

ICCF Gala 2018
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Statement by Naoko Ishii
(as delivered)

431 words

Excellencies, X President of Botswana, Members of Congress, John, David, Friends and Colleagues, good evening to everyone.

I am truly honored to be here with all of you tonight for this wonderful gala event.

What unites us here, tonight, is our conviction that protecting nature is a good investment: Indeed: It is one of the most cost-effective investments we can make to fight against poverty in the developing world. Protecting nature also ensures that we have a healthy planet for our societies to thrive, for generations to come.

But there are big threats to nature. Illegal wildlife trade and illegal logging continue to undermine livelihoods of the local communities. It is also financing criminal networks and triggering conflict and migration.

Plastic and marine debris is threatening the health of our oceans.

And toxic chemicals, including mercury, continue to be released, which is bad for both the environment and health of humans.

I am extremely proud of the work that the GEF has been doing all over the world to tackle those issues, in partnership with governments like Botswana and many other partners that are here tonight.

But I also want to make it 100% clear that we could not have done this work without the strong support of the members of the House and Senate who are here tonight.

Your leadership has helped leverage financial resources which the GEF has received from more than 30 other governments. Every dollar provided by the US taxpayer is being matched by 40 additional dollars.

Thanks to you, 3,300 new parks covering over 2.1 billion acres – an area larger than the continental US – is now being protected.

Thanks to you, 200,000 tons of highly toxic chemicals has been disposed, so they do not enter our food chain. We have also made sure that in 110 countries, national laws are being brought up to the US standard for mercury emissions.

And thanks to you, we will prevent 50,000 tons of plastics from flowing into our ocean.

I cannot close my remarks by thanking ICCF. We have partnered with ICCF to build conservation

caucuses in parliaments across Africa and Latin America, which was built on the remarkable experience of the US Congress. The result of this work is stronger anti-poaching laws that protect park rangers who risk their lives on the front lines fighting against poaching day after day.

Excellences, members of the House and Senate, John, David, friends and colleagues: with partners like you, I am very very hopeful that we will win the battle for the global conservation!

Thank you very much.