Coalition presented the importance of sustainable finance in addressing long-term funding challenges for protected areas. The presentation outlined the organization's three-part model find, design, and mobilize—for supporting conservation finance. A panel also discussed various financial solutions, including biodiversity credits, human-wildlife coexistence insurance, and conservation trust funds.

v. Sustainable Financing for Transfrontier Conservation

The panel addressed sustainable financing for TFCAs, highlighting the challenges of securing long-term funding. Discussions focused on diversifying funding sources beyond traditional donors, with emphasis on innovative mechanisms like biodiversity, wildlife, and carbon credits. The panel stressed the need for Member States to take ownership of the SADC TFCA Financing Facility and prioritize sustainable financing. They also discussed the role of technology and smart parks in managing landscapes and mitigating human-wildlife conflict.

The discussion concluded with a call for increased financial resources, better coordination, and exploration of new funding mechanisms to ensure TFCAs' long-term sustainability.



Ministers and ICPs at the meeting for Environment, Tourism and natural resources

vi. AI Education and Conservation

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)'s Munzur Dale has launched a no-code AI course aimed at equipping youth and communities with self-sufficiency skills. This aligns with the Gamo Project's goals of skill development and environmental sustainability. Aruna Jaguru from South Africa highlighted tourism and business investment in TFCAs as tools for rural development.

vii. Enhancing TFCAs for Sustainable Tourism

Tourism was discussed as a key driver for economic growth and conservation in Southern Africa's TFCAs. Key areas of focus included improving access, connectivity, risk management, and inclusive development. Community success stories like Wetizhook Mountain Lodge demonstrated the importance of partnerships in regional development.

viii. SADC Tourism Development Challenges

The panel identified the need for enhanced tourism infrastructure, such as access and border management. Emphasis was placed on balancing economic benefits with environmental protection, diversifying tourism offerings, and encouraging community involvement and cross-border events.

ix. Strategies for Transfrontier Conservation Success

Effective TFCA strategies included community engagement, land use planning, law enforcement, and biodiversity management. Marine protected areas and sustainable financing tools, such as carbon credits and community trust funds, were also highlighted.

x. Sustainable Finance and Conservation Collaboration

The conversation stressed political stability, inclusive tourism, and sustainable financing as crucial for conservation success. Regional cooperation and active community participation were seen as essential for achieving long-term goals.

DAY THREE: CONTINUATION OF MINISTERIAL MEETINGS

i. SADC TFCAs 25th Anniversary Celebration

The SADC meeting of Environment, Natural Resources, and Tourism Ministers celebrated 25 years of Transfrontier Conservation Areas. They highlighted successes in protecting wildlife and promoting regional cooperation. One major achievement was the Kavango Zambezi TFCA, which covers five countries and is home to over 200,000 elephants.

The meeting also discussed problems like poaching, illegal wildlife trade, and climate change, and called for more funding and stronger environmental agreements. The EU and Germany were thanked for their support, and the importance of sustainable tourism and involving local communities in conservation was emphasized.

Key from the meeting was the adoption of decisions for action by Member States and the Secretariat in promoting regional cooperation, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development.

ii. Advancing TFCAs for Sustainable Conservation

The meeting highlighted 25 years of progress in Southern Africa's TFCAs, emphasizing their role in biodiversity conservation. Key challenges discussed included governance, human-wildlife conflicts, and sustainable financing. Ministers stressed enhancing community participation, accountability, and creating a sustainable financing model.

The Ministers underscored the importance of tourism and business investment in TFCAs and the need for policy harmonization to boost regional cooperation. A key outcome was the decision to expedite the SADC Tourism Visa and the SADC TFCAs Integrated Tourism Investment Development Plan.

iii. SADC Wildlife and Tourism Decisions

The meeting centered on reviewing and adopting key decisions in the wildlife, forestry, and tourism sectors within the SADC region. Major outcomes included the adoption of the Wildlife-based Economy Strategy Framework and the approval of a Regional Voucher Conservation Strategy. Member states were urged to submit their forest reports, and there was a strong emphasis on enhancing cooperation with international partners and tackling illegal hunting and wildlife trade. The meeting also agreed to move forward with decisions related to Transfrontier Conservation Areas and regional tourism development.

iv. Torsa Winding-Up Process Discussion

The meeting focused on the process of winding up Torsa, highlighting the need to set up a bank account for member states' arrears and to develop a clear roadmap by July 2025. Zambia expressed concerns about unclear liabilities and called for a detailed plan. In response, the interim board and Secretariat agreed to address these issues. It was also noted that a liquidator is needed to assess the legal and financial situation.

v. SADC Tourism and Environmental Strategies

The meeting focused on enhancing tourism, environmental management, and biodiversity strategies across the region. Key decisions included approving a regional private sector tourism platform to boost collaboration, reviewing air access policies to improve connectivity, and developing disaster risk management plans. Member states were urged to ratify the SADC Protocol on Environmental Management, actively participate in Ramsar COP meetings on wetland conservation, and strengthen capacity within the SADC Secretariat. Additionally, addressing challenges related to forced displacement and building climate resilience were emphasized as critical priorities for sustainable regional development.

vi. SADC Transboundary Conservation Strategy

The meeting centered on enhancing transboundary conservation by boosting regional cooperation, involving local communities, and securing sustainable funding for TFCAs. Ministers emphasized economic benefits for communities, especially in managing human-wildlife conflicts through laws and practical solutions. Key decisions covered marine conservation, anti-poaching, and tourism development. The Secretariat was assigned to update timelines and incorporate biodiversity into tourism plans. The meeting ended with a pledge to finalize amendments before the next council session.

SIGNING OF FUNDING AGREEMENTS TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE SADC TFCAS

IUCN ESARO signed agreements with KfW for €8 million (Tranche III) and €11 million (Tranche IV) for the SADC TFCA Financing Facility, and €5 million (Tranche II) for the SADC TFCAs Training Programme, in the presence of the SADC Secretariat Executive Secretary and the German Ambassador. Funded by Germany (up to €44 million total), the TFCA Financing Facility, managed by IUCN, supports ecological, economic, cultural, and institutional connectivity in SADC TFCAs for sustainable development and natural resource management. The grants will aid conservation and community development in TFCAs. The Training Programme will provide tailored training for wildlife rangers and TFCA managers, guided by a Training Needs Assessment, to enhance conservation and livelihoods.



The signing Ceremony of three agreements to support SADC TFCA Financing facility between IUCN and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany

DAY FOUR: OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE SUMMIT

Held on May 23, 2025, in Harare, Zimbabwe, the summit carried the theme: ***"Transfrontier Conservation Areas: 25 Years of Cooperation for Regional Integration and Sustainable Development."***

Key highlights of the summit included:

- The adoption of a draft communique that reaffirmed the role of TFCAs in promoting regional cooperation, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development.
- A call for:

- Strengthened law enforcement across borders to combat poaching and trafficking,
- Improved mechanisms to address human-wildlife conflicts, especially in buffer zones and wildlife corridors,
- Promotion of innovative financing, including through carbon trading, conservation levies, and biodiversity credit markets.
- A notable milestone was the launch of Zimbabwe's Carbon Credit Registry Market by President Mnangagwa, intended to position Zimbabwe as a leader in climate finance and to provide new funding channels for conservation activities.

The SADC TFCA Summit adopted three major decisions:

1. **Commendation of Zimbabwe and Partners:** The summit applauded the Government of Zimbabwe and its conservation partners for successfully hosting the summit, recognizing their leadership and commitment to the TFCA agenda.
2. **Call for Continued Collaboration:** Member States were urged to maintain and strengthen collaborative efforts in achieving TFCA goals, including cross-border cooperation, ecosystem conservation, and regional integration.
3. **Enhanced Community Engagement and Benefit-Sharing:** A strong emphasis was placed on empowering local communities through benefit-sharing mechanisms and participatory management, ensuring that conservation initiatives support livelihoods and social development.

Country Highlights:

- **Malawi** shared updates on its active partnerships with Zambia in developing TFCAs and called for continued technical and financial support to sustain and expand these initiatives.
- **Namibia** highlighted the significance of involving youth in natural resource management and conservation and proposed that regional TFCA guidelines include specific frameworks for youth engagement.
- The summit also addressed the need for improved coordination in biodiversity management, urging all Member States to protect shared ecosystems more effectively and recognize TFCAs as influential platforms in shaping regional conservation policies.

SADC TFCAs Conservation Strategy

The summit deliberated on strategic measures to enhance the impact and sustainability of TFCAs across Southern Africa:

- **Strengthening Law Enforcement:** Countries were encouraged to intensify efforts under the SADC Law Enforcement and Anti-Poaching (LEAP) Strategy, which supports regional collaboration in combating wildlife crime, illegal trafficking, and poaching.
- **Sustainable Financing Mechanisms:** The need for diversified, long-term financing solutions was emphasized. Proposals included leveraging carbon markets, biodiversity offsets, and public-private partnerships to ensure that TFCAs are financially resilient and not overly reliant on donor funding.
- **Tourism and Business Investment:** Decision 7 highlighted the importance of attracting investment in ecotourism and sustainable businesses within TFCAs. Zambia showcased the tourism potential of its TFCAs, particularly in generating cross-border revenue and creating jobs.
- **25 Years of TFCA Progress:** As the region marked a quarter-century of TFCA initiatives, Namibia presented its success story of combining community involvement with sustainable wildlife management, demonstrating how local stewardship can lead to conservation and economic gains.

SADC TFCA Summit Celebrates 25 Years

The Summit served as a celebration of 25 years of regional collaboration in transfrontier conservation, underscoring progress in biodiversity preservation, sustainable development, and cross-border partnerships.

Key statements included:

- President Emmerson Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe emphasized the urgency of forming a unified African position on biodiversity, ahead of the upcoming CITES Conference, and proposed a regional youth exchange program focused on wildlife conservation and natural resource stewardship.
- President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa, represented by the Minister of Environment, Forestry, and Fisheries, reiterated South Africa's commitment to the TFCA program, highlighting its value in fostering regional integration, tourism development, and ecological connectivity.
- Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, and other Member States reaffirmed their dedication to strengthening TFCA efforts, emphasizing:
 - Inclusive community benefits from conservation,
 - Building climate resilience in protected areas,
 - And adopting innovative financing mechanisms to support long-term conservation outcomes.