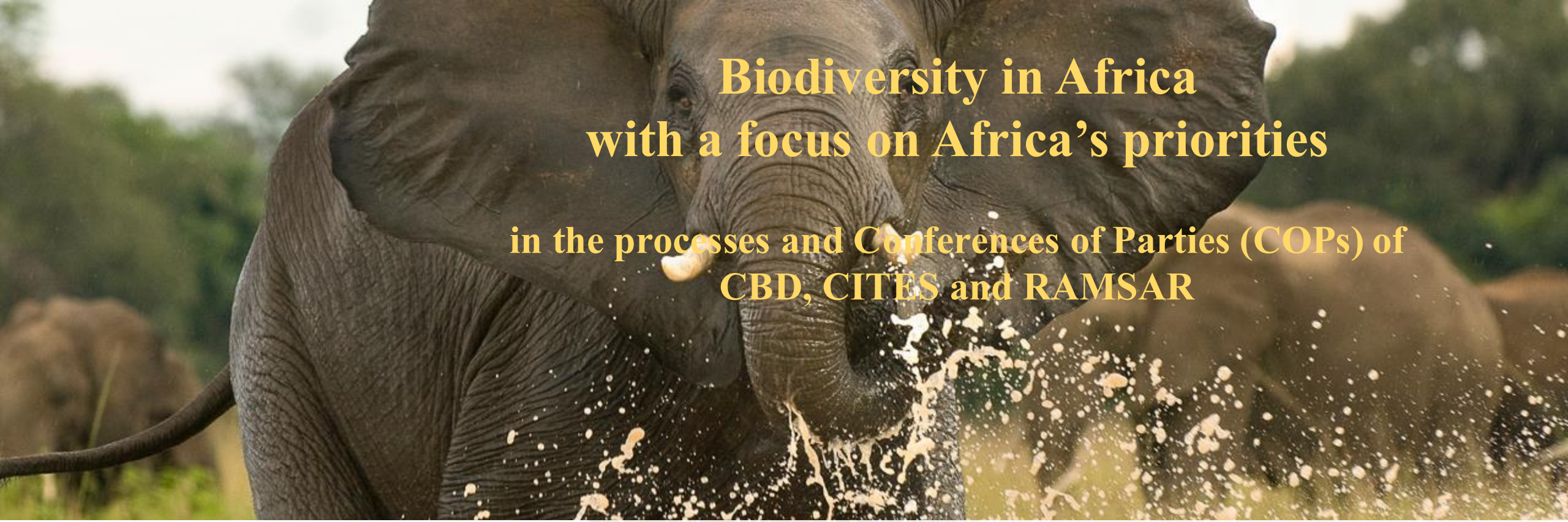


Biodiversity in Africa with a focus on Africa's priorities

in the processes and Conferences of Parties (COPs) of CBD, CITES and RAMSAR

AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

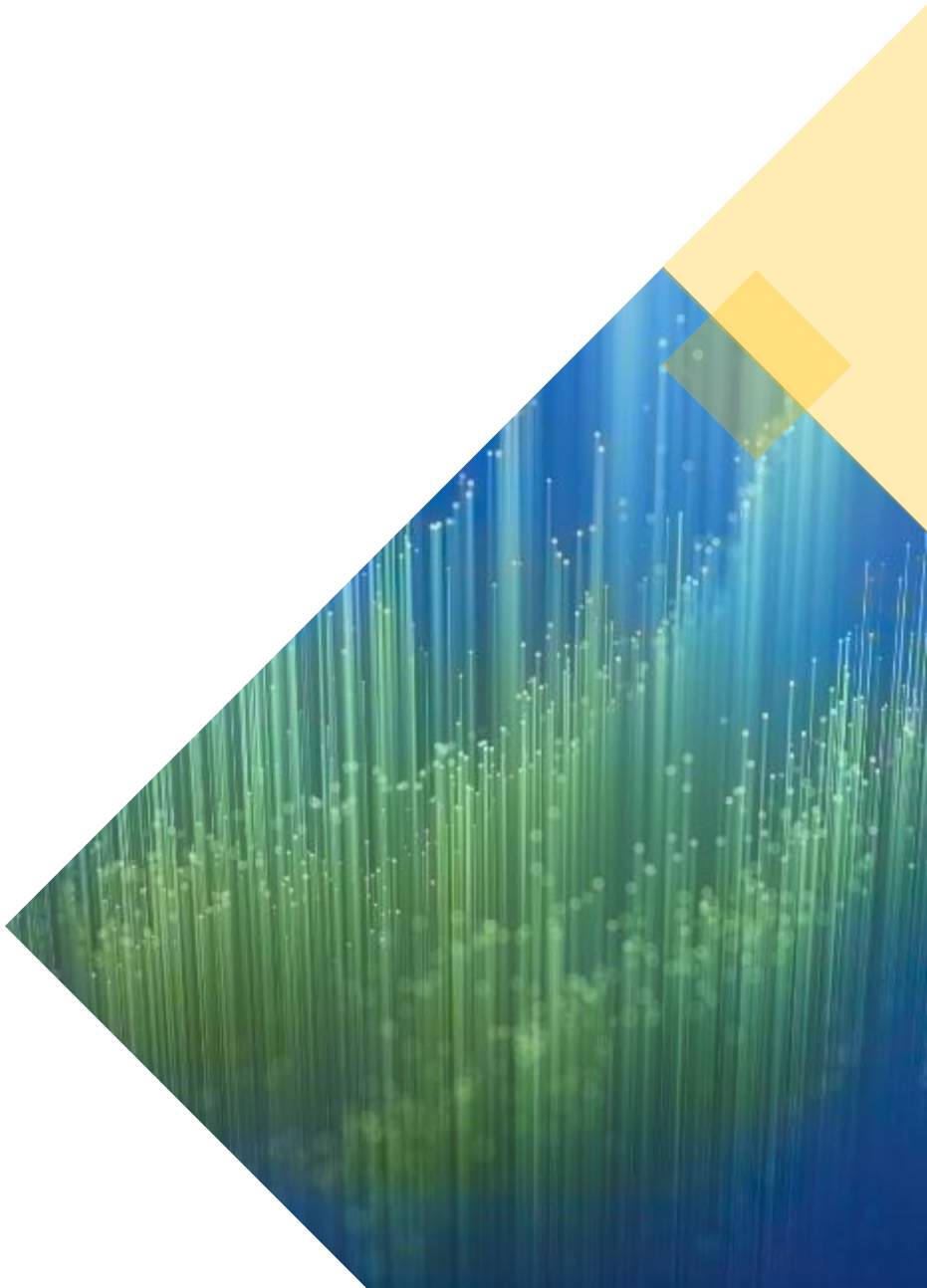
Regional Consultative Meeting

11 July 2025

Harifidy Ralison
Senior Manager, Policy & Partnerships
African Wildlife Foundation

Outline of the Presentation

1. Introduction of AWF
2. Introduction of Conventions
3. Importance of biodiversity
4. Threats, drivers and extent of loss of biodiversity in Africa
5. Key issues for Africa on Biodiversity
6. Key messages and call to action



Introduction of AWF

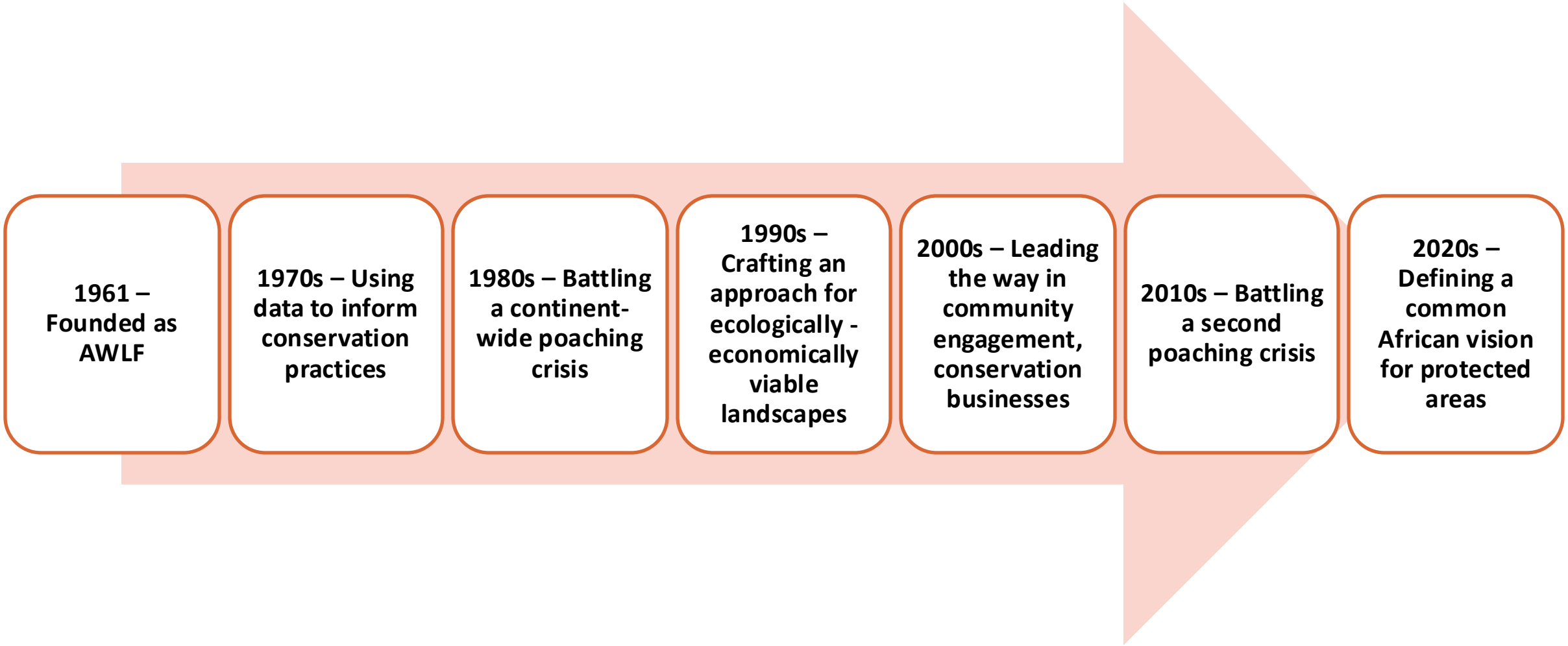
AWF Mission



To ensure that **wildlife** and **wild lands** thrive in **modern Africa**.

64 YEARS

of pioneering leadership in African conservation



2020-2030

The decade ahead, a critical shift to tackle the threats in modern Africa



Introduction of Conventions

About the Conventions

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

Convention on Biological Diversity

Established: 1992
Entered into force: December 29, 1993

Scope
• 196 Parties (countries + EU)
• Covers terrestrial, marine, and freshwater ecosystems
• Links biodiversity conservation with sustainable development
- Nagoya Protocol (Access and benefit sharing)
- Cartagena protocol (Bio-safety)

Mandate & Purpose
• Comprehensive global treaty for biodiversity conservation
• Addresses all aspects of biological diversity: genes, species, ecosystems

Key Objectives
- Conservation of biological diversity
- Sustainable use of biodiversity components
- Fair and equitable sharing of benefits from genetic resources

Implementation mechanism
- GBF delivered through the NBSAPs

Kunming Montreal - Global Biodiversity Framework
23 Targets

GBF 2050 Vision: living in harmony with nature

GBF 2030 Mission: *"To take urgent action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss to put nature on a path to recovery by 2030 for the benefit of people and planet*

Conserving Nature	People's Needs	Enabling factors
Targets 1 – 8: focus on 'reducing threats to biodiversity – Conservation Nature	Targets 9 – 23: focus on 'Meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing',	Targets 14-23: focus on 'Tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

Established: 1973

Entered into force: July 1, 1975

Scope

- 184 Parties
- Covers ~38,000 species (animals and plants)
- Three appendices based on threat levels

Mandate & Purpose

- Regulate international trade in wild animals and plants
- Ensure trade does not threaten species survival
- Protect endangered species from commercial exploitation

Key Objectives

- Control trade through permit systems
- Prevent extinction of species due to international trade
- Sustainable use of wildlife resources

Summary of CITES Strategic Vision (2021-2030)

CITES Vision: *An international agreement that ensures wild fauna and flora are not endangered by international trade and contributes to their conservation and sustainable use*

CITES GOAL: *To ensure that international trade in wild animals and plants is legal, sustainable, and traceable, contributing to the conservation of biodiversity and the livelihoods of people dependent on it.*

OBJECTIVES

- **Legal and Sustainable Trade**
- **Enhanced Compliance and Enforcement**
- **Capacity Building and Cooperation**
- **Information and Technology Use**
- **Integration with Global Biodiversity Goals**

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

Established: 1971

Entered into force: December 21, 1975

Scope

- 172 Parties
- 2,400+ Wetlands of International Importance
- Covers all types of wetlands (coastal, inland, human-made)

Mandate & Purpose

- International cooperation for wetland conservation
- Wise use of wetland resources
- Recognize wetlands' fundamental ecological functions

Key Objectives

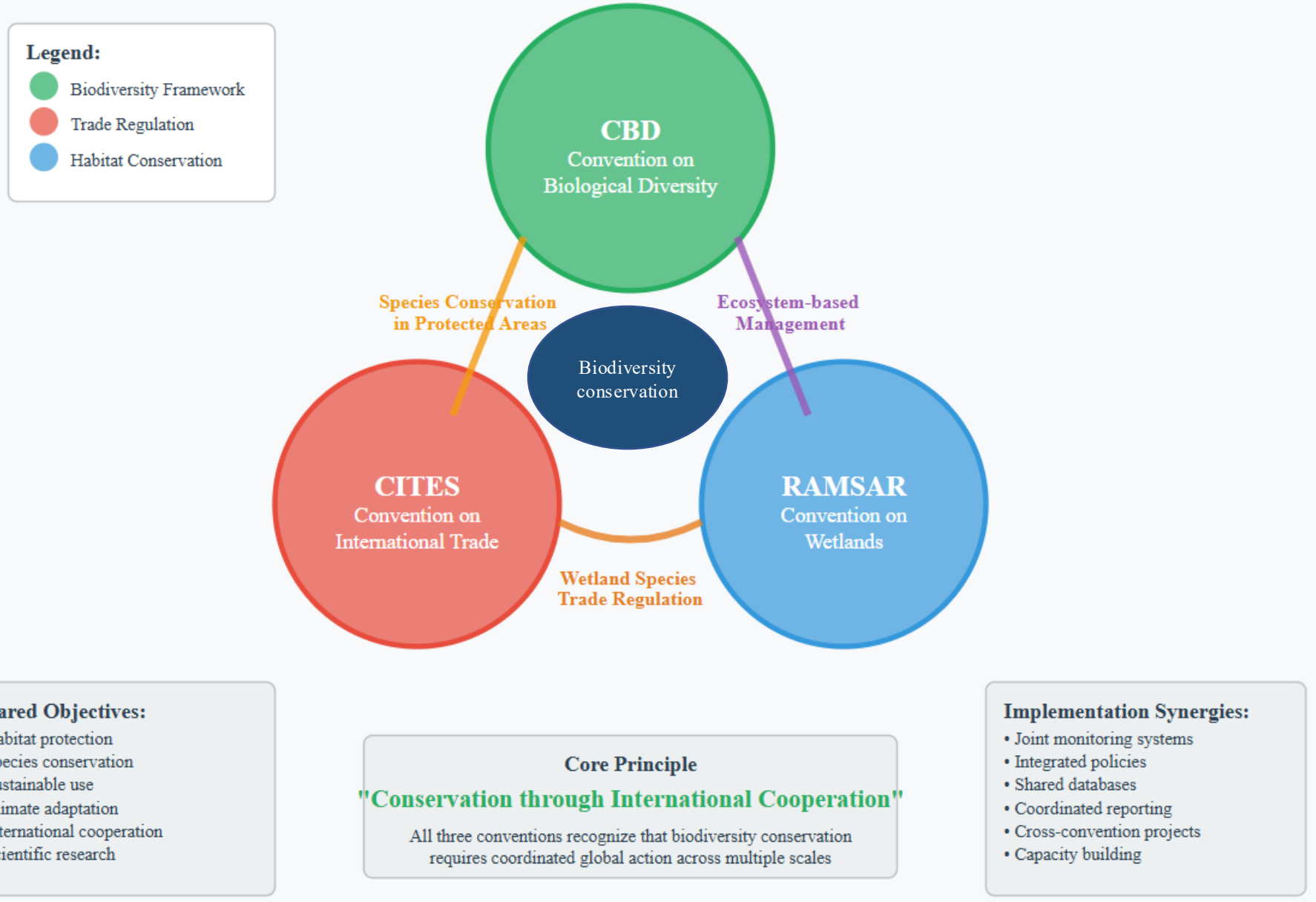
- Designate wetlands of international importance
- Promote wise use of all wetlands
- Enhance international cooperation on wetland conservation

Summary RAMSAR Strategic Plan (2016–2024)

RAMSAR Vision: *A world where wetlands are conserved, wisely used, restored and their benefits recognized and valued by all.*
RAMSAR Mission: *To ensure the conservation and wise use of wetlands through local, regional, and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development worldwide.*

Strategic Goal 1: Address underlying causes of wetland loss	Strategic Goal 2: Effectively conserve and manage Ramsar Sites	Strategic Goal 3: Promote wise use of all wetlands	Strategic Goal 4: Enhance implementation
Targets 1-4	**Targets 5-8**	**Targets 9-13**	**Targets 14-19**
Integrate wetlands into national planning and decision-making.	Ensure all Ramsar Sites are well managed.	Restore degraded wetlands.	Mobilize financial and human resources.
Increase awareness of wetland values.	Develop complete and updated site inventories.	Strengthen ecosystem services and livelihoods.	Improve wetland-related capacity-building.
Promote policies that reduce wetland degradation.	Promote national and international site networks.	Increase sustainable use and participatory management.	Promote international cooperation, including on transboundary wetlands.
			Strengthen the effectiveness of the Convention (reporting, synergies, partnerships).

Interconnections Between CBD, CITES, and Ramsar Conventions



Shared Objectives:

- Habitat protection
- Species conservation
- Sustainable use
- Climate adaptation
- International cooperation
- Scientific research

Core Principle

"Conservation through International Cooperation"

All three conventions recognize that biodiversity conservation requires coordinated global action across multiple scales

Implementation Synergies:

- Joint monitoring systems
- Integrated policies
- Shared databases
- Coordinated reporting
- Cross-convention projects
- Capacity building

The Importance of Biodiversity

What is Biodiversity

- **Biodiversity: The Variety of Life on Earth**

- **What it is:** The incredible variety of all living things on our planet - from bacteria to mammals, encompassing genetic diversity within species, species diversity within ecosystems, and ecosystem diversity across landscapes

- **Why it matters:** Provides essential services like clean air and water, crop pollination, climate regulation, and medical discoveries - healthy ecosystems with high biodiversity are more resilient and better support human life

- **Current challenge:** Human activities are causing species to disappear 100-1,000 times faster than natural rates, making biodiversity conservation critically urgent

- **Examples:** Tropical rainforests, coral reefs, and other ecosystems where millions of interconnected species form complex food webs that sustain life on Earth

(Sources: https://www.cbd.int, https://www.worldwildlife.org, https://ipbes.net, https://www.unep.org)

In summary: value & contribution of biodiversity

Area	Contribution	Statistics
GDP	Nature-dependent sectors	30–50% of Africa's GDP
Livelihoods	People directly reliant on biodiversity	70%+ of the population
Tourism & Jobs	Ecotourism contribution to GDP and employment	$29B+ and 3.6M jobs
Food & Health Security	Reliance on biodiversity for food and traditional medicine	80% in rural areas
Water & Ecosystems	Value of wetlands and ecosystem services	$30B+ per year
Climate Regulation	Carbon stored in Congo Basin peatlands	30 billion tonnes

Threats, drivers and extent of loss of biodiversity in Africa

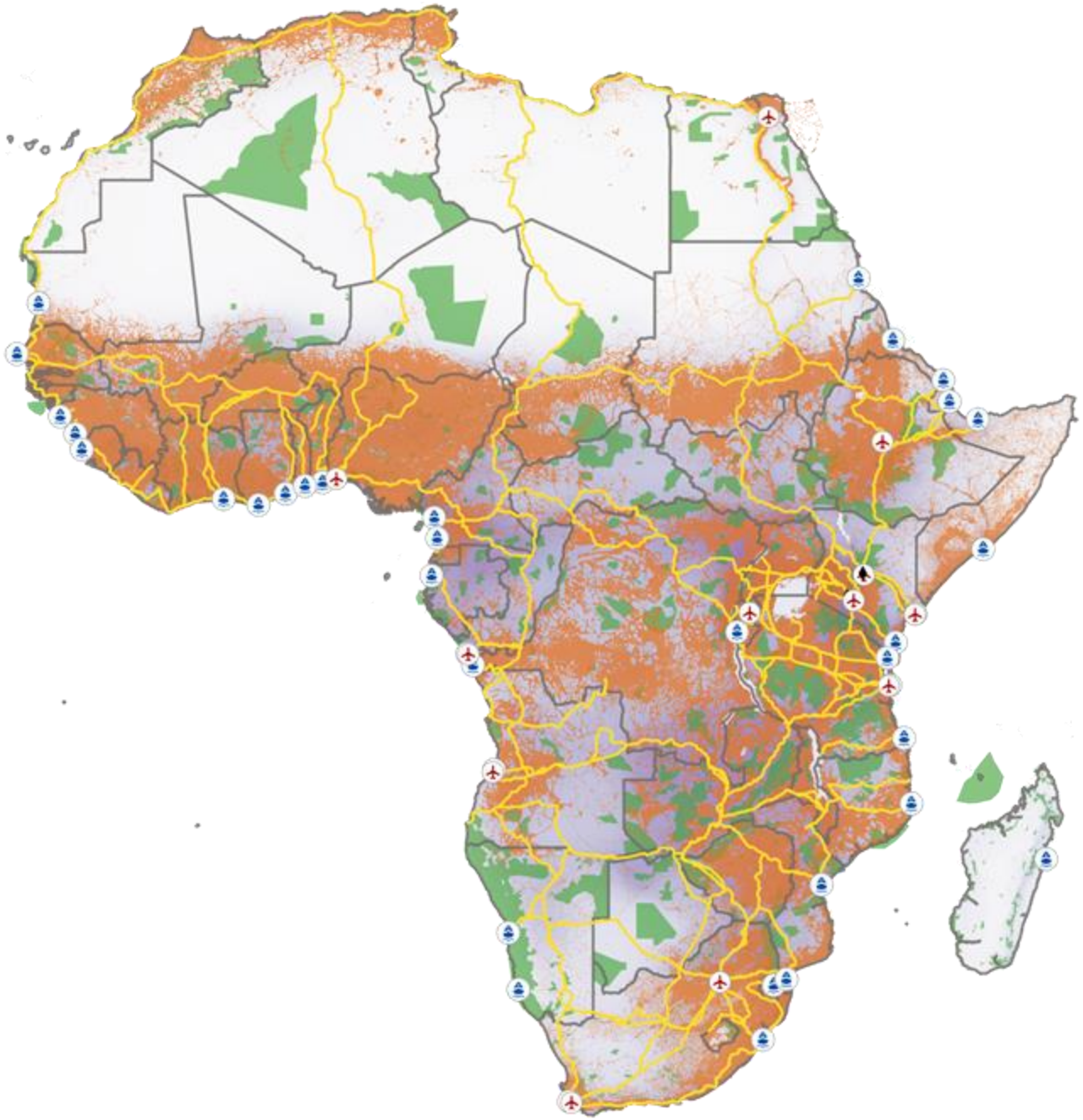
BIODIVERSITY & THE HUMAN FOOTPRINT

Current Human Footprint

Major Development Corridors

Protected Areas

Species Richness



Summary of some implications of biodiversity loss to Africa

Area Affected	Impact	Statistic / Source
Agriculture	Decline in crop yields due to pollinator loss	30% reduction in yields (IPBES, 2016)
Fisheries	Collapse of inland fisheries	30M livelihoods at risk (FAO, 2022)
Economy	GDP decline	Up to 10% by 2030 (UNEP, 2022)
Tourism	Job and income loss	$29B GDP; 3.6M jobs (WTTC, 2020)
Water Security	Wetland degradation	Wetlands disappearing 3× faster than forests
Climate Resilience	Increased emissions and reduced buffering	30B tonnes CO_2 storage in Congo Basin (Nature)
Public Health	Loss of traditional medicines	80% of rural population affected (WHO)

The Issues for Africa on Biodiversity

Summary of the Key Issues for Africa

Issue	African Concern
Development vs. Conservation	Risk of trade-offs and exclusion
Exclusive conservation models	Community conservation through OECM underreported
Equity and ABS	Limited benefit from genetic resources and DSI
Local Participation	IPLCs, women, youth often insufficiently included in decision-making
Regional Alignment	Disconnected national and continental strategies
Financing Gap	GBF targets underfunded
Data and Monitoring	Weak baselines and reporting capacity

Key Messages and Calls to Action for Africa

Key messages and call to action (1)

Integrating and mainstreaming biodiversity into sectoral and development plans

- Biodiversity loss in Africa undermines **food security, water availability, climate resilience, and economic productivity,** yet it is rarely adequately reflected in sectoral and national development plans.
- Infrastructure, extractives, and agricultural expansions often proceed **without adequate biodiversity safeguards**, causing irreversible ecosystem degradation.
- The GBF offers an opportunity to **reposition biodiversity as a development enabler**, not an environmental cost.

Call to Action

- Align GBF **Target 14** (biodiversity integration) with **Africa's Agenda 2063**, National Development Plans, and regional frameworks (e.g., Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), Africa Green Stimulus Programme).
- Support countries to **embed biodiversity into budgeting, procurement, and national accounts**, using tools like natural capital accounting and ecosystem valuation.
- Strengthen the role of **RECs (e.g., SADC, EAC, ECOWAS)** and AU organs in coordinating cross-sectoral policy coherence on biodiversity.

Key messages and call to action (2)

Inclusive conservation models

- Africa's biodiversity is safeguarded daily by **millions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities**, yet they are often excluded from formal conservation frameworks, benefits and financing.
- Women and youth in Africa are central to natural resource management and climate adaptation, but face **structural barriers** in access to land & property, finance, and decision-making spaces.
- The GBF will fail in Africa unless it advances **rights- and equity-based, people-centered conservation models**.

Call to Action

- **Operationalize GBF Targets 21 and 22** by securing **customary tenure rights, legal recognition, and fair and equitable benefit-sharing** for IPLCs across Africa (e.g. promote OECMs).
- Ensure **inclusive participation** in NBSAP revisions, PCA governance, and GBF implementation, including in AU-led biodiversity platforms.
- Invest in **capacity strengthening, mentorship, and leadership pipelines** for African IPLCs, youth, women, and community conservation organizations, positioning them as full partners in biodiversity governance.

Key messages and call to action for Africa (3)

Sustainable, long-term, predictable and equitable conservation finance

- Africa harbors **25% of the world's biodiversity**, yet receives less than **10% of global biodiversity finance**—this must change to meet GBF targets.
- Conservation financing in Africa remains **donor-dependent, fragmented, and short-term**, leaving protected and community-conserved areas, communities, and countries vulnerable to shifting priorities.
- African ecosystems are **natural capital assets**, and investing in them supports **climate resilience, livelihoods, and economic growth**

Call to Action

- Close Africa's biodiversity finance gap through **long-term, predictable, and African-led financing strategies**, as called for under **GBF Target 19**.
- Prioritize **direct financing to Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and youth**, especially those managing community conservancies, sacred sites, and OECMs.
- Promote **domestic resource mobilization**, leverage biodiversity as part of national budgeting, and unlock **innovative mechanisms** like biodiversity credits, carbon-biodiversity bundling, and green investment facilities adapted to African realities.

CONCLUSION – Summary of key messages

1- Integrating and mainstreaming biodiversity into sectoral and development plans

- + expansions of key sectors proceed with **adequate biodiversity safeguards**.
- Ensure we use the Framework as an opportunity to **reposition biodiversity as a development enabler.**

2- Implementing and scaling inclusive conservation models

- Advancing **rights- and equity-based** and **people-centered** conservation models… gender-based conservation, **gender-responsive** representation and participation in decision-making

3- Furthering sustainable, long-term, predictable and equitable conservation finance

➢ Ensures Africa receives the just proportion of **global biodiversity finance**

➢ Promote **domestic resource mobilization** and unlock **innovative financing mechanisms**



THANK YOU!

Harifidy Ralison – hralison@awf.org

AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

ANNEXES

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (2)

Key highlights

- Importance for stakeholders and parties to read the World Wildlife Trade report
- Proportion of wild-sourced plants in trade has decreased over the past ten years to 4% in terms of nb individual plants : vast majority of plants in trade are artificially propagated and no longer “wild”
- Animals: captive-breeding increasing but substantial proportion of trade still wild-sourced - requires constant monitoring to improve our understanding of the world’s wildlife trade

- Over 1 million CITES permits and certificates per Yr are issued by Parties covering international wildlife trade estimated to be worth billions $
- Diverse trade: from live animals and plants to vast array of derived wildlife products: food products, exotic leather goods, wooden musical instruments, timber, tourist souvenirs, cosmetics and medicines.

The value and contribution of Biodiversity (1)

- **Economic Value and Natural Capital**
  - **30–50% of Africa's GDP** is directly dependent on nature-based sectors like agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and tourism.
    (UNEP, 2022; African Union, 2021)
  - The **economic value of ecosystem services** in Africa is estimated to exceed **$1.5 trillion annually**, including water filtration, pollination, soil fertility, and carbon sequestration.
    (TEEB Africa Scoping Study, UNEP, 2021)
  - **Biodiversity loss could reduce Africa's GDP by up to 10% by 2030** if degradation continues unchecked.
    (UNEP-WCMC, 2020)
- **Tourism and Wildlife Economy**
  - **Nature-based tourism** contributes **$29–30 billion to Sub-Saharan Africa's GDP** annually and supports over **3.6 million jobs**.
    (World Travel & Tourism Council; AU-NEPAD, 2020)
  - Countries like Kenya, South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, and Tanzania derive **5–15% of GDP** from biodiversity-rich sectors, especially ecotourism and wildlife-based enterprises.
    (World Bank, 2021)
  - **Eco-tourism in wetland areas** such as the Okavango Delta, Bwindi Impenetrable Forest (Uganda), and Victoria Falls contributes **millions in revenue** annually and supports thousands of jobs.
    (WTTC, 2019; African Development Bank)

The value and contribution of Biodiversity (2)

- **Livelihoods and Food Security**
  - Over **70% of Africans** depend directly on biodiversity for their **food, fuel, shelter, and medicine**.
    (UNEP, 2021)
  - **Inland fisheries**, heavily reliant on healthy ecosystems, provide food and income for over **30 million people** in Sub-Saharan Africa.
    (FAO, 2022)
  - Traditional medicine, derived from biodiversity, meets the **primary healthcare needs of 80% of rural African populations**.
    (WHO Regional Office for Africa)
- **Water Security and Ecosystem Services**
  - Forests and wetlands help **regulate water flow**, purify water, and recharge aquifers for hundreds of millions of people across Africa.
  - Africa's wetlands contribute **over $30 billion per year** in ecosystem services, including agriculture, fisheries, flood control, and carbon storage.
    (UNEP Ramsar Africa Report, 2022)

The value and contribution of Biodiversity (3)

- **Climate Regulation and Resilience**
  - Africa's forests and peatlands store **tens of billions of tonnes of carbon** (e.g., Congo Basin peatlands store 30 billion tonnes alone).
    (Nature, Dargie et al., 2017)
  - **Nature-based solutions** such as mangrove restoration, forest protection, and climate-smart agriculture are key to climate adaptation and mitigation.
- **Cultural, Genetic, and Scientific Value**
  - Africa hosts **8 of the world's 36 global biodiversity hotspots**, from the Cape Floristic Region to the Congo Basin.
  - The continent is home to over **60,000 plant species** and **1,100 mammal species**, many of which are endemic and vital for global biodiversity.

Threats , drivers and extent of loss of biodiversity in Africa (1)

- **Habitat Loss and Land-Use Change**
  - **80% of biodiversity loss in Africa** is driven by habitat conversion for **agriculture, infrastructure, and settlement**.
    (IPBES Africa Assessment, 2018)
  - Over **50% of forests in West Africa** have been cleared, mostly for cocoa, palm oil, and subsistence farming.
    (FAO, 2020)
  - Between 1990 and 2020, Africa lost over **70 million hectares of forest**, an area twice the size of Germany.
    (FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment, 2020)
- **Overexploitation of Wildlife and Natural Resources**
  - More than **1,000 species in Africa** are threatened by **overharvesting**, including bushmeat, medicinal plants, and timber.
    (IUCN Red List, 2023)
  - In Central Africa, up to **5 million tonnes of bushmeat** are harvested annually—posing a major threat to large mammals and ecosystem balance.
    (UNEP, 2016)
  - Unsustainable fisheries: **Over 33% of fish stocks in African marine ecosystems** are overexploited.
    (FAO SOFIA Report, 2022)

Threats , drivers and extent of loss of biodiversity in Africa (2)

- **Climate Change**
  - Africa is warming faster than the global average, threatening species' survival and altering habitats.
    (IPCC, 2022)
  - Climate change could lead to the **loss of up to 20–30% of Africa's plant and animal species** by 2100.
    (IPBES, 2018)
  - Coral reefs in the Western Indian Ocean, which support millions of livelihoods, are **projected to decline by up to 90% by 2050** due to warming seas and acidification.
    (UNEP, 2021)
- **Pollution (Water, Soil, and Air)**
  - Pollution is a growing threat in **freshwater ecosystems**, which support over 400 million people in Africa.
  - Agricultural runoff and untreated wastewater affect **over 50% of Africa's major rivers and lakes**, including Lake Victoria, Lake Chad, and the Nile.
    (UNEP African Environment Outlook, 2019)
  - Pesticide use in agriculture has led to severe biodiversity declines in pollinators and amphibians.

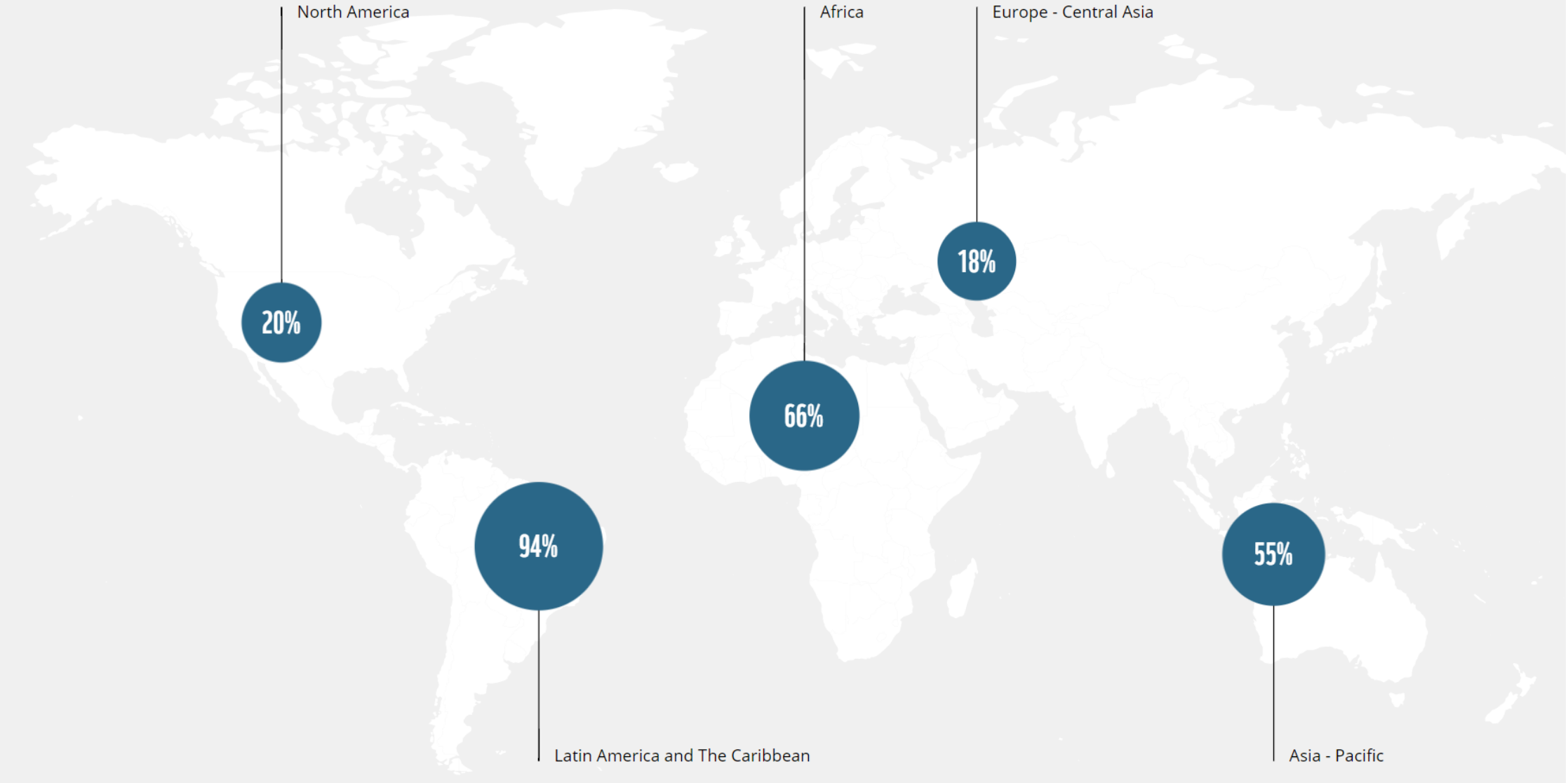
Threats , drivers and extent of loss of biodiversity in Africa (3)

- **Invasive Alien Species**
  - Invasive species are a **top-five driver of biodiversity loss** in Africa.
  - Examples include the **water hyacinth (Eichhornia crassipes)** in Lake Victoria and the **fall armyworm (Spodoptera frugiperda)** affecting maize crops in over 30 countries.
    (CABI, IUCN, 2020)
  - The **economic cost of invasive species in Africa** is estimated at **over $3.5 billion annually**.
    (IUCN, 2020)
- **Illegal Wildlife Trade and Poaching**
  - Africa accounts for **70% of global ivory seizures** and over **80% of rhino poaching incidents**.
    (UNODC, 2020)
  - Poaching has caused **elephant populations to decline by over 60%** in some regions in the last decade.
    (IUCN, 2022)
  - Pangolins are now the **most trafficked mammal in Africa**, targeted for scales and meat.
    (TRAFFIC, 2021)

Threats, drivers and extent of loss of biodiversity in Africa (4)

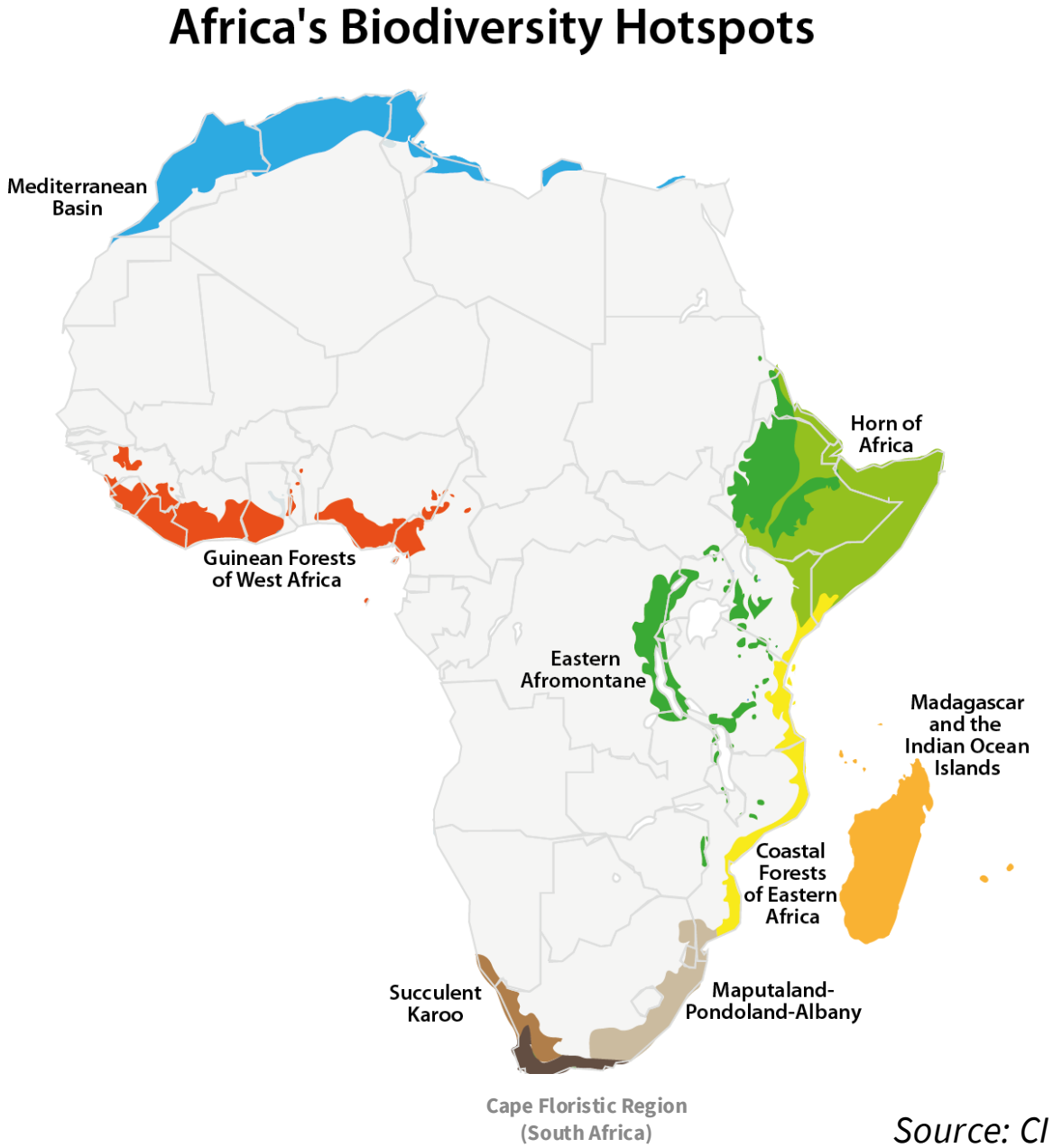
- **Weak Governance and Limited Enforcement**
  - Only **14% of Africa's protected areas** are considered effectively managed.
    (UNEP-WCMC Protected Planet Report, 2020)
  - **70% of Ramsar Sites in Africa** lack adequate management plans or funding.
    (Ramsar COP13 Africa Report)
  - Lack of land tenure and legal recognition for **Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs)** undermines effective stewardship.
- **Rapid Population Growth and Urbanization**
  - Africa's population is expected to double to **2.5 billion by 2050**, driving land and resource pressure.
    (UN DESA, 2022)
  - Urban expansion and sprawl are increasingly encroaching on **biodiversity-rich landscapes**, especially in coastal and savannah zones.

BIODIVERSITY LOSS BY REGION



Biodiversity loss since 1970
Source: Living Planet Report 2022

- Africa hosts 9 of the world's 36 biodiversity hotspots
- 6,400 animals and 3,100 plants in Africa are at risk of extinction
- vertebrate species in Africa are estimated to have declined by 39 percent since 1970.



Source: CI

Key issues for Africa on Biodiversity (1)

- **Balancing Conservation and Development Needs**
  - Africa faces **intense socio-economic pressures**: poverty, population growth, food insecurity, and climate shocks.
  - Conservation is often perceived as conflicting with development, particularly where land use is contested or communities are excluded from benefits.
  - **What Africa Needs**: Nature-positive development models that **mainstream biodiversity into agriculture, infrastructure, mining**, and national budgeting—so that **biodiversity is seen as an asset**, not a constraint.

- **Recognition and Scaling of OECMs**
  - Most African landscapes are conserved by communities, yet they are **under-recognized, unreported, and unsupported**, hindering progress toward securing biodiversity (**30x30 target** - protecting 30% of land and sea by 2030).
  - **What Africa Needs**: National policies and technical support to identify, validate, and finance OECMs—especially those led by IPLCs, women, and youth.
  - **What Africa Needs**: National policies and technical support to identify, validate, and finance OECMs—especially those led by IPLCs, women, and youth.

Key issues for Africa on Biodiversity (2)

- **Equity, Access, and Benefit-Sharing (ABS)**
  - Africa holds a large share of the world's genetic resources and traditional knowledge, yet **benefits from access and use remain limited**.
  - Concerns remain about:
    - **Digital Sequence Information (DSI)** and fair benefit-sharing
    - Recognition and respect for **Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs)**
    - Implementation of **Nagoya Protocol obligations**
  - **What Africa Needs**: A global DSI mechanism that guarantees **monetary and non-monetary benefit-sharing**, and ensures IPLCs are **right-holders**, not just stakeholders.

- **Inadequate Inclusion of Local Voices in Policy**
  - While the GBF emphasizes **"whole-of-society" approaches**, IPLCs, women, and youth remain underrepresented in national processes, NBSAPs, and global negotiations.
  - **What Africa Needs**: Mechanisms to **institutionalize participation**, strengthen environmental democracy, and ensure rights-based conservation.

Key issues for Africa on Biodiversity (3)

- **Limited Alignment Between National and Regional Frameworks**
  - Coordination between national GBF targets and **regional strategies** (e.g., AU Biodiversity Strategy, RECs) remains fragmented.
  - Lack of alignment slows cross-border ecosystem management and shared learning.
  - **What Africa Needs**: Stronger alignment and harmonization between the **AU, RECs, and national GBF commitments**, including through AMCEN and regional platforms.

- **Implementation Capacity**
  - Many African countries lack the **technical and institutional capacity** to effectively implement the GBF targets.
  - **What Africa Needs**: Targeted international support and capacity-building mechanisms tailored to local realities.

Key issues for Africa on Biodiversity (4)

- **Conservation Finance Gaps**
  - National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) remain **underfunded, outdated**, or poorly mainstreamed into national development plans.
  - There is an estimated **biodiversity financing gap of $1.5–3 billion per year** in Africa. *(UNDP BIOFIN, 2022)*
  - **What Africa Needs**: Targeted international support, national biodiversity finance plans, and innovating financing mechanisms tailored to local realities.

- **Limited Data, Monitoring, and Reporting Systems**
  - Many countries lack the capacity to generate **baseline data**, track biodiversity indicators, and monitor GBF target progress.
  - Absence of **national biodiversity accounts**, consistent indicators, and integration with **SDG reporting** undermines transparency and accountability.
  - **What Africa Needs**: Investment in biodiversity monitoring, spatial mapping, citizen science, and digital tools to ensure evidence-based implementation.