



Transfrontier Conservation Areas

SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

DRAFT CONCEPT AND PROGRAM

SADC Transfrontier Conservation Areas Programme

Annual Network Meeting 2026

"Investing in People, Nature and Partnerships: Scaling Impact Across SADC TFCAs"

Skukuza, Kruger National Park, South Africa

10-12 November 2026

Hosted by the South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE)

Dates	10-12 November 2026
Venue	Nombolo Mdhluli Conference Centre, Skukuza, Kruger National Park, South Africa Virtual Participation via Zoom
Host	Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE), Republic of South Africa
Co-organisers	SADC FANR / Joint Action NaturAfrica -C-NRM Programme
Theme	Investing in People, Nature and Partnerships: Scaling Impact Across SADC TFCAs
Expected Attendance	About 100 delegates in-person and others virtual: SADC Member State TFCA Focal Points, TFCA Secretariates, International Cooperating Partners, NGOs, community based organisation representatives
Languages	English, French, Portuguese (simultaneous interpretation provided)

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym	Full Name
BIOPAMA	Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management Programme
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resource Management
CCARDESA	Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa
DFFE	Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (South Africa)
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EWEF	Ecosystems-Water-Energy-Food Nexus
FANR	Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (SADC Directorate)
HWC	Human-Wildlife Conflict / Coexistence
IPLC	Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
Joint Action	Joint Action NaturAfrica/Climate Resilience and Natural Resource Management Program
LEAP	Law Enforcement and Anti-Poaching (SADC Strategy)
LIMCOM	Limpopo Watercourse Commission
LOZAMAP	Lower Zambezi-Mana Pools Transfrontier Conservation Area
OKACOM	Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission
ORASECOM	Orange-Senqu River Commission
RBO	River Basin Organisation
SAWC	Southern African Wildlife College
UNEP-CMS	United Nations Environment Programme - Convention on Migratory Species
ZAMCOM	Zambezi Watercourse Commission



1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The SADC Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCA) Program 2023-2033 emphasises the need for partnerships in the implementation of the program. An aspect of facilitating these partnerships was the creation of the SADC TFCA Network, which is a regional community of practice bringing together governments, community based conservation organisations, NGOs, academic researchers and funders working in TFCAs. The Annual TFCA Network Meeting is a convening platform for these TFCA practitioners from across southern Africa. It provides a structured space to review progress, share knowledge, address emerging challenges and chart the path forward for the SADC TFCA programme.

The 2026 meeting offers the opportunity to do a review of the revised SADC TFCA Programme (2023-2033) and the SADC Law Enforcement and Anti-Poaching (LEAP) Strategy (2022-2032), both approved by Ministers in June 2023. It will also be the first TFCA network meeting hosted in Skukuza, within the Kruger National Park and the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA).

The meeting is hosted by South Africa's Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE), reflecting the country's strong commitment to transfrontier conservation and its role as a key TFCA partner state. It builds on the substantive discussions and recommendations of previous network meetings, including those held in Pretoria (2022), Maputo (2023) and Botswana (2024) as well as the 25th Anniversary International TFCA Conference and Heads of State Summit held in Harare in 2025. It will focus on concrete progress, identifying obstacles, measurable results and forward-looking commitments.

2. RATIONALE FOR HOLDING THE MEETING AT SKUKUZA / KRUGER NP

Locating the 2026 meeting within the Kruger National Park / GLTFCA landscape is deliberate and symbolic. The GLTFCA – spanning South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe – is one of the most operationally advanced TFCAs in the region and has recently achieved significant milestones, including:

- Approval of the GLTFCA Freshwater Resource Management Strategy and its MoU with LIMCOM (2023).
- Ongoing institutional reform and governance strengthening through the GLTFCA Secretariat.
- Active cross-border species management programmes.
- Development of transboundary tourism products and signage guidelines.
- Development and implementation of the GLTFCA Sustainable Livelihoods Strategy.

Hosting the meeting at Skukuza enables delegates to witness these achievements on the ground, contextualises the subsequent conference discussions in a functioning landscape and underscores the South African government's co-hosting role. This also coincides with South Africa being the current SADC Chair.

Given the precedent set by the 2023 Maputo National Park and 2024 Kasane field visits, Day 1 of the 2026 meeting is dedicated entirely to an immersive field experience in the Kruger NP / GLTFCA landscape, concluding with a traditional bush braai hosted by DFFE and SANParks. This will promote informal networking as well as a co-learning opportunity.

DFFE have secured accommodation at both the Skukuza Lodge at a reduced rate and blocked 50 beds in SANParks self-catering bungalows in Skukuza. It is recognised that Skukuza is not as central or accessible as Johannesburg or Pretoria but the extra effort and logistical cost will make the meeting a memorable and fruitful networking opportunity.



3. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The 2026 SADC TFCA Network Annual Meeting aims to:

- Review progress in implementing the SADC TFCA Programme (2023-2033) Costed Action Plan across all five goals at the mid-programme mark.
- Present TFCA progress reports and facilitate structured peer learning across Category A, B and emerging TFCAs.
- Deepen engagement on sustainable finance – scaling innovative instruments developed for TFCA coordination mechanisms, the SADC TFCA Financing Facility and new EU NaturAfrica funding.
- Advance the implementation of the SADC LEAP Strategy (2022-2032) and associated M&E framework.
- Strengthen collaboration between TFCAs and River Basin Organisations (RBOs) through a dedicated joint session.
- Elevate community and wildlife economy discussions, including topics on equitable benefit-sharing, promoting Human Wildlife Co-existence, Indigenous and Local Community (IPLC) rights and the Wildlife Based Economy developments.
- Build consensus on the next steps for emerging/potential TFCAs including Marine TFCAs and the TFCA categorisation roadmap.
- Strengthen the SADC TFCA M&E framework and knowledge management systems.
- Foster professional development, peer-to-peer networking and partnership development across the TFCA community.
- Present developing issues that have an impact on TFCA development such as improved mountain area conservation, translocation of wildlife SOPs, metapopulation regional management systems, CITES and others.

4. MEETING THEME

"Investing in People, Nature and Partnerships: Scaling Impact Across SADC TFCAs"

This theme reflects three interlinked imperatives driving TFCA effectiveness at the mid-programme mark:

- **People:** Centering community rights, livelihoods, human-wildlife coexistence and local governance as foundations of lasting conservation.
- **Nature:** Upholding ecosystem integrity, biodiversity connectivity, freshwater resources, climate resilience and species management across transboundary landscapes.
- **Partnerships:** Harnessing multi-sector, multi-institutional collaboration – including government, private sector, civil society, RBOs and international cooperating partners – to mobilise resources and accelerate implementation.

5. EXPECTED PARTICIPANTS

The meeting will bring together approximately 120 participants, including:

- SADC Secretariat representatives (FANR Directorate)
- TFCA Focal Points and Coordinators from SADC Member States
- International Coordinators and Secretariat staff of TFCAs



- International Cooperating Partners (GIZ, KfW, German Government, EU, IUCN, WWF, FAO, UNEP-CMS, PPF and others)
- Civil society organisations and NGOs active in TFCAs
- Community and indigenous representatives and the Community Leaders Network (CLN)
- East African Community (EAC) observer delegation
- River Basin Organisations (ZAMCOM, LIMCOM, OKACOM, ORASECOM)
- Media and communications representatives

Virtual participation will be facilitated for delegates unable to attend in person, with full interpretation services for in-person and online participants(English, French, Portuguese).

6. DRAFT PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The meeting spans three days (10-12 November 2026). Day 1 immerses delegates in the Kruger NP / GLTFCA landscape through a full-day field visit, grounding the subsequent plenary and thematic discussions in a living transfrontier conservation area. Days 2 and 3 shift to the conference centre, with Day 2 dedicated to plenary sessions and Day 3 structured around parallel thematic streams running from 08:00 to 15:30, followed by synthesis and official closure.

Time	Session / Activity	Lead
Day 1 – Tuesday 10 November 2026: Field Visit – Kruger NP / GLTFCA Landscape		
08:00	Delegate gather outside the Nombolo Mdhuli Conference Centre	
08:30-09:00	Official Welcome and Opening: Brief welcoming remarks from DFFE and SADC Secretariat; Introduction to the day's programme and field visit objectives	<i>DFFE / SADC Secretariat</i>
09:00-12:30	Field Visit – Part 1: Guided excursion into the Kruger NP landscape; Site visits to key GLTFCA management infrastructure (ranger stations, water management facilities, wildlife monitoring); Presentations from SANParks and GLTFCA Secretariat on GLTFCA institutional arrangements, achievements and challenges; Stop at a significant landscape feature illustrating cross-border conservation in action	<i>DFFE / SANParks / GLTFCA Secretariat</i>
12:30-13:30	Bush Lunch: Packed lunch in the field / designated rest camp stop	
13:30-16:30	Field Visit – Part 2: Visit to community interface zone / concession area adjacent to Kruger NP; Engagement with community representatives and/or private sector partners on human-wildlife coexistence, tourism concessions and benefit-sharing; Recycling Waste to art project. Optional: wildlife hide or waterhole stop for informal networking in the bush	<i>SANParks / DFFE / Community Partners</i>
16:30-17:30	Return to Skukuza; Delegate check-in and free time	
18:30-21:00	Bush Braai – Welcome Dinner: Traditional South African braai in the Skukuza boma under the stars; Informal networking; Opening and welcome remarks by DFFE, Cultural performance by Skukuza Choir	<i>DFFE and SANParks</i>



Day 2 – Wednesday 11 November 2026: Plenary Sessions – Progress, Partnerships and Finance

08:00-08:30	Housekeeping, reflection on Day 1 field visit, and adoption of formal agenda	<i>Network Coordinator/ Host</i>
08:30-09:30	Session 1 – Network Updates and Mid-Programme Review: Recommendations from 2022, 2023 and 2024/2025 meetings – status of implementation; SADC TFCA Programme (2023-2033) Costed Action Plan – mid-programme progress across all five goals; SADC TFCA M&E Framework update	<i>SADC Secretariat / GIZ C-NRM</i>
9:30 - 10:30	Session 3 – TFCA Progress Reports: Category A TFCAs: ARTP, GLTFCA, Kgalagadi, KAZA. Structured peer reflection and discussion	<i>TFCA Coordinators TFCA Focal Points</i>
10:30-11:00	Tea/Coffee break	
11:00-13:00	Session 3 – TFCA Progress Reports: Category A TFCAs: Lubombo, Chimanimani, Maloti-Drakensberg, Iona-Skeleton Coast, Malawi-Zambia, Niassa-Selous, ZIMOZA. Category B and emerging TFCAs: Greater Mapungubwe, LOZAMAP, Liuwa Plains - Mussuma ; Structured peer reflection and discussion	<i>TFCA Coordinators TFCA Focal Points</i>
13:00-14:00	Lunch	
14:00-15:30	Session 3 – Sustainable Finance and Resource Mobilisation: SADC TFCA Financing Facility update – IUCN; Federal Republic of Germany and EU Program support for TFCAs; Innovative finance instruments (carbon credits, bio-credits, conservation trust funds, ACF); Community access to finance – reducing barriers for IPLCs	<i>IUCN / Joint Action / SADC Secretariat</i>
15:30-16:00	Tea/Coffee break	
16:00-17:30	Session 4 – TFCA and River Basin Organisation Collaboration: Progress on TFCA-RBO MoUs and task team; Ecosystems-Water-Energy-Food-(EWEF) nexus in TFCA landscapes; Climate resilience and transboundary freshwater governance; Recommendations and commitments	<i>SADC Secretariat / ZAMCOM / LIMCOM / OKACOM / KAZA / GLTFCA</i>
19:00	Delegates' dinner (own arrangements / optional group dinner)	

Day 3 – Thursday 12 November 2026: Parallel Thematic Streams and Closure

08:00-10:00	PARALLEL STREAM A – Wildlife Economy, Livelihoods and Community Engagement: Community benefits and the SADC Wildlife-Based Economy Strategy; Herding for Health and rangeland restoration; CBNRM and the Community Leaders Network; Equitable benefit-sharing – centering IPLCs	<i>CLN / SAWC / Conserve Global</i>
08:00-10:00	PARALLEL STREAM B – Law Enforcement, Anti-Poaching: LEAP Strategy 2022-2032 mid-implementation review; SADC LEAP M&E Tool – lessons and updates; Cross-border ranger training and joint operations; SADC CITES Engagement strategy, Forestry crime – expanding the LEAP mandate	<i>GIZ / SADC Secretariat / African Parks / IUCN</i>



10:00-10:30	Tea/Coffee break	
10:30-12:30	PARALLEL STREAM A – Human-Wildlife Conflict and Coexistence: HWC context and drivers across SADC TFCAs; IUCN HWC Guidelines – implementation in the region; WWF Khetha Safe Systems approach; Proposal: SADC HWC Regional Working Group	<i>IUCN / SADC Secretariate / DFFE / NGOs?</i>
10:30-12:30	PARALLEL STREAM B – Tourism, Potential TFCAs and Emerging Issues: Boundless Southern Africa update – TFCA Tourism Market Development; SADC Univisa and border post tourism audits; Potential and emerging TFCAs – categorisation roadmap; De-listed TFCAs: pathways for re-engagement	<i>SADC / GIZ C-NRM Tourism / Member States</i>
12:30-13:30	Lunch	
13:30-15:30	PARALLEL STREAM A – M&E, Knowledge Management and Human Capital: SADC TFCA M&E Framework – tool development update; Regional Resource Hub / BIOPAMA / CCARDESA; Training institutions and Goal 5 review; TFCA Network Communications system update	<i>GIZ / SADC Secretariat</i>
13:30-15:30	PARALLEL STREAM B – Climate Resilience and Ecosystem Management: Climate change adaptation and DRR in TFCA management plans; Transboundary fisheries and freshwater management; Biodiversity connectivity.	<i>GIZ / ZAMCOM</i>
15:30-16:00	Tea/Coffee break	
16:00-17:00	Synthesis and Recommendations Plenary: Stream rapporteur summaries (Streams A and B); Consolidated recommendations for the SADC TFCA Steering Committee; Action assignments by theme and responsible party	<i>TFCA Network Coordinator</i>
17:00-17:30	Official Closure: Closing remarks by SADC Chair and DFFE; Vote of thanks; Announcement of 2027 host country	<i>DFFE / SADC Chair</i>

7. KEY THEMATIC PRIORITIES FOR 2026

7.1 Mid-Programme Review of SADC TFCA Programme (2023-2033)

2026 represents the three-year mark of the revised programme. A structured review of progress against the Costed Action Plan across all five goals will anchor the meeting. Member States and TFCA Coordinators are requested to come prepared with updated progress reports using the agreed reporting template.

7.2 Sustainable Finance

Sustainable financing for both cross border co-ordination remains the most consistently cited constraint across TFCAs. The 2026 meeting will go beyond problem identification to focus on practical uptake of finance solutions already available – including the SADC TFCA Financing Facility, proposals from the 4 TFCA's the SFC is supporting to develop solutions, conservation trust funds, carbon finance, and others.



7.3 Community Equity and the Wildlife Economy

The revised SADC Wildlife-Based Economy Strategy Framework approved in 2023 needs to translate into concrete community benefit-sharing improvements. The 2026 meeting will dedicate space to honest reflection on whether communities are genuinely centred in TFCA development and will hear directly from community representatives through the CLN.

7.4 TFCAs and River Basin Organisations

The RBO-TFCA collaboration task team proposed at the 2023 meeting will report back on progress. Given that TFCAs and RBOs operate across the same landscapes and manage the same natural resources, formalising this collaboration is a priority under the revised programme. A joint RBO-TFCA panel will be a feature of the 2026 agenda.

7.5 Human-Wildlife Conflict and Coexistence

HWC continues to escalate across TFCAs, threatening both conservation outcomes and community support for wildlife. The 2026 meeting will build on the IUCN HWC Guidelines launched in 2023 and the WWF Khetha Safe Systems approach, aiming to establish a regional SADC HWC working group linked to the IUCN SSC HWC Specialist Group.

7.6 Emerging and Potential TFCAs

The SADC TFCA network was reduced from 18 to 12 TFCAs following the 2023 programme review. The 2026 meeting will address the pathways for re-engagement of de-listed and possible Marine TFCAs, potential Category C TFCAs, and the role of diplomatic channels and International Relations in advancing TFCA development.

8. LOGISTICS AND PRACTICAL INFORMATION

8.1 Venue

The meeting will be held at the Nombolo Mdhului Conference Centre, Skukuza Rest Camp, Kruger National Park, South Africa.

8.2 Registration to participate

SADC TFCA Network members wishing to participate should apply to attend using this link [2026 SADC TFCA Network Annual Meeting - Fill out form](#)

8.3 Accommodation

After confirmation that your application to attend in-person has been received, accommodation should be booked at Skukuza Rest Camp at the Skukuza Lodge Hotel with an agreed special rate or at self-catering SANParks chalets. A room block has been reserved at the Skukuza Lodge use Block Res No: 817309 to get the reduced rate. Email for bookings should be sent to aha | Central Reservations Office cro@aha.co.za. Self-catering SANParks chalets have been reserved but must be booked using Reservation No: RR308464 Client Code: REGI0078 [Online Bookings - SANParks](#). Booking instructions will be communicated with the formal invitation letter.

8.4 Visa and Travel

South Africa welcomes nationals of most SADC Member States without a visa. Delegates requiring visas should apply well in advance. A support letter from DFFE/SADC Secretariat can be provided on request. The nearest international airport is OR Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg (approximately 4-5 hours by road to Skukuza via the Paul Kruger Gate) Connecting flights from OR Tambo to Skukuza, Hoedspruit and Kruger Mpumalanga International are available. Shuttle options can be arranged.



8.5 Virtual Participation

The hybrid meeting format used previously at Network Meetings will be maintained. Virtual participants can join via the designated video conferencing platform (Zoom or equivalent). Interpretation into English, French and Portuguese will be available on all platforms. Virtual participants will be requested to register in advance.

9. PRE-MEETING PREPARATIONS REQUIRED FROM MEMBER STATES AND TFCAS

To ensure productive discussions, all TFCA Coordinators and Member State Focal Points are requested to:

- Complete and submit TFCA progress reports (covering 2024-2026 activities, achievements, constraints and future plans) using a supplied reporting template – deadline: 31 October 2026.
- Review the SADC TFCA Programme (2023-2033) Costed Action Plan and be prepared to report on national contributions to programme goals.
- Identify at least two community representatives or CLN members to participate in the community livelihoods sessions and the rest of the program.
- Advise the SADC Secretariat of any proposed potential/emerging TFCAs in your country that should be discussed.

10. EXPECTED OUTPUTS AND DELIVERABLES

The 2026 SADC TFCA Network Annual Meeting is expected to produce the following outputs:

- A consolidated set of recommendations and commitments for submission to the SADC TFCA Steering Committee.
- An updated TFCA Network action matrix tracking implementation of recommendations.
- A field trip report documenting lessons from the GLTFCA / Kruger NP landscape visit.
- A formal resolution on the establishment of a SADC RBO-TFCA Collaboration Task Team (or endorsement of its existing mandate and workplan).
- A resolution on the establishment of a regional SADC HWC Working Group linked to the IUCN SSC.
- Full proceedings document (compiled within 60 days of the meeting).
- Media and communications outputs to raise the profile of SADC TFCAs.

11. SUPPORT AND FUNDING

The 2026 SADC TFCA Network Annual Meeting is co-organised by the SADC Secretariat (TFCA advisor / FANR Directorate), GIZ and the South African Government (DFFE). Funding support has been confirmed from the Joint Action NaturAfrica/C-NRM Programme (German government and the EU) and the South African government through DFFE and SANParks.

However this does not cover the fill costs, therefore, other International Cooperating Partners will be approached to support areas not covered by the current committed ICPs. Partners wishing and able to co-fund, support specific sessions or community participation at the meeting are invited to contact the SADC TFCA Network Coordinator, Steve Collins on steve.collins@gopa.eu

12. CONTACT AND FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information, registration enquiries or logistical questions, please contact:

SADC TFCA Network Coordinator - Steve.Collins@gopa.eu



SADC Secretariat, Technical Advisor TFCAs - Colum Zhuwau czhuwau@sadc.int

Co-host: Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE), Republic of South Africa

Contact: TFCA Unit, DFFE Aruna Jagaroo ajagaroo@dffe.gov.za

SADC Transfrontier Conservation Areas Programme (2023-2033) Supported by:

