



Africa Protected Areas Congress

Kigali Call to Action for People and Nature

23 July 2022

More than 2400 participants from 53 African and 27 other countries participated in the inaugural Africa Protected and Conserved Areas Congress (APAC) in Kigali, Rwanda from 18-23 July 2022. It was convened jointly by the Government of Rwanda, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF). The Congress attracted participants from across the African continent and beyond, representing governments, African regional bodies, NGOs, national and international experts and organizations, local communities, Indigenous Peoples, youth, academia, the judiciary, development partners and the private sector. It was a congress by Africans and for Africa – celebrating and acknowledging the skills and commitment of Africa to conservation, sustainable use of nature and human well-being. Under the theme “For People and Nature” the Congress identified priority actions to strengthen Africa’s protected and conserved areas in a manner that is just, equitable and fair and that will deepen the involvement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Congress participants committed to act with urgency to address the biodiversity, climate change and health crises, and their relationship to human development and well-being, yielding a nature-positive outcome.

We, the participants in the first Africa Protected and Conserved Areas Congress, call for:

- The identification, recognition and empowerment of all custodians of nature in Africa to lead the way in conserving Africa’s rich biodiversity through protected and conserved areas (PCAs) that are fair and just, and would achieve ambitious targets to conserve the continent’s lands and waters in effective and connected systems. In particular, we call for support to Africa’s Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth, working in partnership with governments, civil society and private actors, to sustain the wisdom, traditions, scientific and traditional knowledge and customary approaches that will result in effective conservation and the long-term resilience of nature, culture, livelihoods and human well-being.
- Acknowledgment of past and ongoing injustices experienced when indigenous peoples and local communities have not been accorded their rights, roles, responsibilities and expectations in the pursuit of conservation goals, and for these injustices to be halted now and in the future. We call for a mechanism to hear their voices, understand options for resolution of their grievances and reach agreement on remedies that will rebuild confidence, and for the relationship between conservation and people to be restored and respected, so that nature conservation in Africa puts people at the centre.
- Greater public and private financial investment in nature conservation and protected and conserved areas concomitant with their value and the flow of ecosystem services in the wider production landscapes and seascapes, to support human livelihoods and well-being. In particular, to direct funding through mechanisms that are fair, equitable and efficient, and that provide direct support to



Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, youth, and non-governmental organizations to address priority conservation and social outcomes.

- A more integrated approach to addressing the Climate, Biodiversity, Health and Conflict nexus of issues involving all relevant stakeholders. In particular, we call for enhanced Pan-African collaboration, cooperation and partnership for protected and conserved area systems throughout the continent, involving all governance authorities and organizations, consistent with the African Union's Agenda 2063 with its goal for inclusive and sustainable development and the pan-African drive for unity, self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity.

We further deliberated on issues facing the African continent in three streams and six cross-cutting themes, pre-congress workshops organized by the IPLCs and Youth as well as pavilions and many side events. We distilled critical actions for effective governance and management of protected and conserved areas in landscapes and seascapes informed by Africa's context and in ways that benefit African people.

Promoting inclusive and equitable governance

Land and waters in Africa are governed under diverse tenure systems that include state, customary and private ownership and differ from country to country. Many areas governed and managed by IPLCs and private partners contribute to effective and well-connected conservation networks, but do not have legal recognition. The Congress recognized the need to acknowledge, respect, recognise and support the rights and identity of customary governance authorities and resource holders, including women, youth and vulnerable people, and the systems and customary laws they use to sustain resources, and to promote legitimacy, transparency and accountability in decision-making, and the fair and equitable sharing of costs and benefits of PCAs. We call for:

- Ensuring equitable, effective, generational and gender-responsive participation of all rights-holders and stakeholders, including IPLCs and youth in decision making related to biodiversity, at all levels, including access to justice and information, respect for and promotion of their rights over lands, territories and resources and their equitable enjoyment of benefits from the conservation and sustainable use of biological and genetic resources.
- Enhanced understanding of the power relations among stakeholders, to help limit elite capture, injustice and corruption and to ensure that the marginalized, women and youth are genuinely included in decision making.
- Promotion of truly sustainable use of natural resources and investment in building an appropriate wildlife economy, through rights-based approaches and with the involvement of rights-holders and stakeholders, while halting human rights abuses associated with law enforcement.
- Stronger support and resourcing of rangers, including community rangers accountable to communities to conduct their critical and diverse work professionally, responsibly and accountably in a way that respects human rights. We urge Governments and other organizations to adopt the new International Ranger Federation Code of Conduct presented at APAC.
- Grievance mechanisms based on clear standards, that are directly accessible to IPLCs to ensure speedy and appropriate resolution of conflicts and injustices.
- Strategies to resolve human wildlife and the establishment of a special fund to compensate communities affected by human-wildlife conflict.



- Better understanding and capacity to recognise and support other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) under diverse forms of governance that contribute to national and global biodiversity targets.

Putting people at the centre of effective and equitable conservation

Africa's protected and conserved areas hold unique competitive advantages for addressing poverty and building resilient communities. They contribute to diverse benefits, are vital for African peoples' livelihoods and cultures, and are central to meeting global and national biodiversity and ecosystem targets. Africa's protected and conserved areas (PCAs) estate are the backbone of natural infrastructure underpinning development aspirations on the continent. The 6 million km² of Africa's PCAs provide food and water security, erosion and flood control, disease control, climate regulation, carbon sequestration and a host of other critical ecosystem services which underpin human welfare and wellbeing, yet are rarely recognised in national accounting. Central to efforts to improve effectiveness is the involvement of all governance authorities subject to their free, prior and informed consent. To deliver diverse benefits and address threats to PCAs and their significant values, they must be effectively governed and managed. We call for:

- Assessment of the effectiveness of protected areas and other conserved areas including their governance and management benchmarked against universal standards such as the IUCN Green List Standard and to prioritize actions, capacity development and funding based on the findings.
- Further efforts to identify all areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services that are neither protected nor conserved and to build these into conservation plans and programmes and ensure ecological representativeness, while ensuring that any proposed targets are not achieved at the expense of people.
- Identification and recognition of all areas in the custodianship of governance authorities that meet the definition of other effective area-based conservation areas (OECMs), and to seek their inclusion and support in national systems, following the free, prior and informed consent of their custodians.
- Universities, governments, regional observatories and research institutes to support the collation of information and knowledge and promote greater collaboration between formal science and Indigenous Peoples' and local knowledge to build capacity and to share experiences at national and regional scale, to apply best practices, and to celebrate and reward success in achieving conservation outcomes.
- Governments and non-state partners should collaborate to transform educational curricula at all levels so that nature conservation is integrated into all disciplines including the humanities, physical, biological and social sciences, technology and innovation.

Mobilizing the economic value of PCAs and sustainable financing

Africa's protected and conserved areas contribute significantly to economic development at local and national levels, generating services that support the surrounding production landscapes and seascapes, and supporting the livelihoods of local communities through sustainable use and employment, especially through tourism. Nevertheless, many PAs have inadequate resources for their effective management. The COVID-19 crisis resulted in the loss of revenues and exposed the vulnerability of PCAs to economic shocks



and brought into sharper focus the underlying financing and resourcing challenges facing protected and conserved areas in Africa and around the world.

We recognize that African PCAs are grossly underfunded despite their enormous economic value, and that public funding, international assistance and revenues fall short of needs, inhibiting their effectiveness and value. Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation considerations in the production sectors of the economy is key for realizing the full potential of Africa's growth, and the empowerment of its people. However, it is not just the volume of funding that matters, but the way it is used to address the most important threats and weaknesses through fair and equitable access to decision making by all of those involved in governance and management in determining priorities, including rights-holders and stakeholders. We call for:

- Strong leadership by African governments to integrate environmental priorities in economic and financial planning that will address the biodiversity and climate crises and sustain the economic value of protected and conserved areas in the further development and expansion of the wildlife economy.
- Urgent action to address the significant under-resourcing of Africa's protected and conserved areas, through a range of instruments, including increased government funding, public-private partnerships, trust funds, and innovative financing mechanisms, such as carbon trading..
- Recognition of the global benefits of Africa's PCAs to attract increased global funding that complements domestic sources, while maintaining strong national and local accountability and ownership, and ensuring that while social and environmental safeguards are essential, this should not result in protracted project preparation or delays in delivering funding.
- Investment through direct grant-funding that focuses on those activities that enhance governance and management effectiveness, and that can catalyze the direct involvement of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth.
- Increased investment using appropriate and diverse financing mechanisms such as those announced at the Congress, including the A-PACT trust fund, the NatureAfrica programme and the programming in Africa of the Global Environment Facility.
- Policies, planning approaches and tools leading to long-term funding at scale, including through blended finance instruments supporting conservation action and landscape restoration.
- Establishment of a Pan-African sustainable financing technical advisory service through existing landscape finance efforts to develop capacity at PCA and local levels that can unlock financing opportunities.

PCAs as natural solutions to the biodiversity and climate change crises

There is widespread agreement that the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, which impact on human health and wellbeing, must be addressed simultaneously. By protecting ecosystems and natural habitats and the ecosystem services they provide, PCAs act as nature-based solutions that help people cope with the impacts of climate change, health and disaster risks. We call for:

Recognising that climate change will lead to geographic shifts in the distributions of species, habitats and impact human livelihoods and migration, African protected area networks should be re-evaluated and



redesigned to secure natural habitat and improve connectivity, thereby enhancing resilience of biodiversity and communities. Governments to consider PCAs as a first option for climate adaptation and mitigation and as nature-based solutions to address both the climate and biodiversity crises through mutually beneficial action. This should be reflected in implementation, and the next revision, of Africa's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

- Restoring fragmented and degraded ecosystems and avoiding or mitigating the impacts of climate change, new infrastructure and environmentally destructive activities, thereby maintaining ecological connectivity through networks of protected and conserved areas, including OECMs and transboundary areas.
- Positioning of PCAs as a significant sector within One Health frameworks, ameliorating land degradation and contributing to sectoral and institutional cooperation and coordination for health promotion, detection and treatment of disease and better understanding of pathways to human and environmental health and well-being.

APAC's Commitment to Action

Recognizing Africa's rich and unique biodiversity heritage and the diversity of its peoples, we the participants at the inaugural Africa Protected Areas Congress commit to the following actions:

- To communicate our recommendations widely, and call upon all governments and stakeholders to support implementation with the necessary urgency, and to monitor implementation.
- To welcome the recommendations made by representatives of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, and youth, and their commitments towards implementation.
- To work with the representatives of youth at APAC2022 now and in the future to create, plan, implement, manage and share the benefits of this collaboration.
- To send a strong message to COP 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity for the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework regarding the recommendations and commitments captured at this Congress, and to COP 27 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- To request the African Union Commission to declare 18 July of each year "Africa Protected and Conserved Areas Day" to be observed and celebrated across the continent.
- To task the convenors and organizing partners of the inaugural Africa Protected Areas Congress to undertake the development of an African Protected and Conserved Areas Forum as an inclusive and consultative pan-African body for the African Protected Areas Directors (APAD), government agencies, CSOs, Youth, IPLCs, NGOs and private sector to guide the implementation and monitoring of APAC 2022 commitments through smaller regional meetings and the convening of the second APAC within the next 4-5 years.
- To maintain the energy, spirit of hope and commitment of this inaugural APAC and convey this through our work in our respective home countries and institutions.

Finally, we acknowledge the generosity and hospitality of the government and people of Rwanda, and everyone, including the volunteers, who helped to convene the inaugural Africa Protected and Conserved Areas Congress, as well as participants who contributed to the rich content and discussions.