



REPORT

Namibia Conservation Parliamentary Caucus (NACOPAC)



**Engagement At the
Global Legislative Summit on National Parks and Protected Areas:
*Threats and Opportunities, and the importance of good natural resource
governance to sustainable national development***

**Mt. Venon Conservation International Conservation Caucus Summit &
U.S. Congressional International Conservation Gala**

WASHINGTON DC

24th – 25th September 2018

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Cover Photo: *Delegations and officials of ICCF took a group photo at Capitol Hill.*

1. Introduction and Background

The International Conservation Caucus Foundation (ICCF), USA, founded in the year 2000, recognized that good governance is a significant yet under stressed factor in sustainable conservation and therefore took on the initiative to meet the need by building political will for international conservation. ICCF supports the leadership of the US congress in international conservation (International Conservation Caucus – ICC) and brings together major conservation NGOs and corporate partners to support educational programmes for the ICC. This partnership has grown to include more than 50 corporations and NGOs. The ICCF group was created purposely to replicate this model worldwide. ICCF is building and supporting international parliamentary conservation caucuses and working with a wide network of partners to find innovative solutions to complex conservation challenges. The ICCF Group brings together governments, businesses and NGOs to inspire conservation action and create innovative solutions.

ICCF supports the leadership of the bipartisan International Conservation Caucus in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives – currently comprised of more than one-third of Congress – by networking with policymakers on issues of international conservation.

ICCF working pathways include the following:

- Inspires and empowers policymakers to develop good policies and legislation;
- Strengthens judicial capacity to enforce laws;
- Showcases successful conservation models;
- Facilitates effective partnerships between the public and private sectors; and,
- Provides on-the-ground conservation expertise through its International Conservation Corps.

ICCF invited the Namibia Conservation Parliamentary Caucus (NACOPAC) to participate in a conservation summit at George Washington’s historic Mt. Vernon Conservation Estate, in Washington DC and also to attend a US Congressional Gala Dinner. This engagement took place 24th and 25th September 2018. Other legislatures who attended the Summit and Gala Dinner included Colombia, Botswana, Gabon, Kenya, Mexico, Malawi, Mozambique, Peru, and Zambia.

Aspects of keen interest to Namibian Conservation Parliamentary Caucus (NACOPAC) included:

- Wildlife management
- Illegal fishing
- Freshwater security, water quality, sanitation, groundwater management and sustainable use
- Sustainable/Green mining operations

Aspects of keen interest to the Botswana Conservation Parliamentary Caucus (BOCOPAC) included:

- Ecotourism development
- Environmental crime
- Community-based conservation

Aspects of keen interest to Colombian Conservation Caucus (CCC) included:

- National parks
- Illegal fishing
- Water quality, sanitation, groundwater management and sustainable use

Aspects of keen interest to Colombian Oceans Caucus (COC) included:

- Fisheries management
- Ecotourism

Aspects of keen interest to the Gabonese Parliamentary Conservation Caucus (CPGC) included:

- Wildlife trafficking
- Illegal logging
- Human-wildlife conflict

Aspects of keen interest to the Parliamentary Conservation Caucus - Kenya (PCC - K) included:

- Wildlife trafficking
- Illegal logging
- Pollution

Aspects of keen interest to the Malawi Parliamentary Conservation Caucus (MPCC) included:

- Wildlife trafficking
- Deforestation
- Sustainable Mining

Aspects of keen interest to the Mexican Conservation Parliamentary Group (GPCM) included:

- Sustainable forestry
- Protected Areas management
- Biodiversity (sustainable management and utilisation)

Aspects of keen interest to Mozambique Parliamentary Forum on Conservation (MPFC):

- Wildlife trafficking
- Illegal logging
- Fisheries management

Aspects of keen interest to the Peruvian Conservation Caucus (CCP) included:

- Water safety and conservation and quality portable water,
- Illegal mining
- Protected Areas

Aspects of keen interest to the Zambian Parliamentary Conservation Caucus (ZPCC) included:

- Biodiversity and wetlands
- Wildlife and protected areas
- Forestry

The delegation from NACOPAC included Hon. Lukas Sinimbo Muha, MP, of the National Council, who was nominated by Hon. Bernard Songa Sibalatani, MP, Vice-Chairperson of

National Council and Co-Chair of NACOPAC, to represent him. Hon. Bernadette Jagger, MP, Chairperson of NACOPAC could not make it to the meeting and therefore she delegated Job Nelson Kisaka, Deputy Director in the Office of the Speaker of the National Assembly and Coordinator of NACOPAC, to accompany Hon. Muha.

His Excellency, Dr. Gottfried Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia was invited in his official capacity to attend the US Congressional dinner, given the challenges that Namibia among other countries is facing in relation to rhino and elephant poaching, ocean conservation, climate change and model successes made in community conservation. He however did not make it but delegated Hon. Pohamba Shifeta, Minister of Environment and Tourism, to represent him at the Gala Dinner who also unfortunately did not make it to the Gala Dinner although he visited Washington DC at the time.

Notably, this Conservation Dinner followed previous annual ICCF-US Congressional Gala Dinners and it was hosted after the creation of the Giant's Club.

The Giants Club is an initiative of the international conservation organisation Space for Giants that unites the leaders of African elephant-range states with international financiers, conservationists and celebrities.

Together, these individuals combine their exceptional political muscle, extensive financial resources, pioneering scientific expertise, and global reach and influence to fulfil the Club's goal of effectively protecting half of Africa's elephants by 2020.

In October 2018, President Masisi of Botswana joined President Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon, President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, to head the Giants Club. Botswana's Former President Ian Khama acts as President Emeritus.

Together their nations are home to more than half of Africa's 415,000 remaining elephants. Botswana alone hosts between 130,000 and 150,000 elephants, mostly centred on the Okavango Delta in its north. The Giants Club is a unique forum to support efforts, bringing as it does the support and influence of a diverse society of people dedicated to accelerating Africa's efforts to protect its natural heritage, for Africa, and for the planet.

The Giants Club Declaration sets in writing the support that the Club will offer its Presidents as they commit their governments to significant international elephant protection mechanisms. There is a need to step up efforts to work to reduce the problem of human-elephant conflict in Africa, promote domestic and international investment in responsible conservation and tourism enterprises to create new revenue from wildlife for the benefit of Africa's citizens, and combat the illegal wildlife trade in the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area among other parts of Africa by supporting initiatives and programmes that build capacity along the criminal trial process.

The Giants Club membership is dedicated to supporting its Presidents to achieve their domestic conservation agendas, funding Space for Giants to give technical guidance or to deliver active conservation programmes.

Examples of Giants Club projects already underway include strengthening judicial systems in Botswana, Uganda, and Kenya to enhance wildlife crime investigations, prosecutions, and

convictions; constructing electrified fences to keep elephants away from farmers' fields and reduce human-elephant conflict in Gabon, Kenya, and Uganda; and launching international conservation investment mechanisms to bring new finance to protected area networks, in Uganda and Gabon.

It is therefore hoped that during one of such conservation dinners, the President of the Republic of Namibia could get an opportunity to endorse the forum and share views on such matters of mutual interest including but not limited to the aspect of benefits accrued from trophy hunting as one of the responsible conservation strategies in Namibia.

2. Engagements on 24th September 2018

- Session 1 looked at the role of legislators in addressing natural resource management challenges while session 2 considered how to implement best practices on the ground.
- The Summit greatly appreciated Namibia's recent efforts in strengthening the Wildlife protection law.



Hon. Lukas Muha of NACOPAC presenting at the Legislative Summit

- Honourable Members of Parliament and Conservation Caucus leaders from Africa and Latin America convened and contributed to the discussion. They also had meetings with U.S. Congressional leaders, multi-lateral and U.S. government agencies, and private-sector, non-profit, and conservation leaders.
- Furthermore, because of Namibia's success story with community conservation and lucrative private game ranching, an interest was particularly drawn to wildlife crimes syndicates and corruption even involving the would-be conservation officers across the world. The discussion zeroed in on the rate of wildlife crime in countries where citizens

are permitted to ranch game vis-à-vis countries where wildlife is exclusively the property of the state.

- The summit noted that working on domestic law in the international perspective enabled investigation and prosecution of transboundary crimes and criminal syndicates. In this case, regional blocs are very important as well as modal laws, in addition to the training of regional prosecutors together.
- The summit discussed the challenge of funding parliamentary conservation caucuses vis-à-vis other parliamentary committees. What was keenly noted here were the politics involved in Parliamentary standing committees and their composition vis-à-vis the fact that caucuses are across party lines and voluntary.
- The Mexican Parliament indicated that they introduced the Honey Bee Day or Fruit Bat Day. The discussion was held around how to observe such days nationally and their symbolic nature to Parliament's perception of conservation and biodiversity conservation in the face of climate change.
- Botswana discussed the culling and translocating of problem animals so as to manage human-wildlife conflict. This was in specific reference to elephants. The summit was also drawn to the attention of using honey bee colonies as an effective live fence buffer against elephants that would try to maraud into human settlements.
- The summit discussed the danger caused by plastics in the environment.
- The US team noted that habitat protection was key to safeguard birds, especially migratory birds.
- Namibia noted that rhino poaching is an alien vice that has recently crept up in the country like it has in other African countries.

3. The Declaration Signed at Mt. Venon Estate

NACOPAC of Namibia, together with other parliamentary caucuses of Colombia, Botswana, Gabon, Kenya, Malawi, Mexico, Mozambique, Peru and Zambia, and members of the ICCF group and Congress men and Women endorsed the Mount Venon Declaration on Wildlife Conservation (*see attached in Appendix I*).



Parliamentary delegations endorsed the Declaration at Mt. Venon Conservation Estate

4. Engagements on 25th September 2018

- The delegations were hosted at a Congressional International Conservation Gala in Washington, D.C. on the evening of Tuesday, September 25, 2018. The Gala was held at the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium to celebrate American and Global Leadership in International Conservation.



Official Opening of the Congressional International Conservation Gala

- The keynote speech at the U.S. Congressional International Conservation Gala was delivered by H.E. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana.



H.E. President Masisi of Botswana giving the keynote speech at the Gala Dinner

Over and above all the efforts being undertaken in conservation, technology was appreciated as being very effective in conservation and fighting poaching. Also the use of specially trained dogs was appreciated as an effective tool in combating poaching.

5. Engagements on 26th September 2018

The delegations were hosted to meetings at the headquarters of the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

- A Meeting was held with officials of GEF;
- Meetings were also held with officials of US Government Agencies including the Department of State (Conservation and Water), United States Department of Agriculture (Forest Service) and USAID;
- Meetings was also held with World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Wild Foundation, UN Environment (former UNEP) as well as the World Bank Group (Environment and Natural Resources Division)



Meetings with US State and Agencies Officials as well as Global Environment Facility (GEF) Officials at the Headquarters of the GEF

6. Engagements on 27th September 2018

The delegations were hosted to brief meeting at Capitol Hill with US Congresswoman Hon. Karen Bass, who is a Member of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee, ranking on Africa, Foreign Affairs, Foster care of children, Criminal Justice and Human Rights. She is also a Member of the Congressional Black Caucus.

During the engagement, Hon. Karen Bass indicated to the meeting that she is passionate about conservation issues and that she is keen on SADC because she was involved with southern Africa liberation movements.

At the end of the meeting, the forum created a Caucus Leadership WhatsApp group on which members regularly on a more-or-less daily basis, exchange opinions on conservation matters across the globe.



The meeting at Capitol Hill with US Congresswoman Hon. Karen Bass

7. Key Recommendations from/by the Summit:

- 1) The Parliamentary Conservation caucuses within the regions and continents meet before proceeding to the international annual meeting. For instance, Parliaments within SADC that have Parliamentary Conservation Caucuses should engage, share experiences, benchmark and seek solutions to shared problems like rhino and elephant poaching as well as pollution and illegal, unregulated overfishing on the seas. In this way, regional blocs will get grounded in the conservation effort. An idea was muted to host a '*SADC Parliamentary Conservation Caucuses Regional Summit Against Wildlife Crime*'.
- 2) Hon. Muha of NACOPAC recommended the aspect of value addition to wildlife products, within their communities of origin before they are moved elsewhere. This could bring in appreciable value to the source as well as environmental appreciation.
- 3) NACOPAC also recommended that since wildlife criminal kingpins have a tendency to jump bail, such should be flagged by Interpol with the help of national bureaus and US State Department. In this way, they will have no country to hide in to continue their illicit trade in contraband wildlife products. The US State Department expressed great desire to network with Interpol and national bureaus on this matter, especially given the link between wildlife crime, terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering and human trafficking.

- 4) The summit recommended that the coalition of parliamentary conservation caucuses together with ICCF pay particular attention to wildlife governance along the line of the issue of ownership. This was in relation to the rate of wildlife crimes in countries where game ranching is permissible vis-à-vis countries where wildlife is an exclusive property of the state.
- 5) It was also strongly recommended that countries neighbouring oceans/seas but are not yet keen on ocean conservation, step up efforts in networking with the Ocean Conservation Foundation as the other arm of the International Conservation Caucus Foundation. It was noted that vessels involved in illicit operations on international waters often dock in national waters as an emergency measure in case they face mechanical breakdowns at sea and then they are abandoned thus because technical waste and sources of oil spills to countries that offer them humanitarian asylum. A strong desire was also expressed to monitor operations on seas because of the strong link between illicit unregulated fishing operations on international waters with human trafficking, sex trade, drug trafficking, arms trafficking, piracy, poaching, terrorism and money laundering.
- 6) Marine Conservation Caucuses were particularly urged to pay keen attention to:
 - i) Pollution on seas and at the coast;
 - ii) Marine mineral mining, which could undermine fish breeding grounds and destroy or compromise the safety of aquatic biodiversity;
 - iii) Methods and regulations in the country and regionally, which could sustainably guide marine resource harvesting in our various countries. For example, Namibia has sea weed could sustainably be harvested for various reasons ranging from food to livestock feed and medicinal uses. Yet to date, nothing concrete has been put in place on this matter. Sea weed can even be successfully farmed in the territorial section of the ocean.
- 7) The summit recommended that in order to facilitate the smooth prosecution of transboundary wildlife crimes and criminal syndicates, domestic law should be crafted in the international perspective and regional blocs should create modal laws, in addition to the collective training of regional prosecutors together.
- 8) The summit also recommended that Parliamentary Conservation Caucuses should get involved in more than just wildlife conservation. For instance, since legislatures are closet to citizens of any given country and their roles are irreplaceable in managing natural resources of the country and in appealing to masses for environmental appreciation. The USAID especially emphasized this aspect.

- 9) The Mexican Parliamentary Conservation Caucus requested to be invited soonest, to Namibia so that it could learn from Namibia and benchmark on matters relating to Community Conservancies as well as reforestation and constructing water catchments as a deterrent to negative externalities of climate change.
- 10) Habitat protection should be ensured globally so as to protect migratory birds, especially during this difficult time of climate change.
- 11) Nations across the globe should continue to seek ways to curb pollution from plastics. Radical measures should be sought by borrowing a leaf from measures undertaken by Rwanda among other countries globally, to prevent and curb plastic waste.
- 12) For countries heavily reliant on groundwater sources for the survival of biodiversity including the humankind and yet reliant on the mineral economy for instance Namibia, should ensure that they engage in sustainable green mining for the safety of the current and future generations.



The NACOPAC delegation paid a courtesy call on the Namibian Embassy in Washington DC

Signed

11/11/2019

Hon. Lukas Muha

NACOPAC Committee Member

Appendix I 2018 Declaration of Mt. Vernon on Conservation

DECLARATION OF MT. VERNON

First World Summit of Legislative Conservation Caucuses

September 24, 2018

We, the legislators members of the Conservation Caucuses of Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Gabon, Zambia, Botswana, Namibia, Mexico, Peru, Colombia, are meeting at the historic home of George Washington on September 24, 2018 to celebrate the First World Summit of Legislative Conservation Caucuses, with the support of leaders of the International Conservation Caucus (ICC) of the United States Congress and the International Conservation Caucus Foundation (ICCF) that acts as an informal secretariat for ICC leaders. We have exchanged experiences regarding the most important issues in our countries on nature conservation, biodiversity, wildlife trafficking, natural parks and protected areas, community management, adaptation and mitigation to climate change, and the importance of good management of natural resources to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of each of our countries.

At the conclusion of the summit dialogue, we recognize that:

Good management of our natural resources is of vital importance for sustainable development, for long-term economic growth and for improving the quality of life of our present and future generations.

National parks and protected natural areas, both terrestrial and marine, are one of the essential bases for the conservation of nature and natural resources, promoting sustainable development thanks to the ecosystem services that they provide and the great potential they have to promote the economic and social development of the communities that inhabit them. It is imperative to protect these areas and effectively manage their development activities, to promote conservation landscapes, and ensure their long-term financial sustainability through innovative financing strategies.

Biodiversity is a global asset that provides and ensures essential services for the survival of humanity. Therefore, as legislators we pledge to promote its conservation and sustainable use. Even as our countries increasingly support its protection and conservation, we will continue to promote the generation of more ambitious commitments and innovation in the strategies to advance conservation and sustainable use, including financial ones, such as a better allocation of public funds, ecological “green” taxes and greater investments in biodiversity through public-private alliances.

The full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities is of vital importance to promote sustainable development and as a strategy for the conservation of biological resources globally. This participation of the communities in productive processes and

activities that involve the use of their natural and biological resources must be guaranteed and, together with the support of all the actors involved, must reflect development models that promote careful and sustainable use of natural capital. Recognition of the rights of the communities over their territories and the preservation of their traditional knowledge are fundamental elements to guarantee the conservation of the ecosystems and to fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals.

Illegal wildlife trafficking is a threat to global biodiversity, the sustainability of ecosystems and national security, which is why it is of the utmost importance to propose measures that contribute to the reduction of this illegal practice, including the protection of species listed in the Appendices I and II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora - CITES-.

We recognize that the year 2020 represents a unique window of opportunity to stop and reverse the loss of biodiversity, address climate change and ensure sustainable development. From our Congresses we are committed to developing a legal framework that take this year as a turning point to strengthen the country's commitments in the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the 2030 Agenda, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Our National Parliaments as direct representatives of the population, committed to the wellbeing of present and future generations, have a fundamental role in creating the national political will to manage and conserve in a sustainable way the natural resources of our countries and the world.

We celebrate this South-South dialogue. We will continue promoting multi-sectoral collaboration and joining efforts to extend the model of Conservation Caucuses worldwide, promoting the protection and conservation of nature in our respective countries and throughout the world.

We commit ourselves to work together within the legislative arena to advance the fulfillment of our conservation objectives and Sustainable Development Goals, by adopting necessary changes in national laws and policies and promoting a better use of our resources.

In recognition of this Summit, the participating Congressmen, members of the Conservation Caucuses, herein affix their names:

Appendix II Speakers and Presenters for the Engagement on 24th September 2018

SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS AT THE ENGAGEMENT ON 24TH SEPTEMBER 2018

Moderators

Hon. Rick Lazio, M.C. (Ret.)

- *Board of Governors, The ICCF Group*

Hon. John Tanner, M.C. (Ret.)

- *Chairman, International Conservation Caucus Foundation*

Panel of Experts

Dr. Sue Lieberman

- *Vice President – International Policy, Wildlife Conservation Society*

Mr. Kaddu Sebunya

- *President, Africa Wildlife Foundation*

Peter Cressy, Ed.D, RADM (Ret.)

- *Director, Executive Leadership Programs, Mount Vernon Leadership Institute*

Hon. Mark Green

- *Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development*

Dr. Andrés Avila Akerberg

- *Executive Director, Política y Legislación Ambiental (POLEA)*

Shamini Jayanathan

- *Director of Wildlife Prosecution, Space for Giants*

Mathew Jeffery

- *Program Director – International Alliances Program, Audubon*

Nik Sekhran

- *Chief Conservation Officer, World Wildlife Fund*

Professor Lee White, C.B.E.

- *Managing Director, Agence National des Parcs Nationaux du Gabon*