



LAUNCH OF THE KAZA ELEPHANT SURVEY REPORT

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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We the designated Ministers responsible for wildlife management in the Kavango Zambezi (KAZA) Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA) Partner States of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, convened today on 31st August 2023 in Livingstone, Zambia, to launch the much-anticipated 2022 KAZA Elephant Survey report.

The KAZA Elephant Survey is a strategic activity of the 2019 KAZA *Strategic Planning Framework for the Conservation and Management of Elephants*. This framework seeks to harmonise Partner States' efforts in the management of KAZA's globally significant contiguous elephant population. KAZA holds over 50% of African Savannah elephants, which is the largest single elephant population in the world.

In April 2019, Partner States directed the KAZA Secretariat to mobilise resources to conduct the first-ever, synchronized KAZA Elephant Survey. This directive was subsequently reaffirmed and amplified by the KAZA Heads of State during the Kasane Elephant Summit of 7th May 2019, centered on the theme **“Towards a common vision for management of our elephants.”**

Among the resolutions of the Kasane Elephant Summit was a commitment to conduct transboundary and synchronised KAZA wide aerial surveys of elephants and other wildlife populations according to standardized methodologies, ensuring comparability across the landscape.

Key to the survey was the collective commitment to a robust scientific process in pursuit of a credible survey outcome. We are pleased to report that the survey design and approach conform to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) Aerial Survey Standards.

The survey results, when compared with previous surveys, reflect a stable population – with a net effect of increases, stability, and possible decrease in different parts of the survey area.

We highlight the following key insights of the survey:

- i. Population Estimate: the survey estimated an elephant population of 227,900 ($\pm 7\%$) – this is an increase of over 10,000 compared to the results from the 2016 IUCN African Elephant Status Report.
- ii. Precision: A percentage relative precision of $\pm 7.34\%$ was achieved for the elephant estimate, indicative of a sound survey design.
- iii. Elephant Carcasses: The overall carcass ratio is 10.47% which is suggestive of a high level of mortality. This underscores the need for further investigation and analysis, and strengthening of current and future efforts to address unnatural mortalities.
- iv. Other Wildlife and Livestock: The survey also produced population estimates for other species such as buffalo, giraffe, hartebeest, hippopotamus, impala, roan, sable, wildebeest, and zebra. Importantly, estimates of domestic livestock herds reflected a ratio of wildlife to domestic stock approaching parity – highlighting growing pressures on water and rangelands and the significance of measures to promote integrated landuse planning, co-existence and cross-sectoral policy harmonization.

Beyond being a scientific milestone achieved within budget and schedule, this survey provides invaluable insights for the coordinated management of elephants and other wildlife. It holds potential to shape policy and management measures at diverse levels, including transboundary and national, to ensure long-term persistence of wildlife for biodiversity and socio-economic development.

In line with these findings, and the varied potential application of the knowledge generated by the survey, we, *inter alia*:

- i. direct the KAZA Secretariat to coordinate efforts towards development of a detailed transboundary action plan for the already existing strategic planning framework for the conservation and management of elephants;
- ii. pledge to translate the survey's findings into practical policy measures, supportive legislation and detailed action plans at varying levels;
- iii. acknowledge the heterogeneous nature of the results, and commit to internal reviews, aiming to tailor suitable actions and address underlying challenges, while capitalising on potential opportunities and investments arising from the survey; and

- iv. invite mutually beneficial partnerships that will assist in the use of the wealth of knowledge generated by the survey to advance the KAZA vision.

Preparations for the survey, including fundraising were initiated in 2019. We commend the Secretariat, Partner State experts and the KAZA Elephant Sub Working Group for rallying together in resource mobilization enabling the survey to be conducted from August – October 2022 in line with the survey design and methodology. The survey cost nearly USD 3.2 million.

We applaud the survey coordination team led by Wild Sense, the contracted service providers, our technical staff from the Partner States, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) – the implementation partner for the survey – and the KAZA Secretariat for all the work that brought us this far.

We thank our Heads of State for their visionary leadership on elephant conservation and management and the resolutions of the Kasane Elephant Summit whose priorities firmly remain on our agenda as we implement the recommendations of this survey.

We acknowledge the KAZA Elephant Survey donors and international cooperation partners comprising the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, the Federal Republic of Germany's Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development through KfW, the Dutch Postcode Lottery through the Dreamfund Project, USAID's Combating Wildlife Crime in Namibia and the Kavango-Zambezi Area Project, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the Environment and Protected Areas Authority (EPAA) of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, World Wildlife Fund US, Panthera, and EU-funded CITES MIKE Programme.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our commitment to implementing the recommendations of the survey.