

# African Great Lakes International Conference

## Conservation and development in a changing climate

The African Great Lakes International Conference will bring together stakeholders to link science and best practice to solutions for conservation and sustainable development of the African Great Lakes.

### About the conference

The African Great Lakes Conference initiative is being led by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in collaboration with the Lake Tanganyika Authority, and is supported by funding from the MacArthur Foundation, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, and the United Nations Environment Programme.

A Conference Organizing Committee, comprised of lake basin management groups and a diverse set of stakeholders in the region, was created in December 2015, and a Technical Committee was established in March 2016. Together, these groups set the agenda, structure, objectives, and deliverables of the conference.

The conference aims to bring together an engaged group to promote sustainable development, human and environmental health, and biodiversity conservation in the region.

Targeted participants include regional lake authorities, government leaders and policymakers, development and funding agencies, scientific leaders, and select community, media, and private sector groups. These stakeholders will collaborate on finding solutions to pressing lake basin issues in the region and commit to an ongoing dialogue about how to effectively address them.

### A region under threat

The African Great Lakes ecosystems span more than 850,000 square kilometers across 11 different countries. 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 region holds approximately one-third of the world's fresh surface water and 10 percent of its fish species. The region is home to thousands of freshwater and terrestrial species found nowhere else on Earth. The lakes also support more than 50 million people who rely on the services nature provides—including drinking water, fish protein, and a means of transportation—for their lives and livelihoods.



**May 2-5, 2017**  
**Entebbe, Uganda**

**Registration opens September 2016.** To learn more or find out how you can get involved, contact Dr. Modesta Medard, African Great Lakes Project Manager, at [modesta.medard@tnc.org](mailto:modesta.medard@tnc.org).

**Conference website:** [www.greatlakesofafrica.org](http://www.greatlakesofafrica.org)  
**Email:** [info@greatlakesofafrica.org](mailto:info@greatlakesofafrica.org)

### Proposed conference sessions

**Climate Change Resilience and Adaptation:** Avoiding negative economic and ecological impacts from climate change.

**Conservation and Development:** Achieving conservation and development goals through smart and innovative land use planning, natural resource management, and infrastructure development.

**Basin Governance and Financing:** Finding new approaches to effective Lake Basin governance, financing, and public participation.

**Environmental and Human Health Solutions:** Discovering the evidence base for integrated population growth, human health, and aquatic terrestrial ecosystem health solutions.

**Ecosystem Service and Biodiversity:** Quantifying and communicating biodiversity conservation and ecosystem service benefits from the local to the basin scale.

**Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture Management:** Achieving long-term benefits from sustainable fisheries management and aquaculture.



But resource pressures are mounting in the African Great Lakes region, which has some of the highest population growth rates in Africa. Development is critical to the region, yet some poorly planned and sited development is threatening the future of natural resources that have sustained the region for generations. Growing challenges include unsustainable fishing, habitat destruction, invasive species, urban and industrial pollution, 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.

## Taking accelerated action

The African Great Lakes International Conference is an initiative to increase coordination, strengthen capacity, inform policy with science, and promote basin-scale ecosystem management in the region. The three-day conference will be much more than a meeting: It will be the start of a process that advances sustainable development solutions across basins and brings long-term attention to cross-basin work.

The initiative comes at a watershed moment as international, regional, and national interest, funding, and technological opportunities coalesce, providing strong incentives for collaboration. The conference 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.

Because all of the African Great Lakes cross borders, the benefits they offer and the challenges they face are best managed at a basin-wide level. Sharing the best available science and best practices with one another is an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate and expand the sustainable management of the African Great Lakes region.

## Expected outcomes

By sharing tools and approaches for ecosystem-based management and best practices from empowered civil society actively engaged in basin management, participants can help enhance the coordination of all stakeholders in African Great Lakes conservation.

Key outcomes expected from the conference include:

- A full conference report and a set of conference papers;
- Special issue journal publications from premier papers;
- Key resolutions or agreements to bolster lake authorities;
- An online information-sharing platform with curated maps and information; and
- New and/or strengthened African Great Lakes funding programs.

The conference will rely on the commitment of its participants to become champions who will build momentum for the vision and implementation of the initiative. Safeguarding the region's natural heritage is fundamental to the future water security and political and economic stability of Africa and beyond.



Photo credits: Ami Vitale (front page), Neville Nel/Flickr (above)

## Institutions represented on the conference organizing and technical committees

Autorite du bassin du Lac Kivu et de la Riviere Rusizi (ABAKIR/Rusizi River), Albertine Rift Conservation Society, BirdLife International, United Nations Environment Programme, Lake Tanganyika Authority, Lake Victoria Basin Commission, Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization, Nile Basin Initiative, Nile Equatorial Lakes Subsidiary Action Program, University of Nairobi, Friends of Lake Turkana, The Nature Conservancy, International Network of Basin Organizations, IUCN, WWF, FAO, Population Reference Bureau, University of Dar es Salaam, University of Burundi, Copperbelt University, and government representatives.

