



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Pan-African Conference on Strengthening Information Sharing Infrastructure and Governance Frameworks to Address Human-Nature Conflicts’.**

#### **Theme: Conflicts in Wildlife Conservation and Agro-pastoralist Land-use.**

A recent report published by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), concludes that, nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history and that this loss is a direct result of human activity. The findings of the report also establish a direct threat to human well-being in all regions of the world including Africa. Increasing demands by a growing human population that puts competing demands on the natural resources of Africa brings the region to the forefront of our vulnerable co-existence with and dependence on nature for sustainable economic development pathways.

The heart of the issue lies within the challenge of finding a balance between wildlife conservation and the needs for agricultural and livestock rangelands by rural communities. Poaching and illegal wildlife trade has become rampant in Africa and bringing an increasing number of species to the verge of decline. With the rapid expansion of human settlements and the growing need for agricultural and range lands, conflicts between humans and wildlife are also increasing. Governments on certain occasions are forced to take mitigation measures to manage population of wildlife and livestock grazing practices to pacify communities living around key wildlife habitats. Furthermore, the rapid changes in land use and infrastructure development in Africa compounded by climate change are impacting traditional ways of life of pastoral communities, affecting their livelihoods and increasing the potential for conflicts,

To implement appropriate management practices and address challenges related to the need to protect wildlife while simultaneously supporting human livelihoods, there is a need for a near to real-time monitoring of human interactions with biodiversity and observe how human influence is affecting land-use patterns. This requires strengthening of information infrastructures and governance frameworks across Africa. as well as increased regional and international cooperation in technology transfer and capacity development efforts.

African Governments, UN agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations partners, scientists are meeting in Arusha, from 17-18 June 2019, for the **‘Pan-African Conference on Strengthening Information Sharing Infrastructure and Governance Frameworks to**

**Address Human-Nature Conflicts’.** The thematic focus of the conference will be on Conflicts in Wildlife Conservation and Agro-pastoralist Land-use.

The conference examines the opportunity for national and regional bodies as well as international organisations to play a pivotal role in strengthening geo-information sharing of infrastructure in addressing the concerns in wildlife conservation and agro-pastoral conflicts in Africa.

The final objective of the conference is to discuss how spatial data infrastructure can help governments in informing them about relevant interactions and interventions taking place in the African landscape within the broader theme of human-nature conflicts.

In his opening remarks, Hon. Dr. Hamisi Kigwangalla, Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, highlighted the positive impacts in terms of enhanced efforts by the Government in protecting the wildlife and dealing with illegal wildlife activities in Tanzania. This has resulted to an increased number of wildlife including the elephants. “We have witnessed a significant increase in the population of wildlife in our protected areas due to tremendous efforts put by the Government to curb poaching and illegal wildlife activities in the country.”

Dr. Kigwangalla also mentioned the achievements made so far to address the problem of human-wildlife conflicts through continuous engagement of communities especially those found around wildlife protection areas. “Government interventions to address conflicts between people and wildlife have seen significant reduction in such conflicts.”

Reiterating on the need for regional cooperation and partnership, Hon. Minister emphasized on strengthened regional collaboration and partnerships to ensure access to sustainable funding and technical support to regional and national agencies. “Partnership remains a key factor to the success of conservation of wildlife in Africa.”

Giving her remarks, Ms. Verity Nyagah, UNDP Resident Representative *a.i.* emphasized on the need for engagement of local communities and use of indigenous knowledge “As we unpack the theme of the conference on sharing information on human-nature conflict, it is important to factor the role of indigenous knowledge and practices in resolving conflicts in wildlife and natural resources conservation. She further added, “We need to ensure that we do not side-line local communities when dealing with these conflicts.”

Ms. Jenny Nunes, the Head of Sector Natural Resources of the European Union spoke about the importance of protecting people’s land rights through improved land planning and management. “While we continue to support efforts to develop and enforce laws and regulations to protect wildlife, at a time when climate change is pushing people away from their traditional land, we also need to protect livelihoods of people through promotion of land use planning, community participation and equitable redistribution of benefits from conservation activities.”

Speaking about the technology to combat wildlife crimes, Mr. Kaname Ikeda, President of The Sensing and Technology Centre (RESTEC) of Japan, pointed out on the role of research institutions such as RESTEC in developing and using advanced monitoring technologies in intercepting poaching and illegal wildlife

trade through an 'intelligence-based interception' approach to save wildlife as well the life of the forest rangers.

Emphasizing the critical role of information sharing to combat illegal wildlife activities, Mr. Edward Phiri, the director of the Lusaka Agreement Task Force, reiterated on the need for enhanced infrastructure for data sharing and exchange. "Illegal wildlife trade and trafficking is a global problem; therefore, effective cooperation is panacea but more importantly a robust data infrastructure and information exchange are integral elements in the fight against wildlife and forestry crime in Africa".

Ms. Fiesta Warinwa, the Director of Policy Engagement at the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) commented on the timeliness of the Conference and the opportunities coming along with it. "We are here today because we recognize the need for concerted efforts to protect Africa's priceless natural resources. We couldn't have chosen a more opportune time. The conference provides us with a unique opportunity to reckon with the mistakes of the past and chart a way forward towards securing a prosperous future for our continent's biodiversity"

This Regional Conference, which is being held at the Four Point by Sheraton, The Arusha Hotel is being organised by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism of the United Republic of Tanzania in Partnership with United Nations Developmental Programme (UNDP). The conference was supported by European Union, USAID, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, African Wildlife Foundation, Lusaka Agreement Task Force (LATF), NEPAD, WWF and Remote Sensing Technology Center of Japan (RESTEC).