



Africa Protected Areas Congress

Nairobi Kenya from 18th – 23rd November 2019

Protected Areas: Delivering benefits for nature and people

OVERVIEW

The Case for Africa Protected Areas

Africa, home of 1.2 billion people, holds more intact natural systems and wildlife diversity than any other continent on the planet. From the mountain tops, across the spectacular savannas and sprawling deserts, tropical forests, mighty rivers down the great lakes and to the immensely rich coastal and marine systems, including large expanses of mangroves and diverse coral reefs, these protected areas are among the most valuable economic and social assets in Africa, as:

- Sources of water for more than half of African cities and rural communities
- Sources of food, wood energy and medicine for millions of households
- Sources of employment and income for millions in the service economy
- Sources of natural beauty that millions of visitors come to marvel
- Sources of protection from impacts of climate change
- Sources of hydro energy that powers economies
- Source of life

“Africa presents the Planet’s last, best conservation opportunity in a severely degraded world”.

The matter with Africa's future and Africa's protected areas

Africa is entering an exciting phase in its history. Development is lifting millions out of poverty, but increasing demands for food, water and energy are pushing our natural systems to their limits. Soon more people will share our continent and all the precious resources on which we depend. These megatrends put Africans at the center of determining how most people will relate to the protected areas and natural systems that underpin our economic prosperity and well-being.

There is an unparalleled opportunity to chart a path that balances economic growth with conservation of Africa's protected areas and natural capital through strategic choices and investments driven by the best available knowledge and long-term thinking. The path that African nations pursue to meet these needs and improve human wellbeing will determine the continent's future. This future will be strongly linked to the health of Africa's protected areas because of their crucial role in preserving intact ecosystems which, in turn, provide benefits that support lives and livelihoods.

ABOUT THE CONGRESS

The Africa Protected Areas Congress (APAC) is the first ever continent-wide gathering of African leaders, citizens, and interest groups to discuss the role of protected areas in conserving nature, safeguarding Africa's iconic wildlife, delivering vital life-supporting ecosystem services, promoting sustainable development and conserving Africa's cultural heritage and traditions.

Why now?

Despite their importance in conserving nature and supporting sustainable development, Africa's protected areas are experiencing nearly all the critical challenges facing conservation today. Among them are poaching, loss of biodiversity, climate change, ecological isolation, chronic under-funding, inadequate legislation and policies, poor governance, weak institutions, inadequate human capacity, human wildlife conflict, and lack of appropriate information to aid management. In a few countries, political instability and armed conflicts continue to affect the management of protected areas. The time to address these issues is now.

The main objectives of the congress are to:

1. Promote the role of protected areas in conserving nature, supporting sustainable development and human well-being and make commitments to secure a sustainable future for Africa's natural heritage.
2. Share experiences and best practices for harmonizing conservation and human development needs and develop strategic mechanisms and partnerships for ensuring long term sustainability
3. Set a common agenda and a shared vision for Africa's protected areas and ensure they are included in the "African Union's Agenda 2063 Strategic Framework for the Socio-economic Transformation of the Continent" and fully recognized for their contribution in achieving the AU's vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in international arena
4. Develop priorities and strategies on issues of common interest and provide a strong African voice and consolidated input into the development of the Post-2020 Global Framework for Biodiversity

This inaugural congress will establish APAC as Africa's pre-eminent platform for thought leadership and engagement of various actors on issues related to protected areas, people and biodiversity.

"The overarching objective of the Africa Protected Areas Congress (APAC) is to position Africa protected and conserved areas within the broader goals of economic and community well-being and increase the understanding of their vital role in conserving biodiversity, delivering ecosystem services that underpin human welfare and livelihoods".

The APAC is specifically convened by the IUCN-World Commission on Protected Areas in partnership with government agencies and conservation organizations, with the support of development partners corporate business, communities, and the media.

THE FOCUS AND DELIVERY

Streams



Protected areas - Key issues for discussion include: Conserving terrestrial and marine protected areas; conservation outside parks – community, privately conserved areas and OECMs; international cooperation and tackling trans-boundary issues; Africa's world heritage; connecting Africa's protected areas, capacity development, sustainable financing and improving management effectiveness and governance standards.



People – A space to discuss the link between the Sustainable Development Goals and protected areas, including their values and benefits to people; engaging stakeholders including the youth, private sector and businesses, promoting nature-based solutions to resolving conflicts.



Biodiversity – Discuss approaches to conserving Africa's fauna and flora, combating poaching and illegal wildlife trade; Africa's ecological futures; impact of climate change; ecological restoration, wildlife-friendly infrastructure.

The congress will be delivered through plenaries, delegate panels, debates, round tables, storytelling, thematic streams, posters and paper presentations. Other unique activities to be undertaken in the lead-up to, during and after the congress will include: ii) An African public festival, ii) Excursions to conservation zones: iii) "The African voice": iv) Media and v) High-level panel segment.

The Invitation

Today, Africa protected areas are at a critical juncture—and each of us has a choice to make. The opportunity is unparalleled. The stakes are high. The time is now. Together, we will transform Africa's conservation agenda.

Will you join us to build a better future?

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