

SADC Transfrontier Conservation Areas at the IUCN World Parks Congress

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Hon. Henri Djombo, Minister of Environment Forest and Sustainable Development in Republic of Congo (left), Joseph Lekealem from the Ministry of Wildlife and Forest in Cameroon (center) and Prof. Lee White, the Executive Secretary of the Gabonese National Parks Agency during the press on Africa's commitment to stop wildlife crime. Credit: Marshall Patsanza/IPS

African Leaders Make New Commitments to Stop Wildlife Crime

By Marshall Patsanza

African Ministers, government representatives and civil society leaders have renewed their commitments to stop poaching which has ravaged the continent's wildlife in recent years.

The leaders also took time to share new approaches designed to halt wildlife crime.

The commitments and initiatives to deal with poaching were made during the African Leaders Dialogue session held at the on-going IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney, Australia.

Ushekua Herunga, Namibian Minister of Environment and Tourism, shared how Namibia has successfully involved local communities in the management of protected areas resulting into

the lowest poaching rates on the continent.

"Namibia's wildlife has increased despite the pressures of human population growth, underdevelopment and poverty," Herunga said.

In 1995, Herunga said, there were 20 lions in the north-west, today there are over 130. Namibia only had about 7,500 elephants and now there are around 20,000 and the Black Rhino was on the brink of extinction but Namibia now has one of the largest populations on the continent.

Henri Djombo, the Congolese Minister of Environment, Forest and Sustainable Development, unveiled an ambitious strategy of the Central African Forests Commission to fight poverty and

promote - socio-economic development with the aim of turning poachers into conservationists.

Lee White, executive director for the Gabonese National Protected Areas Agency, talked about the elephant protection initiative involving five African countries calling for a 10 year moratorium on ivory trade and putting ivory stock piles out of circulation.

The dialogue was officially opened by IUCN President Zhang Xinsheng. He encouraged African societies to share their conservation and sustainable use experiences with the rest of the world especially with regard to the drafting of The Promise to Sydney.

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The SADC TFCAs Exhibition Stand is located at stand no.s 71-73 in the Exhibition Hall.

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Dr Soto on The Importance and Challenges of TFCAs

Mabvuto Banda interviews Dr Bartolomeu Soto who is Director General for Conservation Areas in Mozambique.

Dr Bartolomeu Soto is the Director General for Conservation Areas in Mozambique. He started working in conservation in the 1990s holding several senior positions in government before joining the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as Technical Advisor on Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCA). He was part of the team that developed guidelines for TFCAs and guidelines on the development of tourism concessions in TFCAs. Our reporter, Mabvuto Banda caught up with Dr Soto at the IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney and asked him about the challenges in the region, why the TFCAs are important and the contributions southern Africa has made at the IUCN

Q: What are the challenges in TFCAs in the SADC

A: It was a big challenge in the 1990s to establish Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCA). There was no strong political support in those days...but we managed to get that support eventually because most governments started to understand the importance of having TFCAs in conserving wildlife. The TFCAs were established through the agreement of treaties which said that TFCAs are a mechanism for the integration of conservation and people into the integration of the whole region in terms of development.

Q: Whats the Status Now?

The reality is that moving from the declaration of treaties and MOUs on paper, is very difficult..there are some

activities that are happening but the issue of sovereignty is still slowing down the development of TFCAs. Countries are still concerned about their domestic issues like security on their borders and other equally important concerns. So it takes a bit of time to mobilise those departments mainly the security related departments to implement the TFCAs. The other challenge is bringing economic development into the TFCAs - which is the intention of TFCAs. But you can only bring economic development if you have investment and we have not yet created a special mechanism to promote TFCA investments...I think our challenge now is how to make the investment in TFCAs a special and easy one to do promote to economic development in remote areas where TFCAs are located.

Q: The development of concessions is one solution that SADC believes can work. How far are you on this?

A: The SADC secretariat has developed guidelines for concessions in tourism, in TFCAs and also guidelines for the establishment and development of TFCAs because these guidelines will help to unlock these difficulties that we have.

Q: How will guidelines help. Please elaborate?

A: The guidelines are seen as the solution because they will help to intergrate different experiences from TFCAs. They will help bring experience of TFCAs in one part of the region into the other because some have done better than the others.



Dr. Bartolomeu Soto
Credit: Marshall Patsanza

Q: Any last word?

A: I believe this World Park Congress is a forum that is very important because we exchange experience, knowledge and I would like to highlight that SADC chose TFCA as its contribution to inspiring solutions that ICUN is proposing all of us to think about and TFCA if they are implemented the way we have defined them will integration, it will help collaboration among countries to fight the common problems that we face like poaching and to also resolve problems like poverty and bring economic upliftment and promote joint tourism.

African Leaders Make New Commitments to Wildlife Crime

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The Promise of Sydney is a blueprint for a decade of

change that will come from the Congress to ensure that protected areas can be perceived as one of the best investments in our planet and our own future.

Hon. Jesca Osuna Eriyo, the Deputy Secretary General of the East African Community highlighted the importance Trans-boundary Conservation collaborations as one of the key solutions to tackling the global conservations challenges.

“We need to strengthen continental, regional, sub-nation-

al and national collaborations with expert organisations at all levels as well as forming a framework of networking between the African national and regional conservation Authorities,” said Eriyo.

See African Dialogue event pictures on page 5



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Malawi Zambia (Nyika) TFCA

Brief Profile

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PARK

2,000m above the bushveld and wetlands of Vwaza Marsh, this plateau is classified as one of Africa's premier centres of plant diversity, and a 'Global 200' priority region for conservation. The park enjoys status as an Important Birding Area (IBA) due to its large number of biome-restricted birds.

The TFCA covers 19,280km² and includes Nyika National Park, Lundazi, Mitenge and Mikuti Forest Reserves and Musalangu Game Management Area in Zambia, and Nyika National Park and Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve in Malawi. The Nyika Park in Malawi offers the highest diversity of large mammals and largest concentration of roan antelope in Africa and supports the world's greatest blue swallow breeding population.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

An MOU towards the TFCA's establishment was signed in 2004, launching a series of developments into the area. A joint project management team from both countries is in place to implement integrated management decisions.

In 2013 a draft integrated development plan was finalised, resulting in the inclusion of the North Luangwa National Park to the TFCA. Ministerial approval for this addition has since been obtained and the TFCA description will soon be changed to include North Luangwa National Park.

Culturally, the area offers a variety of historical sites including ancient dwelling sites with rock paintings (for example, at Fingira Rock and Wan'gombe Rume), various iron-ore mines, iron-smelting kilns and the remnants of complex traditional iron-working traditions.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The releasing of a trust fund grant of almost \$5 million has catalysed work to establish more effective cross-border management of biodiversity in the Nyika component. Co-financing commitments nearing \$11 million over the next five years add to this cash injection into the park.

A draft integrated development plan has been finalised, resulting in the inclusion of North Luangwa National Park into the TFCA. Work is currently being done to finalize this integration and begin implementation of integrated management strategies into this new area. Plans are also underway to re-establish populations of sable, black rhino, eland, waterbuck and roan antelope into the park, linked to the success of anti-poaching activities in the area.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Countries	Malawi, Zambia
Area	30,621 km ²
Status	Category B: MOU signed (13 August 2004)

NEWS IN BRIEF AT IUCN CONGRESS

IUCN Identifies Threatened Freshwater Local Action to Boost Reef Resilience Showcased to International Marine Managers

On-ground actions to boost the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef was showcased at the on-going IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney being attended by thousands of scientists and researchers from around the world. Local action — such as reef protection markers preventing anchors damaging coral at Keppel Bay in the southern Great Barrier Reef — was discussed by Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority marine scientist Roger Beeden. “Climate change is the greatest threat to coral reefs worldwide, including the Great Barrier Reef, and I’m delighted to share some of the work we’ve undertaken,” Mr Beeden said. “Managing climate change is embedded across all our work — our focus is building the health of the Reef so that it’s better able to deal with this threat.

“The reef protection markers are a simple but effective example of local efforts to support reef resilience — it was driven by community desire to take action to support coral recovery.

“The option that was chosen was to limit anchor damage and, overall, we’ve seen good results for coral.” In 2008, four reef protection markers — white, pyramid-shaped buoys joined by an imaginary line — were installed to create a no anchoring area in Keppel Bay. In partnership with the local community, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority assessed the resilience of 31 reefs in Keppel Bay to identify recovery potential.

Australia’s Bush Blitz Announces \$1.2 mln in Research to Tackle Conservation

Australia’s world-leading Bush Blitz species discovery programme will invest \$1.2 million in scientific research to help tackle some of this country’s biggest conservation challenges.

Parliamentary Secretary Simon Birmingham made the announcement at the IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney. The \$1.2 million is part of a \$12 million investment the Australian Government and BHP Billiton Sustainable Communities announced in July this year. Each party will contribute \$6 million to extend the Bush Blitz programme to 2017. “By investing in scientific research through Bush Blitz we are discovering new species and learning more about the challenges they may face,” said Senator Simon Birmingham, Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment.

“Another important part of Bush Blitz is inspiring the next generation of Aussie scientists — our kids. This investment will help produce engaging and imaginative resources to educate students about the importance of science and how it links to preserving our natural world.” Bush Blitz is a pioneering partnership between the Australian Government, BHP Billiton Sustainable Communities and Earth-watch Australia. Bush Blitz is helping to fill that knowledge gap,” Senator Birmingham said. Bush Blitz has already discovered more than 825 species that are completely new to science.

New Online Resource Helps Communities Get Active in Parks

An innovative new online resource was launched at the on-going IUCN World Parks Congress 2014, to guide communities to get active in parks to improve their health and wellbeing. Research shows that getting people out in nature is good for both their health and wellbeing. With heart disease, diabetes, obesity and other non-communicable diseases on the rise in both Australia and globally, the importance of connecting with nature has never been more important.

Active in Parks is a concept based on the Healthy Parks Healthy People approach pioneered by Parks Victoria. It works to support Australians to increase physical activity while connecting with their community and nature.

The Active in Parks online resource provides practical guidance and useful resources for both health organisations and parks agencies on how to implement Active in Parks programs in their local areas and regions, together with a national database of outdoor activities across Australia.

The resource includes specific case studies from programs successfully run in Australia, including GP Green Referrals, Bush Groups, New Migrants program and the Heart Foundation Walking Park Walks program, amongst others.

“The purpose of the website is to enable the Active in Parks model to be easily replicated in other towns and cities across Australia to achieve beneficial health and social outcomes for individuals and communities that really need it,” said Sara Mirabella, Executive Director with the People and Parks Foundation, Australia.



We are now halfway through the Sixth World Parks Congress. What are your impressions about the congress so far?

By Uusumuzi Sifile



Julie Freeman,
Australia

I work within the Aboriginal community near Sydney. The congress has been very good for me so far. The same kind of issues that indigenous people from all around the world. It is good to see everyone putting the best foot forward for the planet.



Annah Jamba,
Jamaica

This congress has been very informative for me. I have learnt a lot of new things, which I hope to share with people within my networks. I also liked the SADC exhibition because it helped me appreciate what different countries in the world are doing in the areas of conservation and tourism.



Gaurev Ganesh,
Australia

My impressions are largely positive. A lot of fruitful dialogue, exchange of ideas, different backgrounds, people giving their perspectives on the environment and nature. There has been a lot of talks from different angles on the conservation of nature, which is very good.

African leaders in 'African Promise' to fight Wildlife Crime

African government representatives and civil society leaders met on the 15th of November 2014 at the World Parks Congress in Sydney Australia to forge an African commitment towards establishing transboundary collaborations to fight wildlife crime.

