INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION CAUCUS

CO-CHAIR SENATOR ROB PORTMAN (R-OH)

Tropical forests and coral reefs are home to a major share of the world’s natural resources and play a key role in supporting the health of our planet. To reauthorize a program that has saved 67 million acres of tropical forest and to expand it to help conserve coral reefs, Congress voted to pass S.1023, the Tropical Forest Conservation Reauthorization Act (TFCA), authored by International Conservation Caucus co-chair Senator Rob Portman (R-OH). The President signed the bill into law on Tuesday, January 14, 2019.

Senator Portman, along with fellow International Conservation Caucus co-chairs Senators Richard Burr (R-NC), Tom Udall (D-NM), and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and ICC member Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI), introduced the bill in May of last year. Companion legislation was introduced in the House by Representatives Steve Chabot (R-OH) and Brad Sherman (D-CA). House International Conservation Caucus co-chairs Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE) and Betty McCollum (D-MN) were among original co-sponsors of the House bill.

First passed in 1998, the Tropical Forest Conservation Act (TFCA) is best known for the program’s “debt-for-nature” swaps. Through these swaps, countries are able
The President has signed into law H.R. 4819, the Defending Economic Livelihoods and Threatened Animals (DELTA) Act, a bill aimed at promoting sustainable economic growth through trans-boundary conservation programs in the Okavango River Basin.

The Okavango River Basin is Africa’s most expansive inland water system and home to its largest remaining elephant population. Aiming to promote sustainable economic growth in this region through trans-boundary conservation programs, the Senate voted unanimously on December 19th to pass H.R. 4819, the Defending Economic Livelihoods and Threatened Animals (DELTA) Act, a bipartisan bill introduced by co-chairs of the International Conservation Caucus and passed by the House in July. President Trump signed the bill into law on December 21st.

Representative Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE), a co-chair of the International Conservation Caucus, introduced the bill with bipartisan support in January. Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA), Representative Henry Cuellar (D-TX), and Representative Betty McCollum (D-MN), also co-chairs of the House International Conservation Caucus, were among original co-sponsors of the bill.

Senator Rob Portman (R-OH), a co-chair of the International Conservation Caucus in the Senate, introduced a companion bill earlier this year alongside fellow caucus co-chairs Senators Richard Burr (R-NC), Tom Udall (D-NM), and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI). They, along with Senator Chris Coons of Delaware, led efforts to move the DELTA Act through the Senate.

Beyond encouraging the U.S. to develop a strategy with countries in the region for conservation of the Okavango watershed, the DELTA Act authorizes the Secretary of State and the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to provide technical assistance for water and natural resource management and to build local capacity to combat illegal poaching and wildlife trafficking.

Ultimately, the bill aims to combat threats of poaching and wildlife trafficking and provide opportunities for economic growth by enhancing cooperation and coordination between governments, leveraging the experience and expertise of private-sector and non-governmental stakeholders. The waters of the Okavango River support more than one million Angolans, Botswanans, and Namibians, as well as Africa’s largest remaining population of elephants and a wealth of biodiversity. The region is ripe with potential for development through ecotourism, which can be a sustainable source of revenue for local communities.

“By reauthorizing and expanding it to include coral reef ecosystems, this bipartisan legislation will build on these past successes to encourage our partners to continue to protect these irreplaceable natural treasures, including the ‘rainforests of the sea.’ (...) If signed into law, it will help drive economic prosperity both at home and abroad. It’s a triple win for people, species, and nature.”

-- Kerry Cesareo
WWF President for Forests

“[It] is simply smart policy: it helps preserve and protect precious eco-systems all while strengthening the United States’ economic and security relationships around the world.”

-- Intl. Conservation Caucus Co-Chair Senator Tom Udall (D-NM)
ASSESSING THE BIODIVERSITY AND ECO-TOURISM INVESTMENT POTENTIAL OF ANGOLA’S NATIONAL PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS

Continuing its engagement in Angola, begun in November 2017, The ICCF Group recently assisted the Ministry of Environment of Angola in the organization of a landmark Mini-Mission to assess the biodiversity and eco-tourism investment potential of Angola’s national parks and protected areas.


The group visited many provincial capitals and protected areas throughout Angola. Highlights included the ranger training school and an eco-resort in Menongue, the cultural monument at Cuito Carnivale, views of Mavinga and Cuando Cubango’s vast landscapes by helicopter, as well as Luena City and Camea National Park in Moshioko Province, Iona National Park in Namibe Province, Cangandala National Park in Malanje Province, and Luengue Luiana National Park. The trip culminated in a major investment conference on December 6th in Luanda at the Epic Sana, which focused on the opportunities presented by Angola’s national parks, followed by a reception hosted at the residence of U.S. Ambassador Nina Maria Fite.

Following the Mini-Mission and investment conference, the Ministry of Environment signed a letter requesting area projects. Mini-Mission participants, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, concluded the landmark visit by creating a collective work plan of interested stakeholders for next steps and follow-up actions.

ZAMBIA CAUCUS MEMBERS ASSESS NEW WETLANDS POLICY

In order to examine and discuss Zambia’s recently launched Wetlands Policy, The ICCF Group and the Zambian Parliamentary Conservation Caucus (ZPCC) organized a collaborative workshop on December 3rd in Lusaka, bringing together members of the ZPCC and as well as relevant public- and private-sector stakeholders.

Implementation of the Wetlands Policy, which was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in June 2018, requires an enabling legal framework and strong stakeholder collaboration.

Representing the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Hope Mambwe Banda provided details of the Wetlands Policy. Designed to conserve wetland resources and protect wetland ecosystems, the Wetlands Policy aims to do so in a way that will ensure their integrity, productivity, and sustainability. Specifically, the policy promotes research, inventorying, and monitoring of wetland resources to inform effective management decisions, promotes stakeholder participation in effective management of wetlands, and aims to ensure equitable sharing of benefits.

Prior to Cabinet approval in June, Ms. Banda stated, no national policy had existed specifically targeting wetlands, despite the fact that wetlands account for nearly 20 percent of Zambia’s total land area.

Eighty percent of Zambia’s wetlands are currently protected, according to Griffin Shanungu and Mwape Sichilongo of the International Crane Foundation, including over four million hectares of Wetlands of International Importance. Speaking at the December 3rd workshop, Mr. Shanungu emphasized the importance of Zambia’s wetland ecosystems from a development perspective. These areas, he says, are still subject to risk and loss of biodiversity through invasive plants, fire, and human activity, and they remain particularly vulnerable due to an abundance of fish, fuel, and water.

The Kafue flats are one such area, which Shanungu calls “probably the most important wetland in Zambia.” In Kafue, which ZPCC members visited in June, the park lacks a management framework to address the various demands on the flats, including poverty-driven pressures on the land. Effectively managing the park to generate tourism revenues can be a key to supporting local livelihoods and maintaining these important ecosystems long-term.

The ZPCC, as a voice for conservation in parliament, aims to bring priority natural resource management issues to the forefront of the national agenda. By organizing dialogue around the new Wetlands Policy, the ZPCC continues to promote the role of wetlands as an important resource for conservation and development in Zambia.
On December 7th, 2018, members of the Parliamentary Conservation Caucus-Kenya (PCC-K), the Environment and Natural Resource Committee, group ranch chairpersons, NGO leaders, and conservation experts convened in Nanyuki, Kenya for a day-long workshop to discuss the amendments to the National Wildlife Conservation and Management Act 2013, the development of the National Wildlife Conservation and Management Five-Year Strategy 2018-2022, and the incorporation of the private sanctuaries and community conservancies model into the legislative agenda.

Honorable Francis Chachu Ganya, Co-Chair of the PCC-K, opened the workshop with discussion surrounding the recently passed amendments to the National Wildlife Conservation and Management Act 2013. Stakeholder engagement played an important role in the development of these amendments, which increased efficiency, production, and implementation, and reduced ambiguity and leeway, while introducing benchmarks to penalties and sentencing.

Afterwards, Robert Njue from the Ministry of Tourism, State Department for Wildlife spoke about the development of the National Wildlife Conservation and Management Five-Year Strategy 2018-2022. Discussion surrounding the National Wildlife Strategy presented it as a major key to the future of Kenya, not just for wildlife, but for food security, healthcare, and energy, to name a few sectors. Mr. Njue specified that the goal of the strategy is to increase the value of wildlife in Kenya, with the planned motto for the public launch in January 2019 being “Kenyans for Wildlife, Wildlife for Kenyans.” With community involvement being recognized as critical by the strategy, Mr. Peter Hetz, Executive Director of the Laikipia Wildlife Forum, spoke about how conservancies cut across all sections of the strategy, making them important components of the wildlife sector. Implementation of the strategy will involve grassroots effort, as all of its pillars incorporate conservancies and private sanctuaries.

This being the first-ever National Wildlife Strategy in Kenya, it gives the country a framework for conservation. Hon. Ganya expressed that capacity building of conservancies must continue and the strategy further serves as a structured way of engagement with county officials. Ms. Gladys Warigia of the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA) spoke of how her organization provides a coordinated way for the conservancies to engage with government. KWCA exists not only to create social cohesion for the conservancies, but additionally to continue to make sure conservancies are considered in the law. Ms. Warigia expressed that conservancies have existed long before the law and continue to inform and influence law through experience.

Enquiring discussions served to increase understanding between policymakers and on-the-ground law enforcement and the National Administration of Conservation Areas (ANAC) about issues that handicap efforts to combat wildlife and forest crimes, as well as the current status of the Forest Law. H.E. Deputy Attorney General Albino Macamo emphasized that a lack of specialized prosecutors and judges briefed on the importance and severity of environmental crimes, combined with weak institutional coordination, often prevents the effective prosecution of apprehended suspects. Deputy Attorney General Macamo noted the importance of improving the legal framework at a high level as well, and said he was encouraged that the Conservation Law increased penalties for wildlife crimes to up to 16 years in prison with heavy fines.

Hon. Antonio Jose Amelilia, 1st Vice-President of the National Assembly of Mozambique, concurred regarding the critical importance of sensitizing policymakers about biodiversity and conservation issues to improve the legal framework at a high level as well, and said he was encouraged that the Conservation Law increased penalties for wildlife crimes to up to 16 years in prison with heavy fines.

Members of the MPFC concluded the forum by emphasizing the need to advance the Forest Law to Parliament for improvement and approval, and collaborate with the private sector to advance conservation governance dialogues.
On October 1st, the Peruvian Conservation Caucus and ICCF held a roundtable discussion on illegal fishing, focusing on important challenges and opportunities in fighting illegal fishing in Latin America and the role of policymakers.

Peru’s marine-coastal ecosystems face a series of challenges and pressures that limit the sustainable use of marine resources and the availability of the services they provide to society. However, with technological advancement and the implementation of systems that allow for the detection of illicit maritime activity, the country can more effectively regulate illegal fishing in its waters. The Ministry of the Environment has further indicated that one of its strategic objectives is to reduce pressures on marine-coastal ecosystems by strengthening preventive actions, monitoring, control, and surveillance of the activities that impact them, adopting pertinent measures and effective sanctions.

On October 3rd, the Colombian Conservation Caucus (CCC), the Colombian Oceans Caucus (CCC), and ICCF Colombia, together with the Center of Investigations and High Legislative Studies (CAEL), hosted a multi-sectoral roundtable discussion analyzing the topic of illegal fishing and its implications for sustainable development in the country. Members attending the roundtable concluded that illegal fishing is a topic that requires coordinated work from all parties involved. Illegal fishing impacts continental zones like the Amazon, as well as Sustainable Development Goals for food security, decent employment, climate change, sustainable production, and consumption, which affect continental zones.
Please introduce yourself and Space for Giants.

I am Shamini Jayanathan, Director of Wildlife Protection for Space for Giants.

Space for Giants is an international NGO based in Kenya. We operate in about ten countries across the African continent, covering a number of different areas of work, different streams. My focus is the rule of law, but the organization also covers issues such as green corridors, conservation investment, all ultimately with the purpose of securing landscapes for elephants forever.

Why focus on elephants in Africa?

Victims of poaching, elephants are representative of a number of wildlife species under threat across Africa. Rhinos, pangolins, and many others are subject to this threat. Poaching has grown to become an element threatening the very survival of animals, and if we aren’t careful, the only place we’ll be seeing an elephant in 20 years may very well be the zoo. Hence, much of the work that Space for Giants is focusing on looks at the issue of illegal wildlife trafficking and the poaching crisis that has been sweeping across Africa and threatening those vulnerable populations.

How do you work with The ICCF Group?

Space for Giants works very closely with The ICCF Group. We find that the unique approach of setting up caucuses in countries that are struggling with the poaching crisis, as well as all kinds of other conservation issues, is particularly important: Without the legislation in place, many measures we try to put in place to address these threats can’t actually take hold. Having parliamentarians engaged, and being able to be informed and empowered on the decisions that they make, on what laws to pass and whether they’ll be effective, is incredibly important to our work, to ensure that we can be effective in what we do.

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During the last quarter of 2018, The ICCF Group saw the accomplishment of many of the key objectives set forth by its congressional/parliamentary caucus leaders in the United States and around the globe. On the legislative front, the bipartisan DELTA Act, championed by U.S. caucus leaders, passed by a unanimous vote in the Senate and was signed into law by the President. This represented a major achievement for conservation globally, as the new law allows for the promotion of sustainable economic growth through transboundary programs in one of Africa’s key regions: the Okavango River Basin. Thank you to the bipartisan leadership of the International Conservation Caucus as well as our many partners, who worked tirelessly to make the United States a major ally in the economic development and safeguarding of the wildlife and natural habitat of this important region.

The ICCF Group also welcomed initiatives from caucuses in Colombia and Peru, which undertook the challenging task of addressing illegal fishing and its for the sustainable development of their countries. Working sessions held this Fall led both groups to advocate for a multisectoral approach and a pro-development, pro-growth philosophy, and we thank the business leaders of our Conservation Council for having brought scientific expertise to the discussions while providing technological innovation on the ground capable of solving the pressing conservation issues that relate to food security, employment, sustainable production, and consumption affecting continental zones.

In Africa, The ICCF Group also had a very strong quarter. We continued our engagement in Angola by assisting the Ministry of Environment in the organization of a landmark Mini-Mission, assessing the biodiversity and ecotourism investment potential of the country’s national parks and protected areas. We also supported the Zambian Caucus in its collaborative effort to assess the recently launched Wetlands Policy, helped the Kenyan Caucus in their discussions toward amending the National Wildlife Conservation and Management Act of 2013, and assisted the Mozambique Caucus in discussing the National Strategy on Wildlife and Forest Crime.

Meanwhile, our International Conservation Corps had its most active quarter to date, with initiatives taking root in Grenada, Thailand, Saint Kitts and Nevis, China, Peru, and The Bahamas. We could not be more pleased with the reception our experts have received from government officials on the ground, and we look forward to continuing to build on these initial missions in 2019.

Best Wishes,

John Basil Gantt
President, ICCF U.S.