

RESULTS OF THE AFRICA PROTECTED AREAS CONGRESS APAC ORGANIZED IN RWANDA

The first [IUCN Africa Protected Areas Congress](#) (APAC) which took place in Kigali, Rwanda, from 18 to 23 July 2022 closed the works recording important results in its goal of highlighting the role of protected areas in conserving nature, safeguarding iconic wildlife, supporting ecosystem services, and promoting sustainable development while conserving Africa's cultural heritage and traditions.



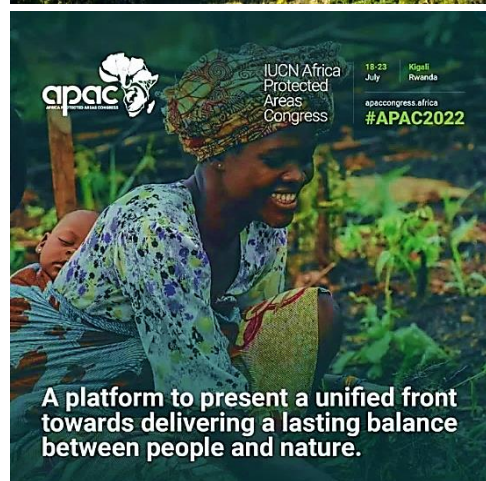
The Congress was jointly organized by the Government of Rwanda, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the African Wildlife Foundation.

More than 2400 participants from 53 African and 27 other countries participated in the event, representing governments, African regional bodies, NGOs, national and international experts and organizations, local communities, Indigenous Peoples, academia, development partners and the private sector, youth groups, citizens and protected area managers.

With this extraordinary number of attendees from African countries, the Congress highlighted the key role ensured by local populations in conserving the natural resources of protected areas. Through the active contribution of the various actors for the proposed themes, the Congress agreed a [Call to Action](#) which identifies the priorities for the future.

Recognizing the importance of developing the great potentials of protected areas in conserving biodiversity and delivering the ecosystem services that underpin human welfare and livelihoods, through a program that included [plenary and thematic sessions](#), the Congress provided a valuable space to share the views of the different participants. The main topics of discussion included: the importance of effective governance and management of protected and conserved areas; the need to recognize, elevate and uphold the rights, roles and responsibilities of Indigenous Peoples, local communities and young people; and the need to value and integrate traditional knowledge and promote the value and role of protected and conserved areas to achieve both environmental and social outcomes.

The event was an opportunity to recognize Africa's rich and unique biodiversity heritage and the diversity of its peoples. [Currently, 19% of Africa's land and 17% of the seas around Africa are covered by protected and conserved areas.](#) These areas contribute to safeguarding Africa's natural capital and cultural heritage and, when effectively governed and managed, can



support economic and social development. The diverse landscapes support an extraordinary range of habitats and a wealth of species diversity. Africa's grasslands, mountains, forests, wetlands and other ecosystems are the foundation for agriculture, tourism and the wider economy. In addition, at present 48 of the 252 natural and mixed natural-cultural sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List are in Africa, demonstrating its rich heritage and legacy.

The event was the first ever continent-wide gathering of African leaders, citizens and interest groups to discuss the role of protected areas in conserving nature. In particular, representatives of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, their organizations and networks from more than 40 African countries have actively participated in the event, making a [final joint Declaration](#). In this document, recognizing the progress made by governments and development partners in advancing the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), they underline that only 6% of protected areas registered across Africa are under the ownership or governance of Indigenous Peoples or Local Communities and signals the need to make greater efforts to recognize and respect the customary collective tenure rights. Another important priority given is to make available direct funding mechanisms to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities-led grassroots organizations, that can be accessible, transparent, and accountable and taking into consideration IPLC in kind contribution, as for example funds for community governance and institutions development, safeguarding biodiversity, livelihoods etc. The declaration also invites to replace the concept and practice of 'protected areas' with "conservation" to promote the people, land, and nature relationship and ensure prioritization of funding for community-based conservation efforts led by IPLCs and their organizations.

The Congress welcomed the recommendations made by representatives of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and their commitments towards implementation among the priorities jointly agreed by the participants in the [Call to Action](#). The Call, for example, tasks the organizing partners to undertake the development of a permanent *African Protected and Conserved Areas Forum*, including all the actors involved in the Congress, to guide the implementation and monitoring of APAC 2022 commitments also through smaller regional meetings, thus allowing the maximum participation of all the actors involved.

Many successful experiences underway in various African countries have demonstrated the great results that can be achieved when local communities are protagonists in the management of the biodiversity conservation practices in Parks areas. The initiatives that emerged from the Congress will be able to expand their impact by bringing great benefits to the environment and new perspectives of sustainable economic development for all, also involving the younger generations.

To know more

[APAC in apacongress.africa website](http://apacongress.africa)

[APAC Call-to-Action in apacongress.africa](http://apacongress.africa)



[APAC IPLCs Kigali Declaration in forestpeoples.org](https://forestpeoples.org)

[APAC-Programme in apacongress.africa](https://apacongress.africa)

[APAC2022-Congress-Handbook](#)

[APAC Congress in African Wildlife Foundation website](#)

[The Africa Protected Areas Congress in UNEP WCMC](#)

[First IUCN Africa Protected Area Congress in unesco.org](https://unesco.org)

[APAC Congress in africabrief.substack.com](https://africabrief.substack.com)

[Africa Protected Areas Congress in Conservation Corridor website](#)

[Africa Protected Areas Congress in Resource Africa website](#)

[APAC Congress in Rwanda Ministry of Environment website](#)

[Article in UNEP-WCMC website](#)

[UNEP Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas Registry](#)

