

## LAUNCH OF THE FIRST EVER AFRICA PROTECTED AREAS CONGRESS

This year's Valentine day was marked on Thursday with special African flavour that saw the launch of the first-ever Africa Protected Areas Congress (APAC) at Nairobi National Park's historic Ivory Burning Site. Kenya's Principal Secretary - State Department of Tourism and Wildlife Margaret Mwakima (PhD) accompanied by Dr. John Waithaka the Congress Director and Regional Chair, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) presided over the launch.

Dubbed *for the love of nature*, the APAC 2019 launch sought to position Africa's protected areas within the goals of economic and community well being as well as seek commitment from African governments to integrate protected areas in the African Union's agenda 2063 strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the entire continent.

"Today we launch the Africa Protected Areas Congress (APAC), the first ever continent-wide gathering of African leaders, citizens, and interest groups to discuss the role of protected areas in conserving nature and promoting sustainable development. This landmark forum organized by the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) provides us with a platform for holding honest discussions on the future we want for our protected areas and seek solutions to the persistent and emerging problems" said Tourism and Wildlife Principal Secretary, Dr. Margaret Mwakima.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were only a handful of protected areas approximately 200,000 which cover around 14.6% of the world's land and around 2.8% of the oceans. As the world continues to develop, pressure is intensified on the ecosystems and natural resources thus the need to protect them.<sup>1</sup>

"We need to come to a common understanding that human beings can live with animals and take care of each other to save biodiversity. As a continent, we can offer resilience, adaptability and tackle climate change to protect our biodiversity," added Dr. Mwakima.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.worldparkscongress.org/wpc/about/what\\_are\\_protected\\_areas](https://www.worldparkscongress.org/wpc/about/what_are_protected_areas)

Kenyatta International Convention Center  
**18-23 Nov 2019**  
 Nairobi, Kenya

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Protected areas safeguard nature and cultural resources, improve livelihoods and drive sustainable development. We must work together to preserve them. The launch steered awareness and visibility of the upcoming conference to be held on **18<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> November this year**. The inaugural APAC Journalists' Award was also launched to provide incentives for African journalists and media houses to be champions of conservation and drive more effort toward reporting on biodiversity in Africa, winners of the inaugural award will be announced, awarded during the November conference, applications are already open for Journalists.

The November congress is expected to attract more than 2,000 delegates who will deliberate on homegrown ways to secure a sustainable future for Africa's protected areas, people and biodiversity while showcasing homegrown examples of practical, innovative, sustainable and replicable solutions that harmonize conservation and sustainable human development.

The collective efforts from the African leaders are expected to contribute to African Union's Agenda 2063 of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in international arena".

ENDS.

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*Hash tags:* #fortheloveofnature, #loveinthewild, #APAC2019

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