

The African Great Lakes Summit

The African Great Lakes Summit is a critical initiative to increase coordination, strengthen capacity, inform policy and management with science, and promote basin-scale ecosystem management in the African Great Lakes region.

Building momentum

The Summit begins with an open call for leaders who would like to collaborate on finding solutions to pressing issues of climate change resilience and adaptation, catchment management and watershed stewardship, fisheries co-management and aquaculture development, and ecotourism and sustainable economic development.

The Summit will rely upon the commitment of these leaders—champions who will build momentum for the vision and implementation of the initiative—including regional and national environmental and lake basin authorities, government leaders, policymakers, scientists, development and funding agencies, private sector and community group representatives. The Summit agenda will be developed by a representative Advisory Committee and Technical Committee using a cross-sector dialogue framework. The Summit will take place in 2017 within the African Great Lakes Region.

Growing opportunity

The initiative comes at a watershed moment as international, regional and national interest, funding, and technological opportunities coalesce, providing strong incentives for collaboration. The Summit will serve to attract additional financial resources to the region and to its active participants and leaders, with a priority on those activities that have the greatest benefits for the region's inhabitants and economies. Informed and strategic sustainable management of the African Great Lakes region will accelerate and expand to a pace and scale that before now was impossible.



A region of global significance under increasing pressure

The African Great Lakes ecosystems, an area over 850,000 km², support 50 million people and their livelihoods through providing drinking water, fish protein and as a means of transportation. The region is biologically rich both in species diversity and in endemism; it is home to half of Africa's freshwater fish species and thousands of endemic freshwater and terrestrial species.

The region includes territory of eleven nations: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. The seven major lake basins in the region include those of Lake Albert, Lake Edward, Lake Kivu, Lake Malawi/Nyasa/Niassa, Lake Tanganyika, Lake Turkana and Lake Victoria.

The Great Lakes region faces some of the highest population growth rates in Africa and is rapidly being transformed by development that brings a host of broad-scale threats to the environment, specifically to lakes and their watersheds. Current pressures to these lakes and watersheds include declining fish populations due to unsustainable fishing, urban and industrial pollution, non-native species, sedimentation caused by deforestation and agriculture, as well as the effects of climate change, which is projected to severely threaten the water security and human well-being of much of sub-Saharan Africa.



Shared analysis

The facilitation of dialogue and an online information-sharing platform will help decision-makers and resource managers, by providing a single, open-access repository of curated information and data. Because many of the lakes and their drainage basins cross borders, the benefits they offer—drinking water, protein from fish, and water for agriculture—are best managed at a basin-wide level. Using and sharing the best available science and best practices is an unprecedented opportunity to confront an increasingly unpredictable water supply due to global climate change.

Outreach surrounding the Summit and the online platform will stimulate interest in the African Great Lakes region from a broad international community invested in global freshwater security, sustainable development and biodiversity conservation.

Accelerated action

The African Great Lakes Summit aims to bring together a select group working to promote peace and security, public health and environmental sustainability in the region.

By providing access to the best available data and information and providing a facilitated network to share knowledge and take action at multiple scales, the Summit will bring international focus to the region and its unique natural heritage as well as the societal and economic challenges and opportunities it faces. For example, the Summit and information platform will benefit from scientific and management links to the North American Great Lakes, building upon the U.S. State Department's Great Lakes to Great Lakes Initiative.

The African Great Lakes Summit is a project of The Nature Conservancy, in collaboration with the Lake Tanganyika Authority, and supported by funding from the MacArthur Foundation and the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund.

For more information about the Summit and to be involved in shaping its agenda, contact Modesta Medard, African Great Lakes Project Manager for The Nature Conservancy, at modesta.medard@tnc.org.



The African Great Lakes Region is globally significant, as home to almost one third of the earth's available surface freshwater. Safeguarding the region's natural heritage is fundamental to the future water security and political and economic stability of Africa, if not beyond.



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