

# RESILIENT AFRICA

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*September 2023*

## UNLOCKING NATURE'S VALUE

*Dispatches on biodiversity as  
a solution to climate change*



BUILDING A FUTURE WHERE  
PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE THRIVE



## PLAYING THE LONG GAME

In this year of previously unimagined climate impacts—some of the hottest temperatures ever recorded, an imbalance between drought and rain across the Horn of Africa, devastating fires in Canada—we must recognize that there continues to be a global failure to balance short-term best interests against playing the long game. It is hard to do. Solutions to one part of the climate crisis, such as incentivizing the use of electric cars, create pressures that contribute to other parts, like the toll lithium mining takes on the Congo Basin rainforest and its people and wildlife. The long game requires collective responsibility and collaborative action. It requires that we act as stewards of the future, that we, as global citizens, embrace the African concept of *ubuntu*, “I am because you are.” And that we as a species apply *ubuntu* to our relationship with nature. Ultimately, we are because nature is.

As a conservation organization, we see that in Africa, factoring in nature as part of the solution to climate change comes down to influencing national policies and what people do on the ground. It includes how we live with our forests, where—and how—we decide to grow food, how we bring electricity to our communities, and how we develop local economies. Nature (which in practical terms includes wildlife habitat) has a role in all of it. Decisions about these issues play out every day in villages and local governing councils across rural Africa and reverberate across the world.

These decisions are important. Time is running out to win the long game.

At the African Wildlife Foundation, we know what leaders at all levels need most now are the resources and tools that empower them to make informed choices and act. We connect and empower local and national stakeholders across the continent to encourage collective responsibility and drive collaborative action to bring Africa together. And we partner with communities to create long-term economic opportunities that safeguard what we all must value if we’re playing the long game—resilient, biodiverse ecosystems that support a healthy planet.

The world must invest in solutions with people on the front lines of adapting to the effects of climate change and those protecting the forests we need, literally, to breathe. In Africa, they are often the same people. Partnering on solutions with local communities is the key to building a future where people and wildlife can thrive. We can win the long game if we embrace the spirit of *ubuntu* and play it together.

Kaddu Sebunya  
Chief Executive Officer, AWF



THE AFRICA CLIMATE SUMMIT TOOK PLACE SEPTEMBER 4-6 DURING AFRICA CLIMATE WEEK IN NAIROBI, KENYA.

## Will Africa Prioritize Nature as Part of the Solution to Climate Change?

The inaugural Africa Climate Summit held in Nairobi, Kenya, was an important milestone in defining how Africa chooses to engage with the world on climate change. The Summit gathered leaders and senior government representatives from more than twenty countries to define an African agenda for meeting global targets and addressing the impact of climate change on the continent. It resulted in the Nairobi Declaration and financial commitments of about \$23 billion. In line with AWF’s vision to see a more unified approach when it comes to sustainable development in the continent, this is a step in the right direction; however, more focus on nature as part of the solution is needed.

Running concurrently was Africa Climate Week, an annual event co-convened by the United

Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the African Union in preparation for the annual global Conference of Parties (COP). This year’s climate COP (COP28) will take place in Dubai November 30 through December 12.

Across the week, AWF worked with partners to help ensure protecting biodiversity was on the table as an essential part of economic growth and as a solution to meeting climate challenges. It was clear the message resonated, although it was also clear that getting funding to the ground remains a challenge. Among announcements related to biodiversity was AWF’s new partnership with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) for a \$5.5M four-year project focusing on conservation and climate resiliency in southern Kenya.

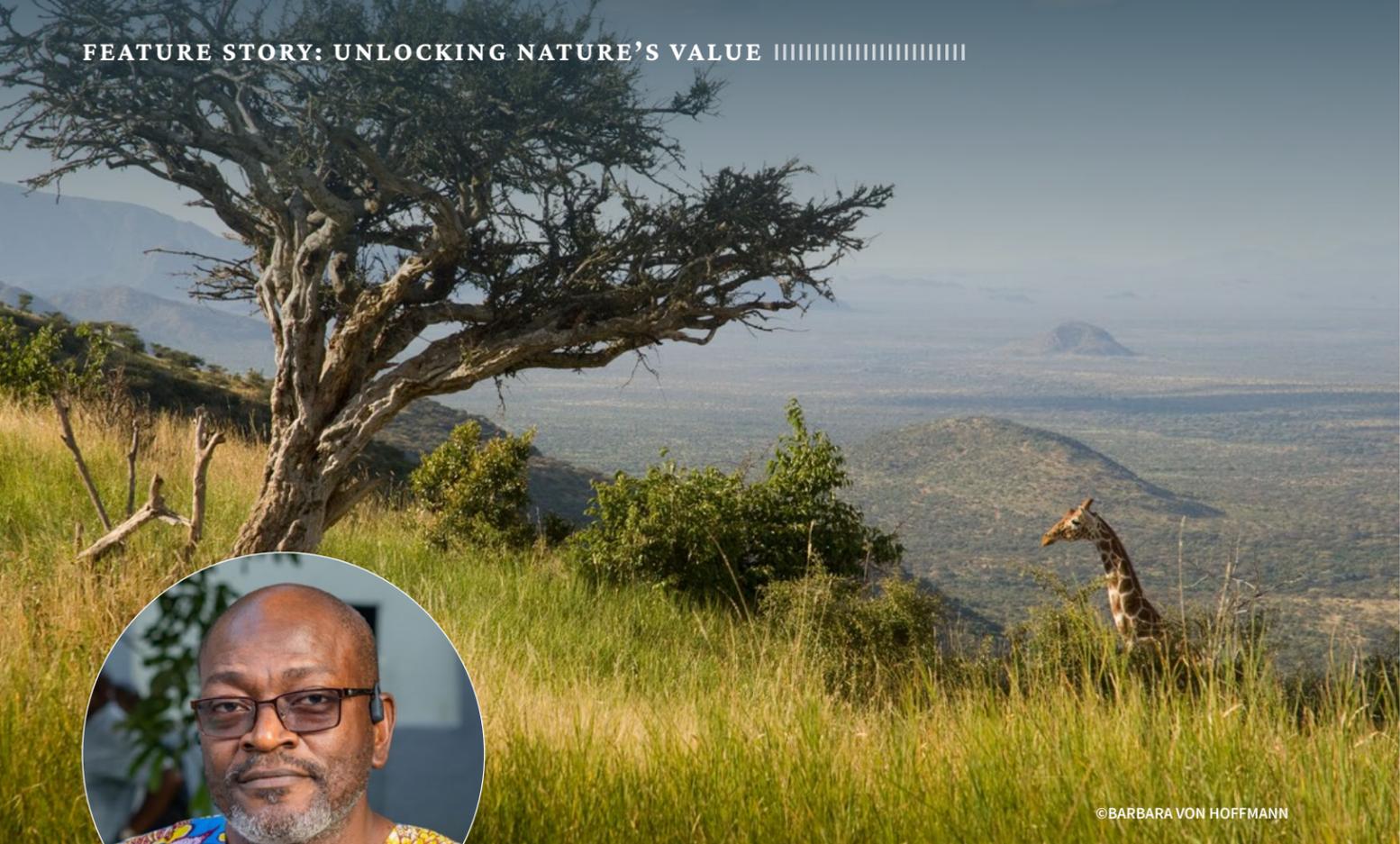
**Resilient Africa** is a newsletter from the African Wildlife Foundation exploring how Africa is defining and meeting conservation challenges on the continent. This inaugural issue looks at climate change following Africa Climate Week and the Africa Climate Summit, both of which took place in Nairobi, Kenya, in early September.

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**What were the conservation-focused outcomes from the Africa Climate Summit, and what should we, as conservationists, have top of mind as the world gathers in Dubai in November? AWF's Senior Vice President of Conservation Strategy, Impact and Learning, Charly Facheux, shares his insights.**

**Charly, what was your overall takeaway from the Summit?**

My biggest takeaway was how Africa is redefining its role. Africa does not want to be seen as a beneficiary, or even a stakeholder in the global policy process. Africa is pushing to be seen as a leader, and that is a very good and important takeaway. It's about Africa wanting to be part of setting the global agenda. That is critical. And it is important for AWF and our mission to develop African leadership at all levels, that the Summit wasn't just about heads of state. It included youth, civil society organizations, IPLC leaders, and the African private sector. That is, for me, a very positive sign.

It also clarified that we are in a moment where the effects of climate change can't be the only lens for looking at Africa. Of course, the effects are there. We need to cope. But we can also see how those challenges can be addressed as opportunities. And importantly, at AWF, we want the opportunities in Africa to be driven by Africans.

**What do you foresee coming out of the Nairobi Declaration itself? What gives you hope?**

An area of hope was the commitments from the private sector. The African private sector not only represents investment; as a group, they also contribute to climate change and are impacted by its effects. For them to deeply engage is critical. Just having them there was big, and for them to be sitting with government and civil society organizations was important. I haven't seen that before, and that is something we need. And I hope that this is just the start. Because heading towards COP28, we need to see more of it.

There was also a push to create a tax on large emitters in order to be able to support sustained climate change financing. That is very encouraging, but it will only work if it is operationalized so that people on the ground—like the communities we partner with across our landscapes—benefit from it. That financing pathway is not yet clear, but it felt like a start.

**Looking ahead, what does AWF want to achieve at COP28?**

Part of our vision as an organization is empowering Africans at all levels to define and own the conservation agenda in Africa. As part of this, we will continue to support diverse leadership perspectives drawn from networks like ACBA (African Civil Society Biodiversity Alliance) and APAD (Africa Protected Areas Directors). And of course, we will continue to support youth voices, who have a big stake in the future of the planet.

We want to make sure that there is a very clear connection between two global agendas—preventing biodiversity loss and combating climate change. They must go hand-in-hand, but they haven't been considered together before. That is changing.

**That's a great point about bringing biodiversity into the climate discussion. How do you see it coming into play at COP28?**

In declarations around climate change, there's always very little reference to nature, and nothing that overtly mentions biodiversity. If I remember correctly, maybe there are one or two elements that include nature within the newly adopted Nairobi Declaration. And it is always a subtle mention of the concept "nature"—overlooking the importance of biodiversity in keeping our global ecosystems healthy.

The strategies the world is endorsing to prevent further biodiversity loss need to be connected to those for climate change. That is work these global conventions need to address. And I am optimistic, coming from COP27 in Egypt and heading to COP28 in Dubai, that the conversation is happening. Until there is a true integration between addressing biodiversity loss and its impacts and addressing climate change and its impacts, we are essentially fighting a fight with one hand tied behind our back.

The second thing that is important from AWF's perspective is the outsized role of Africa in addressing both crises. Neither



battle can be won if they are not fought in partnership with Africa. Both in terms of benefit contributions and in terms of solutions.

**Where do you see the biggest overlap between climate and biodiversity?**

Beyond the basic fact that biodiversity promotes resilience to climate change, the biggest overlap will be coexistence between wildlife and people. We're going to see the effects of climate change driving the need to negotiate space for both differently, shaped by things like climate-based migrations, competition for resources, and increasing human-wildlife conflict. I think we are going to need to be very thoughtful about designing landscapes that balance the needs of people—for progress and opportunity, for youth and their future—with the needs of wildlife.

**Do you have a long-term vision of what conservation can look like in Africa? What would you like to see in 2030 and beyond?**

Wow, that is a one-billion-dollar question. I hope to see the seeds we are planting today starting to blossom. We need Africans to really understand the context and repercussions of our decisions. We are the fastest-growing continent with a population set to double. Two-thirds of the population is under age 35. Today,

**“Until there is a true integration between addressing biodiversity loss and addressing climate change, we are fighting with one hand tied behind our back.”**

over 60% of the land in Africa is degraded. We really need to reverse that and really work to restore more lands. Because if that degradation continues, and our population growth trend continues, then there is going to be a big clash in the near future.

I'd like to see that resolved. And I think it is possible. Restoration of degraded land happens when we negotiate space effectively. So for every kilometer that is restored, we are thoughtful and forward-looking about how it best meets human needs and biodiversity (mainly wildlife) needs, and we find the balance that allows us to safeguard overall ecosystem viability.

## ZIMBABWEAN FARMERS ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHALLENGE



In Zimbabwe, like in many African countries grappling with the impacts of climate change, innovative solutions are not just welcome; they're vital for survival. Mbire District, deep in the nation's Mid-Zambezi Valley, epitomizes this struggle. The region faces climate change-related drought and burgeoning human-wildlife conflict, primarily due to elephant invasions of farms. The situation has led to crop failures and, occasionally, life-threatening encounters with elephants for local residents.

Meet Simon Dumba, a 77-year-old Zimbabwean farmer, who AWF has helped to implement an ingenious solution to these two pressing challenges: chili farming. This drought-resistant crop has offered a new economic lifeline and serves as a natural deterrent against elephants, who find the pungent aroma unbearable. Funded by the European



Union through AWF, this dual-purpose initiative has turned Dumba into a local hero. From just one season of chili farming, he earned around \$700—enough to start building a home he'd only dreamed of before.

Dumba also innovated "chili bombs," a smoky blend of elephant dung and chili peppers, adding an extra layer of protection against wildlife incursions. His ingenuity has inspired other local farmers to adopt this spicy solution, showing that a bit of innovation can ignite meaningful change within communities.

## NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH SIDA: PROMOTING CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN KENYA



On September 7, Romina Pourmokhtari, Sweden's Minister of the Environment, announced a four-year partnership with AWF to ensure ecological integrity, connectivity, and resilience of the ecosystems in Kenya's southern landscapes. The project, which also includes the Land Development and Governance Institute of Kenya and the Indigenous Livelihoods Enhancement Partners, will support community and biodiversity resilience in the face of climate change. The project seeks to promote an integrated approach to conservation and development by safeguarding and restoring critical habitat while developing plans for productive land use by local rights holders. The goal is to support sustainable, inclusive socio-economic development and the well-being of the targeted communities in the region while protecting the region's biodiversity.



AWF COUNTRY DIRECTOR FOR KENYA NANCY GITHAIGA AND SIDA DEPUTY DIRECTOR ANNIKA OTTERSTEDT SHOOK HANDS TO CELEBRATE THE PARTNERSHIP.

"The significance of this partnership with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) showcases how the global solutions we are seeking in climate adaptation can reach the local communities," says Nancy Githaiga, AWF Country Director for Kenya.

## EMPOWERING AFRICAN VOICES: YOUNG POLICYMAKERS

AWF's Charles R. Wall Young African Policy Fellows Program supports young policymakers through training, network building, and real-world experience. Adrian Leitorio is a Wall Fellow class of '22. This is his story.



Having grown up around conserved and protected areas all my life, I have a deep understanding of the crucial role of local communities in safeguarding nature and being a part of climate solutions. I am currently the CEO and co-founder of NaPO (Nature and People as One), a local organization based in northern Kenya that seeks to promote inclusive area-based conservation.

My journey as a climate resilience advocate has been nothing short of extraordinary, thanks to AWF. I had the privilege of being a part of the inaugural Wall Fellows cohort last year, where I gained valuable exposure to the policy process through positions supporting the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment secretariat this year and the Kenya delegation to COP27 last year. I am currently running a climate resiliency project working with the Rendile and Samburu communities



to conserve and restore four important dryland forests in northern Kenya. The strategies we are implementing are backed by local science and knowledge, which has contributed to our positive impact so far. As I plan to attend COP28 this year, my hope is that African voices are not just heard but actively integrated into the decision-making process. World leaders need to keep to the numerous commitments ensuring people-centric solutions are at the heart of investments that propel us closer to meeting the ambitious global targets.

## SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE LIMITS DEFORESTATION IN THE DRC



The Bili-Uele Protected Area Complex stretches over 40,000 square kilometers in the northern Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is part of the Congo Basin rainforest—a vital global carbon sink, which sequesters more carbon than the Amazon. The country's wildlife authority struggles to effectively protect and manage Bili-Uele due to a dire lack of resources and the extraordinary remoteness of the landscape. As the conservation organization with the longest-running presence in the DRC, AWF works with partners such as Cooperazione Internazionale to collaborate with wildlife

communities. These plans provide a roadmap for determining how communities can grow and prosper while protecting important habitat. The land use plans have mapped 12,820 square kilometers across nine different areas in the landscape, dividing each area between zones like agriculture and habitat so that people can thrive in harmony with the forest. The plan allocates 4,527 square kilometers for wildlife corridors, which are critical zones that allow wildlife to move between habitats.

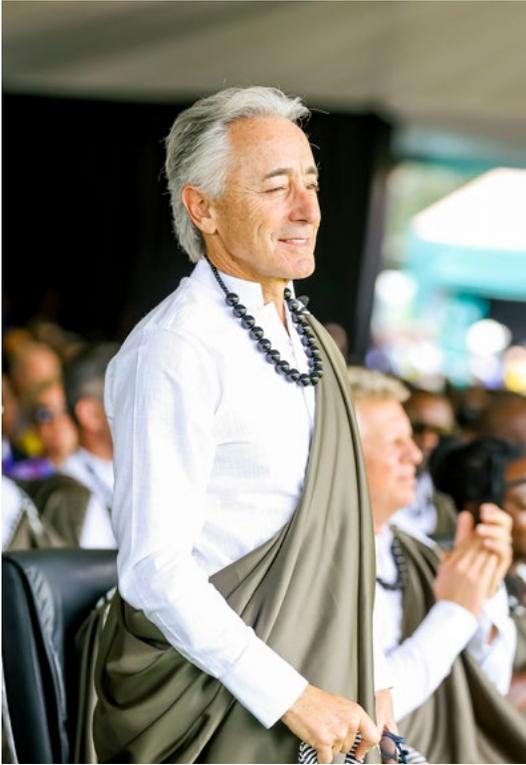
*The rainforest is like a supermarket. It provides communities with everything we need for our survival, but only if we are careful not to deplete it. The land use plan guides people in making the best decisions for themselves and for the long-term wellbeing of the forest.*

**ANTOINE TABU**  
AWF COUNTRY COORDINATOR,  
DRC/DEPUTY CHIEF OF PARTY

authorities and local communities on locally-owned, income-generating alternatives to activities that harm the rainforest and threaten wildlife.

It all begins with land use plans AWF creates in partnership with the

AWF trains local communities on sustainable agriculture and techniques that improve their yield so that forests are not converted into farmland. One outcome has been a pivot towards farming methods that restore the environment. Says farmer Georgette Nyamwero, "We were practicing slash-and-burn agriculture to sustain our livelihoods. Personally, I was doing it not only out of habit but also out of ignorance of its harmful effects on biodiversity."



LARRY GREEN AT RWANDA'S 19TH ANNUAL GORILLA NAMING CEREMONY, KWITA IZINA, ON SEPTEMBER 1, 2023. LARRY NAMED A YOUNG FEMALE GORILLA INGOBOKA, WHICH MEANS "SUPPORT." HIS MOST RECENT GIFT TO AWF SUPPORTS THE RESTORATION OF VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK TO CREATE MORE HABITAT FOR MOUNTAIN GORILLAS AND ASSIST PEOPLE LIVING NEAR THE PARK TO TRANSITION TO CLIMATE-RESILIENT, MODERN HOUSING. ©RWANDA DEVELOPMENT BOARD

# Larry Green

## INCOMING CHAIR, AWF BOARD OF TRUSTEES

I've been involved with AWF for more than ten years as a supporter, donor, and trustee.

I grew up in South Africa. As a kid, and especially as a teenager, I would go to African parks. Then, my wife Deb and I moved to California in 1992 with our children. When they were young, we would go regularly to the national parks and just fell in love with the beauty of nature right out our back door. We loved that we could get away and completely decompress.

About 15 years after we came to the US, I offered to take a group of friends to South Africa on a safari. Seventy-five people signed up. The trip was wonderful! For one, it gave Debbie and me the opportunity to connect back to Africa, to wildlife, and to our roots. But it also reminded us how amazing the people of Africa are. Anybody who's ever been to Africa will tell

you that the people are incredible. After that first friends' trip, we have continued to do many more.

Just by happenstance, around that time, I was introduced to AWF. It was one of those sorts of "meant-to-be" kind of things that I didn't really plan on. Before I knew it, I was being interviewed to join the Board of Trustees. Which I did, and the rest is history.

All these years later, the thing that motivates me the most about what AWF does is our connection to the people of Africa. There is this notion that protectors of wildlife must only be concerned about animals—above anything else—and it is just not true. The reality is that for strategies to protect animals to be successful, they must be holistic. Our strategies must include people and be a win-win for all involved.



At the Africa Climate Summit held September 4-7 in Nairobi, Kenya, African heads of state made commitments to contribute to climate and development action, also calling on the global community to contribute their fair share. AWF was there, championing biodiversity and locally-owned solutions as opportunities for economic growth and climate action.

Watch our Africa Climate Week message:

[AWF.ORG/ACS](https://www.awf.org/acs)

## LEADING FOR WILDLIFE LIVING WITH WILDLIFE CARING FOR WILDLIFE

We believe in a vision of Africa where sustainable development includes thriving wildlife and wild lands as cultural and economic assets for Africa's future generations. **Your generous gift today can help us build a resilient future for Africa where people and wildlife both thrive.**

Support by visiting:

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