



Transfrontier Conservation Areas

SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Landmark SADC TFCA Network meeting builds momentum for Transfrontier conservation in Southern Africa

MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE, 21 November 2023 – The Annual Meeting of the SADC Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) Network convened last week in Maputo, Mozambique, marking monumental progress for transfrontier conservation efforts over the past 23 years across Southern Africa.

The four-day gathering brought together over 100 participants from Government, NGOs, Local communities, Private Sector, Academia and Development partners.

It provided extensive opportunities for collaboration and sharing best practices, tools and innovative solutions for sustainably managing TFCA landscapes spanning over 950 million hectares across the region.

Steve Collins, SADC TFCA Network Coordinator, said: “It was incredibly encouraging to see the enthusiasm and passion for TFCAs amongst all the participants from so many different countries and sectors. Though we each play varied roles, our shared dedication to advancing transfrontier conservation unifies us.”

The Government of Mozambique hosted this milestone event, including a field visit to Maputo National Park, part of the Lubombo Transfrontier Conservation Area connecting Mozambique, Eswatini and South Africa and the first and only marine TFCA on the continent.

Delegates experienced first-hand the park’s dramatic transformation into a beacon of wildlife rehabilitation and protection having overcome the scars of a 16-year civil war which had resulted in the depletion of biodiversity. Park officials also highlighted Maputo National Park’s vast potential for generating sustainable financing and socio-economic benefits for local communities through the continued growth of nature-based tourism.

Setting the stage for the dialogue, **Ndapanda Kanime**, Senior Programme Officer-Natural Resources and Wildlife from the SADC Secretariat, presented the newly approved 2023-2033 TFCA Programme to establish clear goals and strategic direction for the next decade.



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With an affirmed vision in place, participants could focus discussions on practical implementation, forging collaborative partnerships and overcoming pressing challenges across the TFCA landscapes.

Dedicated workstreams discussed issues such as climate change adaptation, harmonising land-use and oceans management, improving rural community livelihoods through wildlife conservation, mitigating escalating human-wildlife conflicts across the region, and building human capital through training, research and knowledge exchange.

“The diversity of players at the table helped us unpack complex topics from multiple perspectives and identify collective solutions,” explained Collins. “We realise these challenges can’t be solved in isolation.”

A major session explored sustainable financing approaches like carbon markets, debt-for-nature swaps and conservation trust funds that can reduce TFCAs’ dependence on external donor funding. “It was encouraging to see Member States really value TFCAs and proactively investigate smart, diversified financing models,” said Collins.

The meeting was supported by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through its technical cooperation (GIZ) and financial cooperation (KfW), USAID Southern Africa, IUCN and MozBio. Key international partners like the EU and IUCN updated participants on major additional TFCA support programmes unfolding across the region. This includes the German government funded TFCA Financing Facility whose second call for grants just closed. The SADC Secretariat reported steady progress approving key strategies and guidelines to formally establish and elevate TFCAs from early conceptual stages to fully operationalised. During a reviewing process of the SADC TFCA Programme, Member States amended the TFCA listing criteria which resulted in a reduction of officially recognised TFCA from 18 to 12 with another two to three likely to become recognised in 2024.

Each of the 12 formally recognised SADC TFCAs provided updates on key achievements, activities and progress between October 2022 and October 2023. For example, the Iona-Skeleton Coast Transfrontier Park advanced marketing efforts including its marine component, while the Kavango Zambezi (KAZA) TFCA conducted its first cross-border elephant survey, with an estimated elephant population of 227,900 across the Partner States of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park coordinated patrols, maintained its fence, and approved standard operating procedures for managing carnivores and flights within the park. These updates highlighted diverse conservation, development and community engagement accomplishments across the TFCAs over the past year.



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The SADC Secretariat, Boundless Southern Africa, and the GIZ Climate-Resilient and Natural Resource Management (C-NRM) project provided updates on implementation of the SADC Tourism Programme 2020-2030. Key activities include progress on the SADC “Univisa” project to facilitate regional travel, border efficiency assessments, and a benchmark study of successful air access policies, practices and infrastructure.

Marketing efforts by Boundless Southern Africa encompassed travel trade shows, press trips, social media campaigns, and itinerary development to showcase TFCAs. The programme, as was highlighted during the event, aims to strengthen regional integration, develop the tourism economy, upgrade border posts, build capacity, and promote TFCAs as world-class ecotourism destinations.

Looking ahead to the next meeting planned for late 2024, Collins concluded: “I sincerely hope that by then, we’ve operationalised more user-friendly communications platforms, formally established two to three more TFCAs, and implemented sustainable rural development and wildlife conservation projects across these landscapes. If so, we’ll have made 2023 a truly landmark year for advancing transfrontier conservation in Southern Africa.”

Ends

About the SADC TFCA Network

The SADC TFCA Network was established ten years ago in 2013 by the SADC Secretariat and its 16 Member States to foster coordination and knowledge exchange amongst the many partners involved in developing Transfrontier Conservation Areas across the region. The Network today comprises over 600 members from government, communities, NGOs, academics and development partners active in the 12 formally recognised TFCAs covering over 950,000 km² of open ecological systems across Southern Africa.

For more information, visit www.tfcportal.org

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