

# The Future of Biodiversity in Africa

## Background

With swelling human demand upon natural resources and inadequate institutional infrastructure, Africa has witnessed the destruction and degradation of vast natural areas, from forests and savannahs 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.

Experts in biodiversity conservation from across Africa, convened by IUCN and the Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group in Dar es Salaam on September 18-20, 2008, articulated the following vision for the future of biodiversity in Africa, and call upon donors and partners to join them in realizing this vision.

## Vision

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

## Recommendations

### A. Reduce the impacts of stressors on biodiversity

- 1. Promote climate change mitigation, and climate adaptation for biodiversity and people** (including: ensuring Africa plays a significant role in climate change mitigation advocacy; keeping African greenhouse gas emissions low; linking carbon credit schemes to poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation, integrating climate science in vulnerability assessments; undertaking disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts; ensuring multi-sectoral and multi-level collaboration and partnerships; and networking to share solutions.
- 2. Reduce the impacts of agriculture on biodiversity (including using innovative techniques to increase productivity and yields and improve food security; and adopting conservation agriculture or "ecoagriculture" approaches)**
- 3. Reduce impacts of extractive industries and unsustainable natural resource use** (including developing alternatives; promoting fuel efficiency and alternative energy sources; and limiting pressure on freshwater sources through more efficient uses of water)

- 4. Reduce impacts of migration and natural population growth**  
(including improving access to healthcare and family planning services and information; promoting girls education and women's empowerment; and reducing the impacts of migration)

## **B. Promote good conservation practices**

- 1. Promote conservation of existing biodiversity** (by practicing effective management of protected areas and endangered species management, and adopting matrix approaches to conservation using broad landscape areas)
- 2. 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.
- 3. Promote sound nature tourism development**
- 4. Develop alternative livelihoods** (promoting livelihood security and reducing pressure on biodiversity through alternative economic activities)
- 5. Reduce risk and impact of emerging diseases** (e.g. reducing risk of disease transfer among wildlife, people and livestock, especially through illegal bushmeat trade; mitigating the impacts of emerging diseases on wildlife and the environment)
- 6. Promote sound governance** (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)
- 7. Promote increased understanding and awareness of biodiversity and environmental issues** (through greater scientific research, improved communication of scientific results and issues, and enhanced awareness raising)
- 8. Promote conservation funding mechanisms** (including promoting conservation investment and new funding mechanisms; promoting payment for environmental services)

## **C. Reach out to faith communities for dialogue and collaboration**

1. 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.