

MAKING A VISIBLE DIFFERENCE IN OUR WORLD



GLOBAL
ENVIRONMENT
FACILITY

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Like the 2003 Fifth World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa, this publication is structured around themes and issues on the cutting edge of research, policy, and practice in the field of protected areas.

It highlights contributions by the Global Environment Facility and presents its perspectives on the future.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF)

The Global Environment Facility unites 175 member governments—in partnership with the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and international institutions—to address complex global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives.

The GEF has allocated \$4.5 billion in grants and leveraged an additional \$14.5 billion for more than 1,300 projects in over 140 developing nations and countries with economies in transition. In August 2002, donor nations pledged an additional \$3 billion to expand and accelerate the work of the GEF—this was the largest replenishment ever.

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FOREWORD

Parks, protected areas, and people are at the heart of the Global Environment Facility.

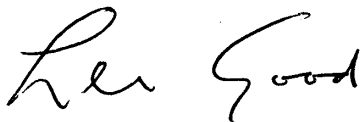
Support for new and existing parks, wildlife refuges, heritage sites, and other protected places accounts for 60 percent of the GEF's project portfolio. Partnerships forged by the GEF are conserving 226 million hectares—or about one fourth of the total area protected.

These places are making a visible difference in our world. They are also at the heart of the GEF's evolution as a learning organization.

As our understanding of what constitutes a protected area has grown and developed, so have our insights into what is required to adequately support and effectively manage them. This is particularly important in light of growing demands on land, water, and other resources needed to sustain human societies. The continued existence and integrity of protected areas will be increasingly critical for the maintenance of all forms of life on the planet.

The GEF fosters and funds practical solutions that transcend traditional boundaries—including that of the traditional 3–5 year GEF project time frame. We have helped to establish co-financing and conservation trust funds, stakeholder participation and community-based management, conservation training and education, environmental research, databases and information systems, monitoring and evaluation programs, policies, laws, and a wide variety of public-private partnerships.

The GEF enters its second decade with a new replenishment and a strong mandate from the international community to broaden and accelerate our efforts. Protected areas will continue to be a primary focus. As an active participant in and supporter of the Fifth World Parks Congress, we look forward to finding new ways of working with all our partners—governments, NGOs, private companies, communities, and individuals—to demonstrate the many ways in which protected areas provide “benefits beyond boundaries.”



Len Good
Chief Executive Officer and Chairman
Global Environment Facility



TRIBUTE TO AFRICA

Mount Kilimanjaro. The Serengeti Plain. Kalahari Desert. Congo. Cape of Good Hope. These place names speak for themselves—of world-renowned wildlife and landscapes that have inspired generations. Scientists believe Africa contains nearly a third of the world's biodiversity. Its 1,200 national parks, reserves, and other protected areas represent a massive 2 million square kilometers, equal to 9 percent of the continent's total land area.

But Africa's most remarkable asset is its people. Through traditions and practices older than modern memory, they have interacted with their environment for millennia, fighting through droughts and other challenges, and enjoying the bounty of the land in times of plenty.

Africa's people have proven resourceful and resolute, and the land resilient, to a point. In recent decades it has become apparent that that point is being reached. Action is required to maintain the beauty, integrity, and productivity of the African environment and all its paragon.

It is fitting, then, that conservationists, NGOs, scientists, government officials, and others come together in Durban, South Africa, to celebrate and pay tribute to these and other treasures of the

natural world, and to strengthen the positive relationship between people and the environment. Africa has some of the oldest "official," as well as "unofficial," protected areas in the world. Among the first international wildlife-related treaties was an agreement by the colonial states intended to protect the many species that had come under increased hunting pressure at the turn of the 20th century. Modern African states reaffirmed this commitment in 1968 by adopting the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

Generations of conservationists have dedicated their lives to maintaining the integrity of African ecosystems. Loss of habitat is one of the primary threats to wildlife, and land-use changes endanger numerous plant species. The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that between 1990 and 2000, Africa accounted for 56 percent of the decrease in world forest cover. Recent science points to the endangerment of many African species, most notably the precipitous decline of great apes in the western and central forests of the continent. Similar trends can be found in other regions. Tanzania has nearly 400 threatened species, South Africa almost 300, and other countries have dozens of threatened species each.

Resources to address these concerns are insufficient and declining. Public expenditure for forest protection, for example, decreased in most African

countries throughout the 1990s. Budget shortfalls for protected area systems in Africa typically run in the millions of dollars. At the same time, poverty, conflict, and disease, especially HIV/AIDS, all limit capacity to respond to these threats.

Since 1991 the GEF has allocated \$830 million in grants for more than 350 projects in 52 African countries. A significant portion has gone to projects that incorporate protected areas. These places have an important role to play in providing benefits for Africans and their environment. They conserve water supplies and combat soil erosion, maintain animal and plant biodiversity for sustainable use by local people, and generate new enterprises and income.

These initiatives speak to well-grounded partnerships as well as the kind of political resolve needed to navigate a new sort of compact where Africa's environment is concerned. The environmental action plan developed by the New Partnership for African Development is a key African enterprise. Similarly, the Africa Protected Areas Initiative provides a timely and strategic opportunity to mobilize resources across the continent and internationally. These and other innovative collaborations are charting a new course for positive environmental trends on this magnificent continent.