BCC 2026
Summary Report



AFRICAN LEADERSHIP UNIVERSITY
International Institute for Environment and Development
SCHOOL OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

450+
Registrations in total

350+
Attendees in total

42
Countries represented

60+
Speakers in total

60+
Partner Organisations Hosting Sessions

19
Sectors represented ranging from Academia to Business

40+
Sessions, with a mix of plenary and parallel sessions

217
Female

257
Male

TOP 5 NATIONALITIES



BUSINESS OF CONSERVATION CONFERENCE

About the conference

The Business of Conservation Conference (BCC) aims to catalyse economic development through the sustainable use of wildlife resources. It brings together influential leaders to build partnerships, unlock the potential of Africa's wildlife economy, and demonstrate that conservation and development are not competing priorities. They can - and must - reinforce one another. At its heart, BCC advances a simple but powerful idea: conservation is everyone's business and a significant economic opportunity for the continent.

Despite decades of expanding protected-area coverage, biodiversity continues to decline. This makes one thing clear: increasing the number of protected areas is not enough. The way conservation is understood, discussed and delivered must also change. People need to be at the centre of the conservation story, with nature protected for and with communities, rather than from them. As biodiversity loss accelerates and the impacts of climate change intensify, healthy ecosystems become increasingly important to human wellbeing, resilience and prosperity.

BCC 2026 explores how to reshape the conservation narrative and translate it into action. It highlights innovative approaches that align conservation with inclusive development, unlock sustainable investment, and create lasting benefits for both people and nature.

Building a community that believes in Africa's Wildlife Economy

Launch the Wildlife Economy Investment Index

Assist SOWC in addressing the urgent need to develop a strong pipeline of highly capable African conservation leaders for the future

BCC 2026
Guest Speakers



Kate Abraham
Associate Dean
ALU School of Business



David Akana
Director of Programs
Mongabay Africa



Hugues Akpona
Regional Operations Manager West Africa
African Parks Network



Bupe Banda
Zambian Community Resources Board Association (ZCRBA)



Aly Breedlove
Managing Director
ThirdWay Partners (TWP)



Kingsley Budu Boafo
Young Conservation Leader, ALU Graduate



Muhindo Nzangi Butonto
National Minister
National Government of DRC



Barbara Chesire
Managing Director
AB Entheos Kenya



Sidee Dlamini
Chief Executive Officer, ALU



Anna Ducros
Researcher, Nature and Climate Finance, IIED



Richard Field
Professor of Biodiversity Science
University of Nottingham



Wanjiku Kinuthia
Deputy Director, Partner Communications
Maliasili



Jackson Koimbori
Head of KEPSA Consult | Senior Circular Economy and Climate Change Coordinator



Erika Korosi
Fellow and Senior Director Nature Markets
Conservation International



Jean Labuschagne
Director of Conservation Development
African Parks



Matt Lindenberg
Executive Director
Global Conservation Corps

BUSINESS OF CONSERVATION CONFERENCE

BCC 2026
Guest Speakers



Camille Maclet

Head of Government Affairs & Market Development
International Advisory Panel on Biodiversity



Goretti Masadd

Chief Executive Officer
The Uganda Institute of Banking and Financial Services



Khorommbi Matibe

Chief Director
Biodiversity Economy and Sustainable Use, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, South Africa



Joyce Mbataru

Communication Manager
Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association



Iminza Mbwaya

Associate Director
Sounds Right: Museum for the United Nations - UN Live



Graham McCulloch

Director
Ecoexist & Okavango Brewing Company



Meshurie Melembuki

WMA Manager
Randilen Wildlife Management Area, Tanzania



José Monteiro

Executive Director
ReGeCom



Simon Morgan

International Projects
CreditNature



Chanda Mwale

Head: Regional Coordination
Sustainable Finance Coalition



Christine Mwangi

Programme Manager - BIOFIN, United Nations Development Programme



Priscilla Nabuyemba

Business Development Officer, ECOTRUST



Ravanya Naidoo

Senior Program Manager, African Bioeconomy
Nature Economy, Nature Finance



Dianah Nalwanga

Head of Biodiversity programmes
ECOTRUST



Pauline Nantongo

Executive Director
ECOTRUST



Esther Netshivhongweni

Chairperson International, Environment Guardians (IEG)

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BCC 2026
Guest Speakers



Kenneth Ngetha
Senior Venture Builder
Catalyst Fund



Patita Nkamunu
Co- Founder and
Head of Projects
EarthAcre



Rahab Nyamoita
Project Assistant
AB Entheos



David Obura
Chair, IPBES



Lincoln Oyugi Odhiambo
ALU Graduate
African Leadership
University



Jonathan Onongo
Biodiversity Project
Officer
ECOTRUST



Godfrey Ozeera
Secretary
Tengele Communal
Land Association (CLA)



Martin Potgieter
Director
RMB



Doreen Robinson
Deputy Division Director,
UNEP, Ecosystems
Division



Dilys Roe
Principal Researcher,
IIED



Mariana Sarmiento
Founder & Chief
Executive Officer
Terassos



Samwel Shaba
Chief Executive Officer
- CEO, Honeyguide
Foundation



Toral Shah
Nature Lead
Plan Vivo Foundation



Viraj Sikand
Chief Executive Officer
EarthAcre

BCC 2026
Guest Speakers



Sue Snyman

Director of Research
ALU SOWC



Daniel Sopia

Chief Executive Officer
Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association



Paul Steele

Chief Economist
IIED



Thabang Teffo

Nature Based Economy & Community Led Conservation Practices
SAWC



Elijah Toirai

Snr Director IPs&LCs Engagement & NCS Partnership, Conservation International



Lactitia Tshitwamulomoni

Director
Wildlife Economy,
Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE), South Africa



Arthur Tuda

Executive Director,
WIOMSA



Henry Van Der Does De Willebois

Natural Capital Development Lead
Conserve Global



Richard Vigne

Executive Director
ALU SOWC



Sinclair Vincent

Senior Director,
Program Development
Verra



Akshay Vishwanath

Executive Director
PILAE



Judi Wakhungu

Former Minister (CS) of Environment, Water, & Natural Resources & Former Kenya Ambassador to France, Portugal, Holy See, Serbia, & Monaco



Gladys Warigia

Policy and Advocacy Manager,
Kenya Wildlife Conservancy Association



Anne-Kathrin Zschiegner

Executive Director
The Long Run

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Conference **Impact**

Held in Nairobi from 4–7 March 2026, the Business of Conservation Conference (BCC 2026) brought together leaders from conservation, communities, finance, business and policy around a shared ambition: to unlock the potential of Africa's wildlife economy as a driver of sustainable economic development.

The conference delivered strongly against this ambition. Participant feedback showed that approximately 90% of attendees felt BCC met or exceeded their expectations, reflecting both the relevance of the programme and the quality of the experience.

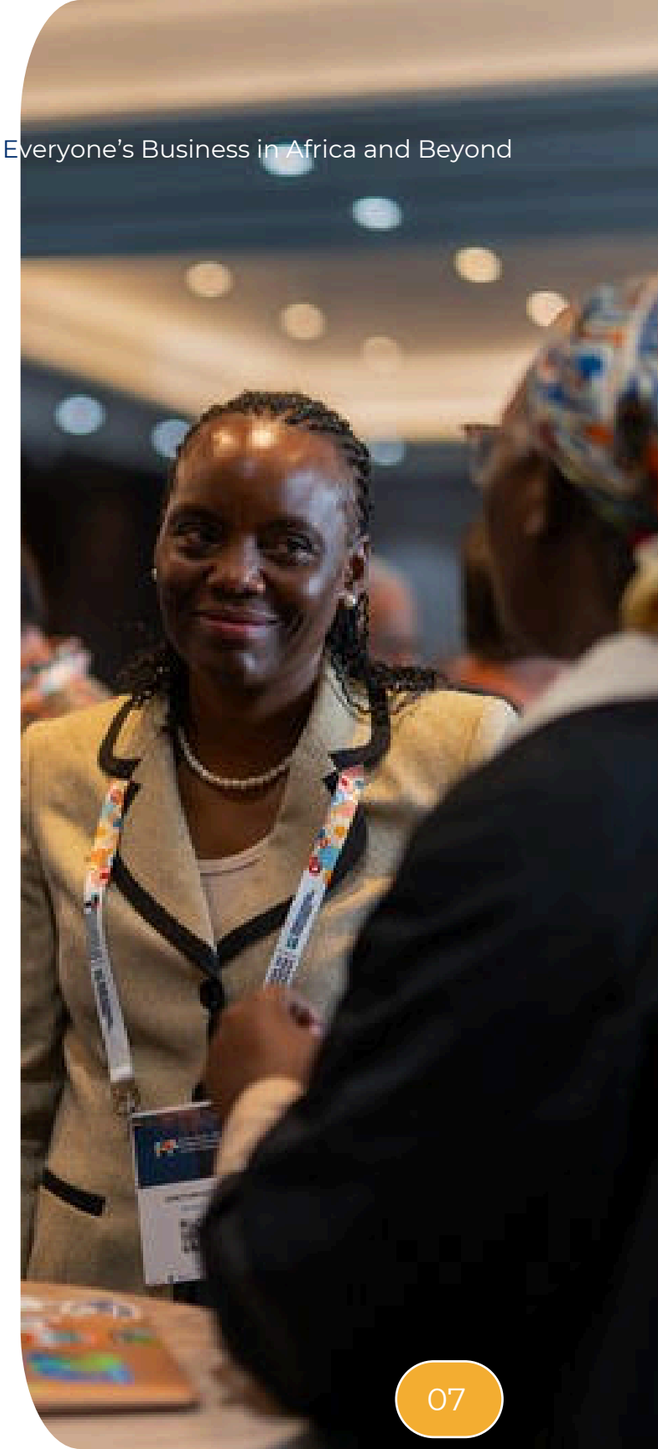
A particular strength of BCC 2026 was the calibre of its speakers and sessions. Participants gained new knowledge, practical insights and inspiration that they could take back into their organisations, projects and businesses. Importantly, many began translating these ideas into action.

BCC's wider value lay in the connections it created. By bringing together people and institutions that do not often share the same platform from businesses and investors to conservation organisations, communities and policymakers the conference created space for new relationships, ideas and partnerships to emerge.

The findings highlight BCC's role not only as a convening event but also as a platform that catalyses partnerships and drives impact across the conservation sector. These connections are already producing tangible outcomes. Participants began developing joint research initiatives, exploring new project collaborations and discussing potential funding opportunities. Together, these emerging partnerships demonstrate how BCC could move beyond conversation to help generate practical action and investment in Africa's wildlife economy.

BCC 2026 therefore provided more than a forum for discussion. It acted as a catalyst - connecting people, ideas and capital in ways that strengthened conservation while creating economic opportunity for people and communities across Africa.

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Key Conference Highlights

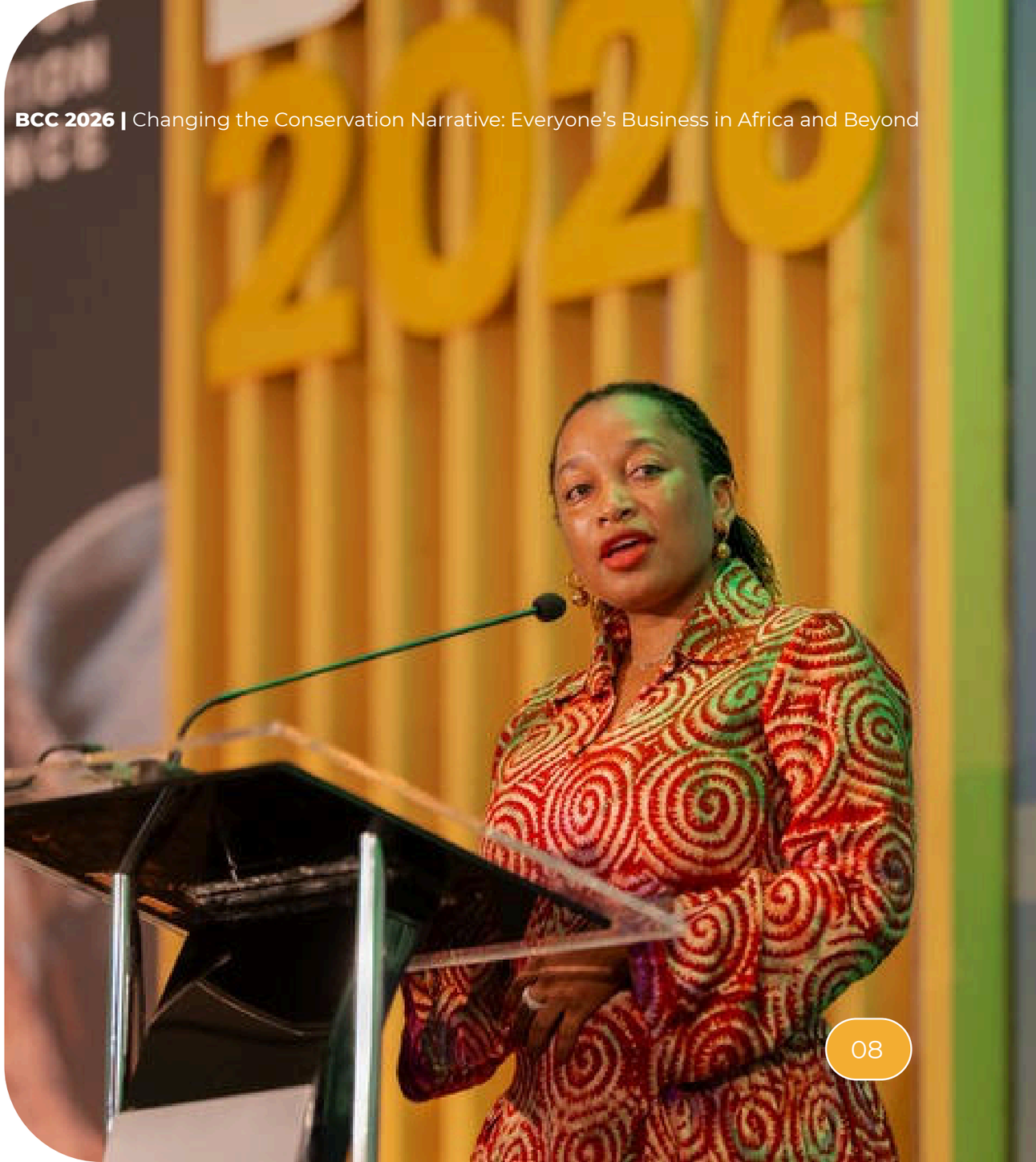
Day 01 of the **Conference**

1. Scale and Strategic Framing

The convening marked the largest gathering to date, reflecting growing recognition of conservation as a strategic pillar in Africa's development. A central theme was the need to reposition conservation as an economic sector that delivers tangible returns.

As emphasised by Sidee Dlamini, CEO of the African Leadership University, "Conservation needs to produce returns." These returns extend beyond environmental protection to include job creation, economic value, and human capital development. Participants stressed the importance of clearly defining what Africa expects from its natural capital and how these benefits could translate into sustainable livelihoods.








MARA















2. Financing Conservation at Scale

A major focus was the challenge of financing conservation sustainably in a rapidly evolving economic and political landscape.

Richard Vigne raised a critical question: ***"Can conservation compete in changing economic and political markets?"*** This was echoed in discussions around the urgent need for scalable financing solutions.

KEY INSIGHTS INCLUDED:

- **Current financing models are not sufficient to meet conservation needs**
- **There is strong investor appetite, but a shortage of bankable projects**
- **Emerging mechanisms such as nature bonds, biodiversity credits, and blended finance offer potential pathways**





"There are ready investors, but they need bankable projects"

Martin Potgieter
Director, RMB



3. Reframing Conservation Narratives

Participants emphasised the need to shift how Africa's conservation story is told. Current narratives often focus on challenges rather than successes.

David Akana, Director of Programs, Mongabay Africa, stated, "We need more positive stories... to show Africa in a different light." Conservation storytelling was identified as a shared responsibility across governments, civil society, donors, and researchers.

There was strong consensus that communities should be empowered to define and share their own narratives. Joyce Mbataru reinforced this by noting the importance of allowing communities to tell their success stories in their own way, supported by appropriate technical and financial resources.



4. Governance and African Ownership

The dialogue highlighted the importance of strengthening African ownership of conservation systems, as an overreliance on external funding continues to limit long-term sustainability.

Sue Snyman, Director of research, School of Wildlife Conservation at the African Leadership University,, emphasised the broader economic context, noting that : "Africa cannot conserve its way out of poverty. Nor can it develop its way out of ecological collapse" This underscores the need to integrate conservation into national development priorities.

Participants stressed that current financing models are not sufficient to meet conservation needs, and the government should:

- **Take greater responsibility for financing conservation**
- **Integrate conservation into national budgets and planning processes**
- **Strengthen institutional coordination, particularly with finance ministries**

Without stronger domestic commitment, conservation efforts risk remaining fragmented and underfunded.



5. Defining Conservation Success

There is currently no unified definition of conservation success across stakeholders.

Joyce Mbataru posed the question, "Is there a unified definition for conservation success?" highlighting that there is currently no unified definition of conservation success across stakeholders and that there is a diversity of perspectives across communities, NGOs, and governments.

Successful models demonstrate that conservation can deliver both ecological and economic outcomes. Community-led initiatives, such as locally managed conservation enterprises, illustrate how livelihoods and biodiversity protection can be mutually reinforcing.



6. Community-Centered and Indigenous Approaches

A strong theme throughout the discussions was the need to reconnect with indigenous knowledge systems and cultural practices.

Esther Netshivhongweni observed that traditional African conservation methods, such as totem-based systems, historically ensured ecological balance. She emphasised that "we are becoming too scientific and ignoring indigenous history and knowledge."

Participants agreed that conservation strategies should:

- **Integrate ancestral knowledge and cultural values**
- **Promote community ownership and participation**
- **Ensure communities benefit directly, including as stakeholders in conservation enterprises**



7. Building Conservation as a Business Sector

Entrepreneurship was identified as a key driver for scaling conservation impact and addressing poverty.

Kenneth Njenga outlined the requirements for investment readiness, including risk identification, market clarity, and financial viability. Mercy Kimalat emphasised the importance of understanding unit economics, stating that entrepreneurs must clearly define their market, costs, and distribution strategies.

There was strong support for building capacity among conservation practitioners, particularly in business, finance, and leadership skills. Educational institutions were highlighted as important platforms for pre-incubation and innovation.



8. Innovation Through Adaptation

Participants noted that innovation in conservation financing does not necessarily require entirely new systems.

Marianna Sarmiento highlighted that many effective solutions already exist in other sectors, stating that the opportunity lies in adapting proven financing models to conservation contexts. This includes applying approaches used in infrastructure and construction financing to conservation projects.



9. Key Strategic Takeaways

1. Conservation must deliver measurable economic, social, and ecological returns
2. Financing models must evolve toward investment-driven approaches
3. Narrative change is essential to shift perceptions and unlock support
4. Communities and indigenous knowledge must be central to conservation strategies
5. Building investment-ready conservation enterprises is key to achieving scale





Day 02 of the Conference

Plenary 1 Summary: From the Ground Up – Business Models in Community Conservation

The session highlighted both the opportunities and structural challenges in building effective community conservation models across Africa. While policy frameworks exist in some countries, such as Mozambique, weak implementation and outdated institutional approaches continue to limit impact. Many existing systems and community engagement methods are no longer aligned with current realities.

Case studies such as the Mara Conservancies demonstrated the risks of overreliance on tourism, particularly exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the importance of diversifying revenue streams. Emerging approaches include carbon trading, government-backed conservation funds, and commercial livestock enterprises. Mechanisms to address human-wildlife conflict, including compensation schemes, are also playing a role in reducing retaliatory killings.

A key message from the session was that community conservation must be economically viable. As emphasised by the moderator, success depends on building strong enabling infrastructure, including governance systems, skills development, and access to capital, ensuring that conservation initiatives can sustain themselves financially.

Speakers also emphasised that meaningful conservation depended on genuinely inclusive community engagement. Communities were not homogenous, and particular attention was needed to ensure that quieter or less visible voices, the "silent majority", were included in decision-making, rather than allowing a small number of individuals to speak for everyone.

The importance of investing in young people also emerged strongly. Participants highlighted the need to equip Africa's next generation with the skills, opportunities and influence to shape, and ultimately lead—the future of conservation across the continent.



Day 03 of the **Conference**



Camille Maclet - Director, Government Affairs and Market Engagement (IAPB)

Camille Maclet highlighted the role of international processes in strengthening governance for nature markets. She noted that there are programs that facilitate dialogue with investors and businesses. These initiatives focus on social equity, additionality, and market integration, helping create systems that support effective natural market governance.

Through these efforts, governments are better positioned to develop and implement appropriate policies within their own jurisdictions.

Governance engagement was emphasised as critical in fostering collaboration, particularly in regions such as China and South Africa.

Training initiatives are also being implemented to build collaboration and create synergies across different networks.

To further strengthen cooperation, efforts are being made to create positive spaces for collaboration among stakeholders.

In ongoing dialogues with governments, the aim is also to propose technical support and other mechanisms that can strengthen governance systems and support the growth of natural markets.

Day 03 of the **Conference**



Esther Netshivhongweni – Chair, International Environment Guardians (IEG)

Esther Netshivhongweni outlined the future plans of the International Environment Guardians (IEG) in supporting the development of nature markets.

She explained that IEG has developed different frameworks aimed at supporting the development of the market. The organization also has a partnership with IPP in South Africa, which focuses on integrating all IPLC (Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities) networks.

On the question of how to increase synergies and collaboration, Esther noted that synergy has developed naturally since the organization began its work in 2023, largely as a result of working together with different partners. She also highlighted that during the launch of the high-level principles, all key players were present, which helped strengthen collaboration among stakeholders.

Currently, IEG continues to work with partners in market testing to further develop and refine the system. She further noted that IEG operates across seven cultural regions, reflecting the diversity of communities involved in these governance processes.

Erika Korosi – Fellow and Senior Director, Nature Markets, Conservation International

Erika discussed the importance of building confidence in natural markets through well-defined principles. These principles focus on three key areas: verified outcomes for nature, fairness for people, such as ensuring consent, and principles that support good governance and market integrity.

She outlined three strategic priority areas guiding their work. The first area focuses on establishing principles that ensure credible outcomes for nature and fair participation for people. The second strategic priority area is knowledge sharing, aimed at strengthening understanding and collaboration across stakeholders. The third area focuses on advocacy and influence, particularly in engaging governments and governance structures.

On increasing synergies and collaboration, Erika noted that stakeholders are unified by a common purpose. However, achieving progress requires dividing responsibilities and addressing the many formal processes involved in building natural markets.

She also highlighted the role of the Nature Market Accelerator, which helps demonstrate what high-integrity supply in nature markets looks like. This initiative itself contributes to driving collaboration and building a stronger community around nature market development.

Parallel Sessions
Takeaways

Sustainable Finance Coalition
Finance solutions for enduring naturescapes

Sustainable Finance Coalition: Sustainable Finance 101- what you need to know to achieve impact at scale for conservation

The session focused on how to move beyond fragmented funding models towards scalable, durable finance solutions that can meet the growing needs of conservation across Southern Africa.

1. Closing a widening finance gap

Conservation faces a significant and growing funding shortfall, with increasing pressure as development aid declines. Current reliance on short-term grants is not sustainable, reinforcing the need for long-term financing approaches.

2. Diversifying the finance mix

No single instrument can address the gap. A combination of funding sources, ranging from traditional finance to emerging tools such as carbon and biodiversity credits, is required, alongside stronger links to community-based economic opportunities.

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3. Redirecting capital towards nature

There is substantial potential to shift capital away from harmful subsidies towards nature-positive investments. Sustainable finance was framed as finance that is scalable, enduring, and impact-driven.

4. From ideas to implementation

A structured approach is needed to identify viable finance solutions, design them into workable models, and mobilise capital over time. This includes building pipelines of investable projects and strengthening links between conservation and financial markets.

5. Grounding finance in real-world contexts

Case studies from Honey Guide (Tanzania) and Conserve Global (Mozambique & Namibia) highlighted that conservation areas require diversified revenue streams to remain viable. Tourism alone is often insufficient, reinforcing the importance of developing complementary, community-linked enterprises.



6. Enabling conditions for success

Three factors emerged as critical: strong governance systems to ensure accountability, access to flexible and risk-tolerant capital, and improved financial literacy and capacity within the conservation sector.

7. Building trust and managing expectations

Clear communication, realistic timelines, and transparent processes are essential for maintaining community support and ensuring long-term viability.

Overall, the session reinforced that scaling conservation finance requires integrated approaches, strong institutional foundations, and a shift towards models that are both economically viable and socially grounded.



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Baotree

Baotree - If You Can't Measure It, You Can't Market It: How Tourism Becomes the Engine for Real Impact

The session emphasised that tourism can only deliver meaningful impact when it is underpinned by clear, reliable data.

1. Measurement as the foundation

Understanding visitor numbers, spending patterns, length of stay, and behaviour provides a clear picture of tourism performance. This enables evidence-based decision-making and reduces reliance on assumptions or anecdotal insights.

2. From marketing to strategy

Tracking campaign performance and visitor trends allows marketing to shift from broad promotion to targeted investment. Destinations can prioritise high-value markets, optimise resource allocation, and improve return on investment.

3. Driving real economic impact

Tourism contributes to employment, supports local enterprises, and stimulates value chains across sectors such as transport and hospitality. Measuring these contributions helps ensure that benefits are maximised and more equitably distributed.



4. Shifting focus to impact, not volume

Success should be assessed through a broader lens, including visitor satisfaction, community well-being, and environmental sustainability. This supports more responsible tourism models that prioritise long-term value over short-term growth.

5. Leveraging data and technology

Digital platforms, booking systems, and user-generated data provide real-time insights into traveller preferences and behaviour. These tools enable adaptive management, improved service delivery, and more responsive destination planning.

Overall, the session reinforced that data-driven tourism is essential for achieving sustainable growth and maximising benefits for both communities and conservation outcomes.



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Zambia National Community Resources Board Association - Wildlife and wealth: Crafting economies that benefit nature and deliver value to communities

The session highlighted that equitable governance and meaningful benefit-sharing are central to making conservation both investable and sustainable.

1. Governance as a foundation for investment

Strong, inclusive governance systems, built over time, are essential. Fairness, representation, and accountability create the conditions needed to attract and sustain investment.

2. Investing in systems, not just projects

Building effective governance requires long-term commitment (often 3–5 years), yet remains underfunded. Prioritising these systems is critical for long-term success.

3. Rethinking what "benefits" mean

Conservation benefits extend beyond income to include social cohesion and access to natural resources. These non-monetary values are often overlooked but remain central to community support.

4. Addressing equity and elite capture

A key challenge is ensuring benefits reach communities equitably. Direct, household-level benefit distribution can reduce elite capture and strengthen trust.

5. Making conservation viable at a local level

For conservation to be a credible land-use option, tangible benefits must be felt at the household level, not only at institutional or leadership levels.

6. Reducing dependency through diversified models

Heavy reliance on donor funding and volatile tourism revenues highlights the need for more resilient and diversified income streams.

Overall, the session reinforced that equitable governance and locally felt benefits are not peripheral, they are fundamental to building viable wildlife economies.



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AB Entheos

AB Entheos & Zoological Society of London - Insurance for Human-Wildlife Co-Existence

The session explored how insurance can provide a more sustainable and scalable response to human–wildlife conflict (HWC), which continues to impose high economic and social costs.

1. A growing and underfunded challenge

HWC is increasing, with current compensation systems proving inconsistent, under-resourced, and unsustainable as long-term solutions.

2. Insurance as a structured alternative

Insurance offers more reliable compensation, encourages risk mitigation, and enables stronger public–private collaboration by distributing risk more effectively.

3. Design and trust determine success

Effective schemes depend on strong community involvement, transparent governance, rapid claims verification, and clear regulatory frameworks.

4. Emerging finance models

Innovations such as outcome bonds and parametric insurance are unlocking new capital, enabling faster payouts, and linking finance to measurable conservation outcomes.

5. Community-centred implementation

With much wildlife occurring on community land, local buy-in is essential. Successful approaches integrate livelihood support, mitigation measures, and accessible payout systems.

6. Remaining challenges

Key barriers include securing long-term funding, aligning sectors, strengthening regulation, and managing risks such as moral hazard.

Overall, the session highlighted that combining innovative finance with strong community trust is critical to making HWC insurance both effective and sustainable.



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WEDNESDAY 4TH MARCH, 16:40 - 18:00 EAT

conserve GLOBAL

Conserve Global - How agency, resources, governance, and capacity lead the way in building nature-based livelihoods in rural communities

The session emphasised that sustainable conservation outcomes depend on strong governance, community agency, and viable livelihood models.

1. Strengthening governance and transparency

Many conservancies face financial and operational challenges. Simple, transparent revenue-sharing models and improved communication are helping to rebuild trust and participation at the community level.

2. Balancing livelihoods and collective action

Shifts towards more profitable activities, such as tourism, can increase individualism, potentially weakening collective stewardship. Maintaining shared responsibility remains critical for conservation success.

3. Putting communities at the centre

Direct and visible community benefits are essential. When livelihoods improve, support for conservation strengthens, reinforcing long-term sustainability.

4. Treating conservation as a business

Sustainable community conservation requires clear revenue models, accountable governance, and structures that enable communities to make informed decisions.

5. Addressing funding imbalances

Limited direct funding to African organisations constrains locally led conservation. Greater investment in local actors is needed to unlock long-term impact.

Overall, the session reinforced that agency, governance, and equitable benefit-sharing are foundational to building resilient, nature-based livelihoods.



BIOTRADE AFRICA

Africa Biotrade Advisory Group - The Business of BioTrade: Communities, Commerce and Conservation

The session highlighted BioTrade as a mechanism to link conservation with livelihoods by creating market value for natural products and services.

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1. Aligning conservation with economic incentives

BioTrade enables communities to generate income from natural resources, strengthening incentives for sustainable use and conservation.

2. Grounded, real-world applications

Case examples, including frankincense harvesting, baobab enterprises, and human–wildlife coexistence initiatives, demonstrated how BioTrade can support both livelihoods and ecosystem management.

3. Balancing markets and sustainability

Effective BioTrade requires regulation to prevent overharvesting and ensure long-term resource sustainability, particularly for high-value species.

4. Strengthening value chains

Intermediaries remain important, but producers need stronger negotiating power and more equitable participation in value chains.

5. Enabling market development

Targeted marketing, supportive regulatory frameworks, and certification mechanisms are critical to scaling BioTrade markets.

6. Managing risks and unintended impacts

Potential risks, such as resource overexploitation or inequitable benefit distribution, must be actively managed through governance and oversight.

Overall, the session reinforced that BioTrade can drive conservation and livelihoods, provided markets are well-regulated, inclusive, and sustainably managed.

carbontanzania
Protecting forests for communities, wildlife, and climate

Carbon Tanzania - Carbon finance at scale, building the next generation of projects and evidencing the social impact

The session explored a shift in carbon finance from reporting outputs to demonstrating whether projects are genuinely understood, accepted, and beneficial to communities.

1. Rethinking how impact is measured

Standard metrics such as credits issued or hectares protected do not capture lived experience. Communities define success through outcomes such as livelihoods, dignity, and social cohesion, creating a disconnect in impact measurement.

2. From consent to meaningful participation

True acceptance requires more than formal agreements. It depends on ongoing engagement, inclusive processes, and a clear understanding of long-term implications, trade-offs, and benefits.

3. Strengthening community agency and governance

Effective projects require transparent governance, fair revenue-sharing, and safeguards against elite capture. Communities must play an active role in decision-making, not remain passive beneficiaries.

4. Expanding how impact is evidenced

Not all outcomes can be quantified. While carbon credits are measurable, changes such as improved well-being or reduced conflict require stronger qualitative approaches alongside traditional metrics.

5. Recognising and embedding local stewardship

Projects must respect existing community custodianship and build trust through strong local engagement and intermediary roles.

6. Addressing structural limitations

Current reporting frameworks remain limited, creating uncertainty for investors and risks of superficial participation. More integrated approaches to measuring social impact are needed.

Overall, the session reinforced that credible carbon finance depends on aligning technical metrics with community-defined outcomes and strengthening governance, participation, and evidence systems.



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ALU students, youth and AWF - Next Gen Leaders & Future-Proofing Conservation: From Ideas to Action in Africa's Wildlife Economy

The session highlighted the growing role of young leaders in shaping a more inclusive, innovative, and economically viable conservation landscape.

1. Collaborative, cross-generational leadership

Emerging leaders are working across sectors while valuing mentorship, challenging legacy systems, and promoting more inclusive approaches to conservation.

2. Linking conservation to viable business models

There is a strong focus on sustainable finance, including impact investing and nature-based enterprises, to ensure conservation delivers long-term economic value.

3. Harnessing innovation and technology

Digital tools and data systems are improving monitoring and transparency, while reinforcing, not replacing, local knowledge and indigenous practices.

4. Aligning conservation with climate resilience

Ecosystems are increasingly viewed as natural infrastructure, supporting biodiversity, carbon storage, water security, and risk reduction.

5. Enabling youth as active contributors

Young professionals are already driving solutions, but require greater access to funding, mentorship, and decision-making platforms to scale their impact.

6. Moving from ideas to action

Future-proofing conservation depends on practical implementation—through pilot projects, real responsibilities, and continuous learning based on measurable outcomes.

Overall, the session reinforced that empowering the next generation is essential to building a resilient and adaptive wildlife economy.



THURSDAY 5TH MARCH, 11:45 - 13:00 EAT

Sustainable Finance Coalition
Finance solutions for enduring naturescapes

Sustainable Finance Coalition - Solution Showcase: Blue Finance Solution

The session highlighted that while blue finance has gained strong global traction, translating this momentum into scalable investment remains a key challenge.

1. From policy alignment to capital deployment

Global frameworks and political commitment are in place, but the sector is not yet effectively mobilising or deploying capital at scale.

2. Addressing structural financing gaps

Despite significant funding needs, investment in ocean sustainability remains limited. Key constraints include weak project pipelines, low bankability, and mismatches between available capital and on-the-ground capacity.

3. The role of policy and system reform

Redirecting financial flows towards sustainable ocean outcomes requires coordinated policy reform, standardisation, and stronger regulatory frameworks to build investor confidence.

4. Positioning Blue Finance as an economic opportunity

Beyond conservation, blue finance supports livelihoods, climate resilience, and long-term resource security, positioning it as a driver of sustainable economic development.

5. Emerging financing models

Initiatives such as outcomes-based funds are beginning to bridge the gap between concept and implementation, linking investment to measurable environmental and socio-economic outcomes.

6. Priorities for scaling

Unlocking impact will depend on building investment-ready projects, strengthening technical capacity, aligning impact measurement, and improving coordination across markets.

Overall, the session reinforced that the next phase of blue finance requires shifting from ambition to execution through stronger systems, pipelines, and financial instruments.



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ReGeCom Mozambique - Are we neglecting investment in community governance for conservation?

The session explored why conservation, particularly in marine contexts, continues to struggle to attract institutional investment.

1. Structural barriers to investment

Conservation projects are often not structured in ways that meet investor requirements, limiting their attractiveness to institutional capital.

2. The role of risk and scale

Investors favour projects where risks have been reduced and where there is clear potential for scale. Many conservation initiatives remain too small or early-stage to meet these thresholds.

3. The need for investable models

Without viable business models and revenue-generating opportunities, conservation will continue to rely heavily on grants rather than attracting broader financing.

4. Strengthening financial systems and transparency

Institutional investors require robust financial management, including standardised reporting, audited accounts, and clear governance structures.

5. Unlocking the role of financial institutions

Commercial banks and financial institutions are well-positioned to support conservation finance through blended finance models, given their existing systems, capital, and market reach.

6. Bridging the gap to capital

Greater alignment between conservation design and financial expectations is needed to build a pipeline of investment-ready projects.

Overall, the session reinforced that attracting investment into conservation depends on strengthening governance, improving financial structures, and developing scalable, investable models.



African Parks - Sustainable Finance for Protected Areas: Carbon Solutions that Strengthen Climate, Communities and Conservation

The session highlighted carbon finance as an emerging pathway to strengthen the financial sustainability of protected areas while delivering community and climate benefits.

1. Addressing unstable conservation funding

Declining tourism and inconsistent donor support are creating funding gaps, thereby positioning carbon finance as a complementary, more stable revenue stream.

2. Placing communities at the centre

Conservation outcomes improve when communities benefit directly. Financial and social returns strengthen local stewardship and long-term ecosystem protection.

3. Valuing ecosystems through carbon markets

Carbon projects assign economic value to natural landscapes, attracting investment while supporting biodiversity conservation and emissions reduction.

4. Ensuring equitable benefit-sharing

Transparent revenue-sharing between communities, governments, and project developers is essential to building trust and sustaining participation.

5. Diversifying finance for resilience

Protected areas require a mix of funding sources, including carbon markets and other nature-based finance mechanisms, to reduce reliance on single income streams.

6. Delivering broader impact

Well-designed projects can generate employment, support sustainable land use, and enhance climate resilience alongside conservation goals.

Overall, the session reinforced that carbon finance can play a critical role in strengthening protected areas, provided it is inclusive, transparent, and aligned with both ecological and community priorities.



NATURE FINANCE

NatureFinance - Nature-Based prevention of disease: Entry points for financing ecosystems

The session highlighted the strong link between ecosystem health, human well-being, and economic resilience, positioning nature-based solutions as a pathway for preventative health.

1. Linking environment and health outcomes

Environmental degradation directly impacts human and livestock health, with significant economic and productivity losses, particularly in climate-vulnerable regions.

2. Recognising adaptive community systems

Pastoralist livelihoods demonstrate resilience through mobility and local innovation, but are increasingly strained by land degradation and climate pressures.

3. Aligning finance with ecological realities

Short-term funding cycles are misaligned with long-term ecosystem dynamics, limiting the effectiveness of interventions and resilience-building efforts.

4. Leveraging cash transfers as a dual solution

Direct cash transfers reduce poverty while also decreasing pressure on natural resources, offering scalable benefits for both livelihoods and ecosystems.

5. Integrating community and government roles

Effective solutions require stronger government involvement and the inclusion of community-driven innovation in programme design and implementation.

6. Framing ecosystems as health infrastructure

Investing in ecosystems supports disease prevention, strengthens resilience, and delivers co-benefits across health, livelihoods, and conservation.

Overall, the session reinforced that financing ecosystems is not only an environmental priority, but a practical strategy for improving health and long-term development outcomes.



BUSINESS OF CONSERVATION CONFERENCE

THURSDAY 5TH MARCH, 14H00 - 15:15 EAT

NatureFinance - Scaling the bioeconomy at the nature and climate nexus

The session highlighted the bioeconomy as a pathway for Africa to drive green industrialisation and economic resilience, while addressing climate and biodiversity goals.

1. Unlocking underutilised natural capital

Africa holds significant biomass resources but captures limited value, with much of the continent exporting raw materials rather than higher-value products.

2. Linking bioeconomy to trade and competitiveness

Scaling the bioeconomy requires strong trade and industrial policies that support value addition, market access, and regional competitiveness.

3. Leveraging regional integration

Frameworks such as AfCFTA offer a platform to build regional value chains and retain more economic and environmental value within Africa.

4. Ensuring sustainability through governance

The bioeconomy is not inherently nature-positive. Strong governance and safeguards are required to prevent overexploitation and support regenerative outcomes.

5. Navigating evolving global standards

International trade standards are increasingly shaping market access, creating both challenges and opportunities for sustainable production.

6. Aligning policy for impact

Greater coordination across bioeconomy, trade, and industrial strategies is essential to unlock investment and scale.

6. Strengthening private sector engagement

While interest is growing, deeper and more sustained private sector participation is needed to translate momentum into tangible outcomes.

Overall, the session reinforced that realising the bioeconomy's potential depends on aligning policy, governance, and investment to support inclusive and sustainable growth.



AWF and ALU SOWC - Decision and investment support toolkit for assessing and developing wildlife economies

The session introduced a toolkit designed to strengthen evidence-based decision-making and unlock investment in wildlife economies.

1. Addressing data and valuation gaps

Limited data and the under-recognition of ecological infrastructure constrain investment. Strengthening the evidence base is essential to attract funding and inform policy.

2. Integrating ecological and financial insights

The toolkit combines environmental and economic data, supporting more informed decisions and improving the negotiating position of communities and stakeholders.

3. From analysis to action

Structured in two phases, the toolkit moves from baseline assessment to implementation, enabling users to translate insights into investment and policy decisions.

4. Positioning wildlife as an economic asset

Wildlife economies can drive sustainable growth when natural capital is recognised and managed as a productive asset.

5. Strengthening governance and usability

Feedback highlighted the need for stronger governance integration, risk assessment, clearer implementation pathways, and adaptability across contexts.

6. Enhancing accessibility and capacity

Improved data systems, digital accessibility, and capacity-building, particularly for communities, are critical for effective application.

Overall, the session reinforced that combining ecological and financial evidence can unlock investment, provided tools are practical, inclusive, and grounded in real-world conditions.



Sustainable Finance Coalition - Connected Finance

The session introduced "connected finance" as a shift from fragmented funding towards integrated, system-level approaches to conservation investment.

1. Addressing data and valuation gaps

Conservation finance remains disjointed, with weak links between ecological value, community realities, and investor expectations. Stronger integration is required to unlock capital.

2. Positioning communities as economic actors

Durable conservation depends on communities generating reliable income from wildlife economies. This requires secure rights, transparent revenue systems, and enterprise support.

3. Strengthening enterprise readiness

Many conservation enterprises are not investment-ready. Blended finance, technical assistance, and aggregation platforms are needed to meet market and investor requirements.

4. Building trust through standards and verification

Robust measurement, reporting, and verification systems are essential to reduce risk and attract private capital, with intermediaries playing a key bridging role.

5. Enabling coordination through partnerships

Cross-sector collaboration and coalition-led approaches are critical to align policy, finance, and implementation across regions.

6. Unlocking Africa's opportunity

Africa has strong potential to lead in integrated conservation finance, but this requires scalable models, standardisation, and a pipeline of investable opportunities.

Overall, the session reinforced that scaling conservation finance requires a shift from isolated projects to coordinated systems that connect communities, markets, and capital.



FRIDAY 6TH MARCH, 14H00 - 15:15 EAT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP TOOLS

The session highlighted the importance of aligning conservation approaches with community priorities to ensure equitable and effective outcomes.

1. Addressing misalignment and elite capture

Disconnects between conservation objectives and community needs can lead to inequitable outcomes. Inclusive processes are essential to ensure fair participation and benefit distribution.

2. Leading with trust and openness

Engagement should begin without preconceived agendas, focusing on listening, understanding local dynamics, and allowing sufficient time for meaningful participation.

3. Ensuring transparency and accountability

Communities must have full access to information, understand how data is used, and receive feedback. Decision-making should be inclusive and visible at the community level.

4. Building on existing governance systems

Working through established community structures avoids duplication and strengthens legitimacy, rather than introducing parallel systems.

5. Strengthening community agency through tools

Approaches such as participatory planning (e.g. GALS) enable communities to define their own priorities and pathways, with external partners supporting implementation.

6. Embedding ethical engagement practices

Respect for consent, data ownership, and community privacy is critical to building long-term trust and sustainable partnerships.

Overall, the session reinforced that effective conservation depends on genuine, inclusive engagement that empowers communities as active decision-makers.



DATA SOVEREIGNTY MONITORING AND STANDARDS VERIFICATION

The session emphasised that trust, underpinned by high-integrity data, is central to the credibility and growth of nature and biodiversity markets.

1. Integrity as the foundation of nature markets

Standards, verification systems, and certification bodies provide the rules, methodologies, and oversight needed to ensure credibility and traceability.

2. Standards bodies as market enablers

These organisations act as custodians of integrity, setting science-based frameworks, requiring independent verification, and maintaining transparent registries.

3. Advancing data sovereignty

There is a growing shift towards ensuring communities retain ownership and control over their data, balancing transparency with cultural rights and ethical considerations.

4. Community-based monitoring as core infrastructure

High-integrity systems combine scientific methods with locally defined indicators, embedding community participation in monitoring and verification processes.

5. Leveraging technology with caution

AI and digital tools can improve data processing and scalability, but must be carefully governed to avoid bias, exclusion, and over-reliance on automated systems.

6. Navigating transparency and equity trade-offs

Technologies such as distributed ledgers offer potential to balance verification with data ownership, though access and inclusivity remain key concerns.

7. Flexible, principles-based standards

Effective systems prioritise adaptability and stakeholder engagement over rigid uniformity, allowing for ecological and cultural diversity.

Overall, the session reinforced that the future of nature markets depends on balancing scientific rigour, community sovereignty, and transparent verification systems.



INCENTIVISING THE MARKET

The session explored how market mechanisms, policy, and private-sector engagement can unlock investment in conservation and nature-based solutions.

1. Mobilising private sector capital

Public funding alone is insufficient. Private sector participation—supported by familiar instruments such as carbon markets—is essential to scale investment.

2. Strengthening policy and regulatory frameworks

Clear, enabling policies and streamlined processes (e.g., licensing, standards) are critical for reducing barriers and attracting investors.

3. Building market infrastructure and trust

Robust systems for monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV), along with clear definitions of nature credits, are key to improving transparency and market confidence.

4. Expanding financial instruments

Innovative tools such as green bonds and sustainability-linked loans are emerging to address financing gaps and diversify investment pathways.

5. Aligning incentives for business engagement

Businesses invest in nature for compliance, risk management, value creation, and reputational benefits. Investment opportunities must align with these drivers.

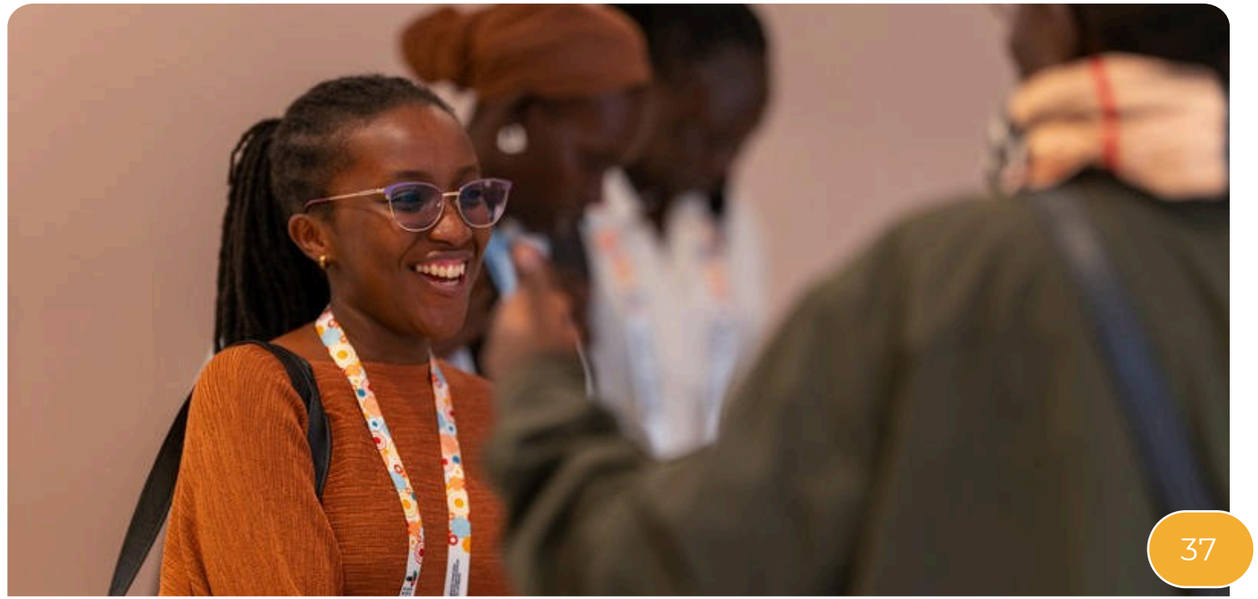
6. Strengthening collaboration and implementation

Partnerships across government, the private sector, and communities are required, alongside a focus on practical implementation rather than overemphasis on frameworks.

7. Integrating communities and value chains

Effective market systems must incorporate community participation and ensure transparent benefit-sharing mechanisms.

Overall, the session reinforced that incentivising nature markets requires aligned policy, credible systems, and investment models that meet both environmental and commercial objectives.



PARTICIPANT VOICES

"It is truly one of the most valuable conferences I attend"

Diana Koerner, Linking Tourism

"New network of people and more information on conservation efforts and policies – my expectations were met 100%"

Diana Koerner, Linking Tourism

"BCC is a great source of examples, contacts, knowledge, and inspiration."

Diana Koerner, Linking Tourism

"It was a very well-organized event and very fruitful"

Diana Koerner, Linking Tourism

"I hoped to have a deeper understanding in nature conservation and I'm now fully prepared to impact my community wildlife conservation strategies."

Diana Koerner, Linking Tourism

"It was an incredible few days, and as a newbie to BCC I was beyond impressed at the mix and quality of participants, and the level of organization. Your team was really supportive to engage with at every step. Congratulations on an excellent event and thank you once again!"

Diana Koerner, Linking Tourism

Thank You

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