A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF BIODIVERSITY IN AFRICA

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Biodiversity remains the fundamental basis of Africa's development, and underpins the well-being of current and future generations. With swelling human demand upon natural resources and inadequate institutional infrastructure, however, Africa has witnessed the destruction and degradation of vast natural areas, from forests and savannas to freshwater and marine areas. Nevertheless, significant areas in Africa still remain where the habitat is relatively intact, and Africa holds much of the world's biodiversity and natural resources. However, climate change, ongoing population growth till late in the century and globalization of trade pose serious threats for the future. But there are also opportunities which we must seize, building on existing successful approaches to biodiversity conservation as well as new innovation, to take urgent and renewed action. For the great majority of Africans, biodiversity represents the only lifeline that can no longer be ignored.

By 2025, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss in Africa have been significantly slowed, people and nature are adapting to climate change, and species and ecosystem services are providing a foundation for human welfare in a society committed to sustainable economic development and equitable sharing of natural resource benefits.

The ***Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group (ABCG)*** is a partnership of US-based conservation organizations with field programs in Africa. Members include: the African Wildlife Foundation, Conservation International, the Jane Goodall Institute, The Nature Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Society, World Resources Institute, and World Wildlife Fund.

In September 2008, the ABCG, with the support of IUCN, convened a group of African biodiversity experts in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The group produced this Vision Statement, which has been widely circulated and refined since then. It is a living document that will continue to evolve as African conservationists and their allies and supporters worldwide adapt to and learn from a complex and rapidly changing environment.

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Implementing the Vision

1. Mainstream biodiversity in human well-being and development agendas

Bridge and harmonize biodiversity conservation, climate vulnerability assessments and mitigation efforts. Clarify the concept of climate adaptation. Link implementation across conventions to avoid duplication and overlap. Strength the states.

Pay attention to growing scarcity of water, especially in light of need to increase agricultural productivity. In general, greater attention must be paid to the harmonization of the Millennium Development Goals, as the implementation of goals for water and food production, as well as other goals, can if unchecked work at cross-purposes to one another. Cross-sectoral partnerships are needed.

Mitigate and adapt to climate change for biodiversity and people (including: ensuring Africa plays a significant role in climate change mitigation; keeping African greenhouse gas emissions low; linking carbon credit schemes to poverty alleviation and biodiversity, integrating science into vulnerability assessments; undertaking disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts; ensuring multi-sectoral and multi-level collaboration and partnerships; and networking to share solutions).

Harness biodiversity and ecosystem services for improved agriculture (including increasing productivity and yields and improve food security; and adopting conservation agriculture or "ecoagriculture" approaches).

Enhance greater accountability for sustaining biodiversity and ecosystem services by private sector institutions (including developing alternatives; promoting fuel efficiency and alternative energy sources; and limiting pressure on freshwater sources through more efficient uses of water).

Promote restoration/rehabilitation of degraded systems and natural resources (including research, monitoring and evaluation of montane, forest, arid, savannah, mangrove, coral, and freshwater systems) in order to provide livelihoods while increasing biodiversity.

Enhance the role of healthy ecosystems in mitigating risk and impact of emerging diseases (e.g. reducing risk of disease transfer among wildlife, people and livestock; mitigating the impacts of emerging diseases on wildlife and the environment).

2. Promote good conservation practices

Refine landscape approaches to natural resource management, using "matrix" approaches for the horizontal integration of activities. Work within the landscape to understand the relationship between factors such as emerging infectious disease, food production, and environmental change, including especially climate change, changes in land use and land cover, and invasive species.

Improve monitoring of climate and land use/land-cover change. In particular, extend the use of satellite earth observations for Africa. Identify key indicators and tools for measurement, including indicators accessible at the community level. Develop early warning systems for climate change in order to protect vulnerable communities and ecosystems.

Conserve existing biodiversity (by practicing effective management of protected areas and endangered species management, and adopting matrix approaches to conservation using broad landscape areas).

Promote sound nature tourism development (including empowerment and strengthening capacity of local communities to have greater control and ownership of ecotourism).

Demonstrate biodiversity and ecosystem services as a fundamental basis of human well-being (promoting livelihood security and reducing pressure on biodiversity through alternative economic activities).

Promote sound governance and rights-based approaches (promoting rights of local people, sharing benefits, engaging civil building capacity, ensuring stakeholder access to information and decision-making processes, empowering women, undertaking multisectoral approaches and partnerships; and promoting sound policy at all levels).

Encourage innovative conservation funding mechanisms (including promoting conservation investment and new funding mechanisms; promoting payment for environmental services).

Address the linkages between HIV/AIDS and natural resource management using coping strategies to deal with the impacts of the disease to conservation capacity, increases in natural resource use, and changes in land use.

3. Strengthen the role of social and development institutions in biodiversity conservation and human well-being

Support African innovation. Identify African strengths. Link donors and implementers, and assist in preparing research and pilot projects that are relevant to African needs and brokering them to donors.

Reach out to faith communities for dialogue and collaboration. The global urgency for a sustainable world demands multidimensional approaches and a persistent push for ideals based on innovative and pragmatic strategies. Faith-based communities comprise the largest social organizations in Africa, representing a repository of opportunities to spread the cause for sustainability in the continent. Conservation leaders should reach out to religious communities to collaborate in implementing these recommendations, with a view to enhancing the capacity for value-based sustainability decisions that link nature and human well-being.

Reach out to relief and development organizations for mitigating impacts of migration, HIV/AIDS and natural population growth (including improving access to healthcare, HIV awareness and prevention, and family planning services and information; promoting girls education and women's empowerment; and reducing the impacts of migration).

Improve environmental literacy in all sectors of society, and support it through improved information collection and exchange. Make biodiversity and climate models more accessible. Develop community centered climate mitigation and adaptation strategies supported through participatory processes. Ensure access to both information and benefits. Extend the discourse through common African modes of social organization, especially the faith communities. Provide for horizontal learning exchanges through peer-to-peer networks to address issues such as climate adaptation. Translate knowledge, build community capacity, and make shared experiences accessible to communities.

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