



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement from the Community Leaders Network and Resource Africa Following KAZA Summit 2024

31 May 2024 - The Community Leaders Network (CLN) and Resource Africa commend the progress made since the signing of the historic KAZA (Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area) Treaty of 2011. This landmark agreement established the world's largest Transfrontier conservation area, with a mandate to foster regional cooperation, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development.

A pivotal element of the KAZA Treaty, as highlighted in item 3b, states the importance of "ensuring that the activities of the KAZA TFCA are aligned to SADC instruments and other international protocols that target poverty alleviation and community empowerment in their mandates." This clause underscores the critical need to empower local communities, ensuring they benefit from conservation and development initiatives.

Since 2011, significant investments have been made in community development projects, forums, and various initiatives aimed at uplifting local populations. The Community Leaders Network and Resource Africa acknowledge these efforts and the tangible progress achieved to date. Notable projects have included infrastructure development, capacity building, and sustainable livelihood programs, all contributing to the socio-economic enhancement of the region.

The role of the Community Leaders Network has been instrumental in advocating for community rights, ensuring that local voices are heard and considered in all conservation and development plans. Resource Africa, established in 1989, has consistently worked to promote sustainable resource management and the empowerment of local communities across the region. Our joint efforts have been pivotal in driving forward community-centric conservation practices.

However, despite these advancements, we express concern that KAZA has not yet developed an effective platform for meaningful community participation. The principle of "plan with us, not for us" has been clearly articulated by the communities, emphasizing the need for genuine engagement and collaboration. Regrettably, KAZA's current approach falls short of this ideal, often overlooking the crucial input and involvement of the very communities it aims to support.

At the recent summit, presenters unanimously noted the glaring absence of local communities. A more befitting gesture would have been to at least invite a Chief from the KAZA region to open the summit, symbolizing true community involvement and respect. This oversight highlights the need for KAZA to engage more effectively through the established national networks and the Community Leaders Network to improve relations with local communities.

We call upon KAZA and all stakeholders to reaffirm their commitment to community empowerment and to develop robust mechanisms for meaningful community participation.



It is imperative that local communities are not merely beneficiaries but active partners in the planning and implementation of conservation and development projects. True success will only be realized when the voices and aspirations of local people are at the heart of all initiatives.

In conclusion, while we celebrate the progress made, we urge a renewed focus on enhancing community participation. **We would like to be part of the platform going forward to ensure the community voices are effectively represented.** By doing so, we can ensure that the vision of the KAZA Treaty is fully realized, fostering a future where conservation and development go hand in hand, benefiting both people and nature.

Siyoka Simasiku, CLN

Shylock Muyengwa, Programs Director, Resource Africa

About Community Leaders Network: www.communityleadersnetwork.org/

CLN seeks to amplify the voices of local communities through participation and influencing policy negotiation, development and implementation processes to ensure informed decision-making at national, regional and international levels that reflect the needs and rights of local communities to manage and benefit from their natural resources.

About Resource Africa: www.resourceafrica.net

Established in 1989, Resource Africa works to promote sustainable resource management and the empowerment of local communities across the African continent. We provide technical support and expertise directly to communities and their national and regional networks based on their expressed needs and requirements. Our over-arching aim is to strengthen the capacity of these networks and grassroots organizations to the point where they can advocate for their rights at all levels of governance, collect and share scientific and traditional knowledge on their own terms, deliver benefits to their people living alongside wildlife, and realize their goals of sustainable development and climate-resilient livelihoods.

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