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WASHINGTON, DC - FEB 6, 2019

U.S. INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION CAUCUS, OCEANS CAUCUS CO-CHAIRS OUTLINE PRIORITIES FOR 116TH CONGRESS

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: SENATOR TOM UDALL (D-NM), REPRESENTATIVE DAVID JOYCE (R-OH), SENATOR SHELDON WHITEHOUSE (D-RI), REPRESENTATIVE SUZANNE BONAMICI (D-OR), REPRESENTATIVE DON YOUNG (R-AK), SENATOR RICHARD BURR (R-NC), SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN (R-AK)
The leadership of the International Conservation Caucus and the Oceans Caucus made great strides in advancing international conservation in the 115th Congress, driving legislative outcomes on a wide range of issues.

Caucus co-chairs celebrated these accomplishments on February 6, 2019, speaking before a gathering of leading businesses and NGOs, and resolved to build upon them in 2019 and beyond. They also shared their priorities for the 116th Congress.

INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION CAUCUS

IN 2018, INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION CAUCUS CO-CHAIRS IN THE HOUSE AND SENATE INTRODUCED AND USHERED THROUGH TWO BILLS TO ENHANCE EFFORTS TO CONSERVE CRITICAL ECOSYSTEMS AROUND THE GLOBE.

The Defending Economic Livelihoods and Threatened Animals (DELTA) Act, introduced in the House by International Conservation Caucus co-chair Representative Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE), was signed by the President just after the new year to promote sustainable economic growth in the Okavango River Basin region, Africa’s largest inland water system and home to its largest remaining elephant population. Days later, the President signed the Tropical Forest Conservation Reauthorization Act (TFCA), a bill authored by International Conservation Caucus co-chair Senator Rob Portman (R-OH), to reauthorize a program that has saved 67 million acres of tropical forest and to expand it to help conserve coral reefs. Each of these bills was introduced with the support of fellow caucus co-chairs as original co-sponsors, and both passed with tremendous bipartisan support.

Speaking at ICCF’s annual gathering of its Conservation Council - ICCF’s collaboration of business, NGO, and institutional partners - International Conservation Caucus co-chair Senator Richard Burr (R-NC) emphasized the importance of “not losing focus on expanding education and commitment around the world.” His colleague in the Senate and a founding co-chair of the International Conservation Caucus, Senator Tom Udall (D-NM), suggested that Congress should take steps to improve U.S. commitments to conserve important biodiversity around the world.

OCEANS CAUCUS

The U.S. made great strides in addressing the growing challenge of marine debris in 2018, thanks in large part to the leadership of the Oceans Caucus in the House and the Senate. In October, President Trump signed the Save Our Seas (SOS) Act, a bill introduced in the Senate by honorary Oceans Caucus co-chair Senator Dan Sullivan (R-AK) and founding Oceans Caucus co-chair Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI). The bill, which garnered unanimous bipartisan support in both chambers, promotes a global response to the marine debris crisis and reauthorized the expired NOAA Marine Debris Program for five years.

During the February 6th discussions, Senators Sullivan and Whitehouse both indicated that in 2019, they will look to build upon this progress. Senator Sullivan told those gathered that they know where the waste in the oceans is coming from. Many around the world are organizing around this issue, which, the Senator said, makes him enthusiastic about the prospects of solving it. He and Senator Whitehouse each discussed a second bill they plan to introduce this year, a Save our Seas Act 2.0.

Another issue on which the Oceans Caucus leadership has shown tremendous leadership in recent years is illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The Senate approved four international fishing treaties, and Congress passed implementing legislation in 2015. In 2019, Senator Whitehouse said, Congress should look to do more to counter illegal fishing.
Oceans (ARPA-O). The legislation would launch a new Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing Tech Force, to coordinate the development of technologies to address IUU fishing. This measure follows on successful work of the Oceans Caucus to support the passage of four international agreements aimed at combating IUU fishing and the related enabling legislation.

WASHINGTON, DC • MAR 28, 2019

WHITEHOUSE, MURKOWSKI UNVEIL BILL TO ADVANCE UNDERSTANDING OF OCEANS, GREAT LAKES, AND COASTS

The BLUE GLOBE Act would support innovation, accelerate development of marine technologies, and improve monitoring of important bodies of water.

U.S. Senators Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), co-chairs of the bipartisan Senate Oceans Caucus, today unveiled new legislation to advance data collection of the Great Lakes, oceans, bays, estuaries, and coasts. The Bolstering Long-Term Understanding and Exploration of the Great Lakes, Oceans, Bays, and Estuaries Act, or the BLUE GLOBE Act, would accelerate technology innovation, grow the marine workforce, and develop a better understanding of the blue economy.

“We know more about the surface of the moon than we do about our own oceans,” said Senator Whitehouse. “Senator Murkowski and I have proposed a bipartisan bill to help give the oceans the attention they are due. It’s time to invest in research, technology, and a future workforce that will shape a better understanding of our seas, Great Lakes, and coasts.”

“Our oceans are one of the Earth’s most valuable resources. With the growth of the ocean economy projected to outpace the global economy, this is an opportunity that our nation must capitalize on. But in order to do so we need to invest in the necessary technology to produce reliable data and observations that will allow us to strategically link economic growth and stewardship of our oceans, bays, lakes, and estuaries. This will open the door to increasing Alaska’s sustainable seafood production, support our coastal communities and residents, and develop stronger transportation, recreation, and energy production,” said Senator Murkowski.

The BLUE GLOBE Act would charge existing federal ocean-focused interagency committees to improve domestic and international coordination and enhance data management and accessibility. It would also establish an Interagency Ocean Exploration Committee to promote exploration and monitoring of the oceans. The legislation would ensure a high-level ocean committee will continue in the Office of the President, regardless of the administration.

The BLUE GLOBE Act would accelerate ocean data and monitoring innovation by giving new and existing NOAA Cooperative Institutes a stronger focus on technology advancement. It creates a new innovation prize, and tasks the National Academy of Sciences with assessing the potential for an Advanced Research Project Agency–Oceans (ARPA-O). The legislation would launch a new Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing Tech Force, to coordinate the development of technologies to address IUU fishing. This measure follows on successful work of the Oceans Caucus to support the passage of four international agreements aimed at combating IUU fishing and the related enabling legislation.

“We are excited to see the BLUE GLOBE Act focus on the importance of monitoring and observations for our oceans, coasts and Great Lakes,” said Debra Hernandez, Chair of the IOOS Association. “Observations provide us with the basic information to understand the changes that are occurring and to develop the information, alerts and assessment necessary for fishermen, emergency managers, rescue personal, resource managers, shippers and the general public. The BLUE GLOBE Act supports the Integrated Ocean Observing System and other observing and technology efforts by enhancing coordination, encouraging innovation and supporting information technology.”

The BLUE GLOBE Act reauthorizes a number of NOAA programs and directs heads of relevant federal agencies to more accurately measure the value of the Blue Economy.

It also looks to indigenous, subsistence, and fishing communities as a source of ocean information. The bill calls for the creation of a workforce development program to support undergraduate, graduate, and informal education in fields relevant to ocean data and monitoring.

“Improved data collection and collaboration is paramount to protecting and preserving the world’s oceans,” said Johan Bergenas, Senior Director for Public Policy at Vulcan Inc., a technology leader in the effort to identify and combat IUU fishing. “The BLUE GLOBE Act will help guard our water resources by ramping up technology innovation and increasing data collection and collaboration across agencies. Vulcan commends Senators Whitehouse and Murkowski for their leadership on these issues, which are vital to American and global prosperity.”

“I’M PROUD TO INTRODUCE THIS LEGISLATION TO HELP ENSURE WE HAVE ROBUST, RELIABLE INFORMATION TO FOSTER THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR BLUE ECONOMY.”

-- SENATOR LISA MURKOWSKI (R-AK)
WASHINGTON, DC - JAN 18, 2019

JOYCE JOINS BIPARTISAN LEADERSHIP OF HOUSE INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION CAUCUS

ICCF would like to welcome Representative Dave Joyce (R-OH) to the leadership of the ICC and looks forward to working with him towards advancing U.S. leadership in international conservation.

Representative Joyce joins Representative Henry Cuellar (D-TX), Representative Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE), and Representative Betty McCollum (D-MN) as co-chair of the House International Conservation Caucus. Co-chairs of the Senate International Conservation Caucus include Senator Richard Burr (R-NC), Senator Rob Portman (R-OH), Senator Tom Udall (D-NM), and Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI).

Representative Joyce represents Ohio’s 14th Congressional District in the United States House of Representatives. He is a member of the House Appropriations Committee and is the Ranking Member on the House Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, the subcommittee now chaired by fellow caucus co-chair Representative McCollum. Prior to being elected to Congress in 2012, Joyce served Ohio as a special prosecutor, including a term as Geauga County Prosecuting Attorney. He holds a bachelor’s degree in accounting and a J.D. from the University of Dayton.

WASHINGTON, DC - MAR 12, 2019

CONGRESS REAUTHORIZES CONSERVATION PROGRAMS, EST. ROOSEVELT PRIZE

The bill, the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (S. 47), also creates prize competitions to combat wildlife trafficking and promote conservation. President Trump signed the bill into law on March 12, 2019.

Initially introduced as the Wildlife Innovation and Longevity Driver (WILD) Act, Title VII, Section 7001 of the Dingell Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act reauthorizes the African Elephant Conservation Act, the Asian Elephant Conservation Act of 1997, the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act of 1994, the Great Ape Conservation Act of 2000, and the Marine Turtle Conservation Act of 2004 through 2023. These bills, collectively coined the Multinational Species Conservation Acts, directed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to create the Multinational Species Conservation Funds, from which FWS provides grants benefiting elephants, rhinos, great apes, and marine turtles. Earlier this year, Congress appropriated $11,561,000 to carry out these programs in 2019.

Further, Title VII, Section 7002, initially introduced by International Conservation Caucus co-chair Senator Rob Portman as the Migratory Birds of the Americas Conservation Act, reauthorizes the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act through 2023 as well, authorizing $6,500,000 annually for the program. The bill similarly permits FWS to match grants for migratory bird conservation projects throughout the Western Hemisphere. Congress appropriated $3,910,000 for the program in 2019.

Section 7001 - the WILD Act - also establishes a series of Teddy Roosevelt Genius Prizes for technological advancement and innovation, including for “prevention of wildlife poaching and trafficking,” “promotion of wildlife conservation,” “management of invasive species,” “protection of endangered species,” and “nonlethal management of human-wildlife conflicts.” The prize competitions, to be administered through FWS, in partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), are authorized through 2023 and may award one prize in each category annually in the amount of $100,000.
WASHINGTON, DC · FEB 5, 2019

EMPOWER THE AFRICAN VOICE IN CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT, SAYS NEW AWF CEO

Africa’s natural resources foster a substantial international tourism industry, but structural improvements must be implemented to increase the voice of Africa in development and conservation decision-making.

To protect the continent’s wildlife and lands while boosting its national economy, a wholistic approach that deeply considers citizens’ aspirations will be necessary, says Kaddu Sebunya, CEO of the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF). On February 5th, ICCF hosted a Congressional staff briefing on African conservation and development featuring Mr. Sebunya as a keynote speaker, bringing together AWF and senior congressional staff to consider and discuss these issues.

Despite Africa’s rich diversity of resources, in some places its tourism industry does not financially empower rural communities or encourage consideration of conservation as an essential component of the national economy. This leads to reliance on illicit activities like wildlife poaching, which have global links to human and drug trafficking activity along with the illegal trade of other natural resources. AWF, bolstered by integral partnerships with U.S. government agencies such as the Department of Interior and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, works toward ecotourism that benefits African communities and advancing both security and conservation through public- and private-sector involvement. Their work to advise African governments revising their wildlife laws, for example, also helps to strengthen human trafficking laws, not only advancing conservation goals but also supporting economic growth and international security. In addition, AWF’s development of schools and educational programs in remote communities, such as wildlife clubs and the Classroom Africa program, generates a shift from sole dependence on land in these rural areas to involvement in other sectors. AWF also works with the African Union to create and implement international forums, bringing African workers’ voices into the national and international dialogue.

According to Sebunya, to successfully empower African citizens through natural resources, there must be an effort from the public and private sectors to integrate conservation interests into development considerations. Greater support to bring the voice of Africa to the foreground in African development negotiations with countries like China would allow development projects in Africa to reflect the mindset and aspirations of African people, leading to increased economic responsibility and conservation interests on the continent. Private-sector investments in organizations like AWF would also help to distribute profits from the tourism industry more widely across regions so that African communities - particularly rural communities in which the income of some currently depends on illegal activity - independently own and run their own businesses.

Many improvements have been made in African natural resource management, but the need for African ownership and leadership persists as development negotiations and ecological implications are considered globally. U.S. support for international conservation, with implementing partners like AWF, remains an essential component of achieving conservation and development goals, as well as increased international security.
THE OKAVANGO WATERSHED Region of southern Africa, which spans the nations of Angola, Botswana, and Namibia, is Africa’s most expansive inland water system and home to its largest remaining elephant population.

On February 25th, Representative Fortenberry and other Members of the International Conservation Caucus joined the Ambassadors of Botswana and Namibia, a high-level parliamentary delegation from Angola, and institutional and private-sector stakeholders at an ICCF-hosted Congressional Member Dinner to celebrate passage of the DELTA Act and discuss continued efforts to promote conservation and sustainable economic growth in this important region. Attendees highlighted the potential benefits the DELTA Act could bring about on both a local and global scale. The bill instructs the U.S. government to partner with the governments of Angola, Botswana, and Namibia and other stakeholders to develop plans for sustainable management of resources and wildlife in the Okavango Watershed Region.

Representing the governments of Botswana and Namibia at the February 25th dinner were H.E. Ambassador David Newman and H.E. Ambassador Monica Nashandi, respectively. Joining from Angola were members of the National Assembly led by the Honorable Josefina Diakite, Chair of the 3rd Commission on Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation, and Angolan Communities Abroad.

In Washington at the request of the Angolan government, this high-level parliamentary delegation met throughout the week with various public- and private-sector stakeholders as well as leaders of the International Conservation Caucus. ICCF has been working closely with the Angolan government over the past year, most recently participating in a mini-mission led by Angola’s Minister of the Environment to assess the biodiversity and ecotourism investment potential in Angola’s national parks and protected areas. ICCF partners African Parks, Vulcan, and Halo Trust also participated in this mini-mission.

Over the last century, tiger populations have declined by nearly 97 percent. Across 13 countries in Asia, habitat destruction and poaching for traditional medicine and exotic trade items continue to jeopardize the survival of this CITES-listed Appendix I species (species threatened with extinction).

Just days before the film’s premiere on Discovery Channel, ICCF and Discovery partnered to present TIGERLAND, a documentary following the people on the front lines trying to save tigers from extinction, on Capitol Hill. Discovery CEO David Zaslav introduced the film.

Zaslav recalled a conversation about the “Greatest Generation,” sharing, “We talked about Discovery as being not just a media company, but a purpose-driven company. And that the issue for our generation, our rendezvous with destiny, is to fight this issue of animal extinction.”
MEXICAN CONSERVATION PARLIAMENTARY GROUP UNDERTAKES FIELD MISSION IN CAMPECHE, MEXICO

From January 23-25, 2019, the Mexican Conservation Parliamentary Group, with the support of the ICCF Group, the National Committee for Protected Natural Areas (CONANP), and Politics and Environmental Legislation (POLEA), undertook a field mission to Campeche to learn about success stories in conservation and the management of forests.

On the mission’s first day, a tour of the central area known as Reserva de la Biosfera de Calakmul was organized to highlight the most intact tropical forest in Mexico and its habitat of endangered species such as the jaguar, over 350 bird species, nearly 100 mammals, and vegetation representative of 80% of the flora found in the Yucatán Peninsula.

On the second day, the delegation visited the Ejidos de Valentín Gómez Farias y Nueva Beca to see how community-driven organizations can generate concrete examples of sustainability, which promote natural capital conservation and generate socio-economic benefits to participants. In both of Mexico’s unique ejido land tenancy systems, communities have organized themselves to sustainably manage wood and non-wood forest resources, which allowed them to incorporate into value chains local products such as honey, spices, and chiles, thereby creating their own organic-certified brands.

On the third and final day, the delegation met with MPs to discuss their strategic plans and to identify points of collaboration, targeting effective conservation policies and legislation. The delegation then visited the National Committee for Conservation and the Management of Forests (CONAFOR), and the Ministry of Transport and Communications, to discuss the unique and important role the Maputo Harbor has to play within the region.

ZAMBIA TO MOZAMBIQUE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY EXCHANGE

From February 24th – 26th, The ICCF Group supported a visit of the Zambian Parliamentary Conservation Caucus (ZPCC) to Maputo, Mozambique. The Zambian delegation met with the Speaker of the Mozambican Assembly, Her Excellency Verónica Macamo, the members of the Mozambican Parliament on Conservation (MPFC), the Ministry of Transport and Communications, and the Port & Railway Authorities. Specific objectives discussed included the caucuses’ strategic plans for 2019, cross-boundary wildlife conservation issues, and the utilization of ports to combat environmental crime. The delegation was keen to share and discuss with their Mozambican counterparts systems of governance enforced in both countries in relation to conservation policies and legislation.

During the visit at the Mozambican Parliament, H.E. Verónica Macamo spoke on the significance of the visit and welcomed the delegation “as brothers and sisters, and as neighbours and colleagues working in the same area to protect [against] loss of natural resources for the people.” She continued by stating that the conservation of nature is very important to the Mozambican government, and by expressing her gratitude that the leader of the 5th Committee, Hon. Francisco Mucanheia, who is also a Co-Chair of the MPFC, is an expert on natural resource management and conservation.

Following, Hon. Nickson Chilangwa, leader of the Zambian delegation and Secretary of the ZPCC, proclaimed that Zambia and Mozambique “share a common future.” The countries share both a border and the Zambezi River and in turn must share experiences and learn from one another. He pointed out illegal harvesting of timber and indigenous plants, and wildlife poaching and trafficking, as illicit activities that connect the two countries and must be addressed.

Afterwards, the Zambian delegation met with the members of the MPFC to discuss their strategic plans and to identify points of collaboration, targeting effective conservation policies and legislation. Hon. Mucanheia spoke of how ICCF-supported activities were critical in helping parliamentarians recognize the need to review the Penal Code in 2016. These code revisions specifically targeted illegal timber logging, a cross-boundary issue that saw timber logged in Zambia being transported out of Africa through Mozambique. Hon. Chilangwa emphasized the critical need for regional coordination as exploited material from Zambia and the surrounding area continues to be smuggled through Mozambique.

Following the Parliament visit, the delegation met with the Port and Railway Authorities for a tour of the administrative and operational sections of the Maputo Port. The port serves as a transit point for minerals coming in from neighbouring countries that are then shipped worldwide. The delegation and Port Authorities discussed the administrative and operational processes involved in the seizure of wildlife products along with the legal processes that follow against perpetrators. Afterwards, the delegation met with the Minister of Transport and Communications, Carlos Mesquita, to discuss the unique and important role the Maputo harbor has to play within the region. Hon. Chilangwa explained that although Zambia is a landlocked country, Mozambique has three ports that connect to Zambia. He continued that it is imperative for Mozambique to collaborate with its neighbours in order to align policies and legislation that have a regional effect. Minister Mesquita pointed out that the Ministry is aware of the importance of multilateral approaches to governance and is working on a trilateral agreement with Malawi and Zambia at the moment.

With the understanding that conservation is a fundamental aspect of sustainable development, the general consensus of the exchange participants was that Zambian and Mozambican leaders must continue to coordinate and collaborate to ensure the passage of regional biodiversity conservation legislation.
MALAWI MPCC EXCHANGE TO NAIROBI AROUND UNEA CONFERENCE

From March 11th to 15th, Co-Chairs of the Malawi Parliamentary Conservation Caucus (MPCC) traveled to Nairobi, Kenya for an inter-parliamentary exchange to engage with their counterparts of the Parliamentary Conservation Caucus - Kenya (PCC-K).

Activities included participating in the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-4), an urban safari to the Nairobi National Park alongside Angolan delegates, and a visit to the Parliament of Kenya, where the delegation was formally recognized by the Speaker of the National Assembly.

With the aim of discussing systems of governance enforced in both countries, a point of discussion surrounded the ban of thin plastics, which has been successfully implemented in Kenya. Despite criticism from manufacturers and other players in the industry, Kenyan police continue to work closely with the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) to enforce the rules, and public willingness to embrace the changes has facilitated the process of implementation. The Malawi delegation was able to meet with business leaders and Members of the Kenyan Parliament to discuss sustainable management within businesses in terms of capital investment focused on eco-friendly products and how parliamentarians can refine and develop domestic policies and legislation that focus on good natural resource management.

OPENING OF THAILAND-US FRIENDSHIP TRAIL

Marking 200 years of U.S.-Thai friendship and cooperation, The ICCF Group’s International Conservation Corps traveled to Thailand to mark the opening of the “Thailand-U.S. Friendship Trail” in Khao Yai National Parks.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION CORPS

The ICCF Group’s International Conservation Corps is made up of experienced veterans from U.S. and Canadian land management agencies (such as the U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, among others) who travel to partner nations around the world to provide high-level, low-cost expertise.
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

To date, the first quarter of 2019 has been one of the most ambitious quarters for U.S.-led conservation initiatives, thanks to the commitment and efforts of co-chairs of the U.S. Congressional International Conservation Caucus and Oceans Caucus.

Caucus leaders opened the year by outlining their priorities for the 116th Congress, now in session. Oceans Caucus founders, Senators Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), unveiled the BLUE GLOBE Act, bipartisan legislation that if passed, would advance data collection of the Great Lakes, oceans, bays, estuaries, and coasts. The International Conservation Caucus welcomed Representative Dave Joyce (R-OH) to its leadership and catalyzed political will from both Democrats and Republicans for Congress to reauthorize conservation programs as part of a comprehensive natural resource management package. Signed into law in March by President Trump, this major legislative effort will advance the WILD Act, sponsored by Senator Whitehouse, by establishing the Teddy Roosevelt Genius Prizes for technological advancement and innovation, and the Migratory Birds of the Americas Conservation Act, introduced by caucus co-chair Senator Rob Portman (R-OH).

Abroad, The ICCF Group also made significant strides in its mission to support caucus leaders. In Latin America, thanks to the support of governmental and nonprofit partners, we supported the Mexican Conservation Parliamentary Group in undertaking a field mission in Campeche, Mexico, for caucus members to learn about success stories in the sustainable management of forests. In Africa, we witnessed record-breaking participation in our Zambian Workshop on The Ban of Plastic Bags & Caucus Strategic Planning, with over 60 members of parliament attending. We also hosted inter-parliamentary exchanges between Zambia and Mozambique and between Malawi and Kenya through the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA), undertaking issues such as systems of conservation governance, cross-boundary wildlife conservation, and the utilization of ports to combat environmental crime.

Building on such a successful quarter, The ICCF Group can look forward to a productive Spring, and we wish to thank our partners without whom we could not support the network of conservation caucuses now active and growing around the world.

Best wishes,

John B. Gantt
President, ICCF U.S.