

Dear Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, climate and wildlife of Zimbabwe,

Dear Director of the department of Food, Agriculture and natural resources of SADC Secretariat,

Dear Director General of Zimparks,

Dear Director of Africa Directorate for central East and southern Africa at BMZ,

Dear representative of WWF,

Dear CEO of Peace Parks Foundation,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to address you today at this important event to celebrate the 25 years of the SADC Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) programme. These cross-border conservation initiatives represent one of the most promising and forward-thinking approaches to safeguarding our planet's rich natural heritage while driving regional integration from below.

I would like to thank Zimbabwe for hosting this event. As you all know Zimbabwe is part of 5 TFCAs: KAZA, LOZAMAP, ZIMOZA, GLTFCA and Chimanimani.

In a world where ecosystems are increasingly impacted by human activity and fragmented by political boundaries, TFCAs offer a unique solution to protect biodiversity while tackling issues affecting neighbouring communities such as human wildlife conflicts and the lack of livelihood and job opportunities.

NaturAfrica

Ladies and gentleman,

I would like to emphasise the work done by the European Union in support of TFCAs under the Global Gateway flagship initiative called **NaturAfrica**.

At its core, NaturAfrica stands on **three pillars**, each essential to building resilient, inclusive and sustainable ecosystems.

The first pillar is Biodiversity Conservation. This pillar is not simply about protecting species, it is about ensuring that these ecosystems continue to provide essential services, such as clean water, carbon sequestration and sustainable livelihoods.

The second pillar is the Green Economy. Conservation and development are not mutually exclusive. NaturAfrica supports the creation of a green economy that promotes sustainable livelihoods while protecting the environment.

The third pillar is Governance and Partnerships.

Effective governance is essential for ensuring that conservation initiatives succeed in the long

term. NaturAfrica places a strong emphasis on strengthening the governance frameworks that support conservation and development.

The NaturAfrica initiative has a budget of EUR 155 million (2021-2024) targeting 6 key mega landscapes in Africa.

In Southern Africa, we have earmarked EUR 33 million to support the sustainable management of a number of TFCAs, for the benefits of people and nature, fully aligned with the objectives of the SADC TFCA Programme.

SADC has pioneered the concept of transfrontier conservation areas since the 90's and it has now become a model to follow for other regions in Africa.

We have joined forces with our colleagues from the German cooperation (BMZ) which have been working to support this programme for a long time, putting Team Europe as a robust partner of SADC and SADC MS in this joint effort.

1) We have kicked off the start of our official support to the SADC TFCA programme through NaturAfrica in April last year through the signature of a contract with GIZ supporting the project that is now called the “**Joint NaturAfrica/Climate-Natural Resources Management project**”. The objective is to improve governance, coordination and capacities for transboundary Natural Resource Management (NRM), at the regional and TFCA levels.

2) In parallel, in this first phase of our programme we **target 6 TFCAs**: KAZA1, ZIMOZA/LOZAMAP2, MAZA3, Great Limpopo, Chimanimani and Kgalagadi). In a second phase (after 2025) the support will be expanded either towards other TFCAs or through consolidation of the support ongoing in the existing ones. We are aiming at supporting your efforts and consolidate your achievements in the longer term.

3) Finally, we intend to contribute directly to the **SADC TFCA Financing Facility** to support projects on the ground targeting green economy initiatives in TFCAs at the level of communities. We intend to launch the activities under this component in the next couple of months.

As we look to the future, let us continue to strengthen our partnerships, invest in sustainable solutions, work with local communities living in and around protected areas, and preserve the incredible biodiversity that Southern Africa offers to the world.

Thank you.

¹ Kavango Zambezi TFCA (Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe)

² ZIMOZA – Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia / LOZAMAP – lower Zambezi and Mana Pools

³ MAZA – Malawi, Zambia