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Biodiversity and Conservation in Tanzania

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Biodiversity and Conservation in Tanzania

Tanzania is rich in biodiversity and is home to several iconic species, including elephants, lions, black rhinoceros, and giraffes. Tanzania hosts 6 of 25 globally designated biodiversity hotspots and has protected or conserved in some fashion approximately 44% of its total land area. Efforts to foster conservation and biodiversity in Tanzania, which an array of U.S. assistance programs have supported over the past two decades, have drawn the interest of some Members of Congress. Tanzania has regularly hosted congressional delegations, often with a focus on U.S.-funded conservation program implementation and oversight.

Tanzanian efforts to sustainably manage and conserve the country's natural resources and maintain biodiversity face a range of challenges. Factors that affect biodiversity in Tanzania include agricultural expansion and overgrazing, resource overexploitation (e.g., fisheries, forests), invasive species, bushfires, and fuelwood/charcoal consumption. Illegal poaching and related wildlife product trafficking—notably of African elephant ivory, rhino horns, and pangolin scales—also pose challenges. Such trafficking—which is often linked to transnational smuggling operations, at times abetted by corruption and weak law-enforcement capacity—reportedly generates millions of dollars in illicit revenue for criminal groups. Tanzania is both a source country of and a transshipment point for transnational wildlife trafficking by such groups and, in some cases, by rebel or other armed groups in neighboring countries. The U.S. Department of State lists Tanzania as one of 28 Focus Countries globally for wildlife trafficking under the Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt Wildlife Trafficking Act of 2016 (END Act; P.L. 114-231).

Tanzania has made numerous efforts to preserve biodiversity and sustainably manage natural resources. Such efforts include increasing the area of protected land, which between 1995 and 2014 was expanded by more than 20%; crafting and implementing a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and other policies; and pursuing community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). Under the CBNRM model, local land is set aside for wildlife and the government grants certain use rights to local communities. Such communities manage local tourism, sustainable land or natural-resource utilization activities, and local conservation activities; in turn, the communities garner revenue, employment, and other benefits derived from such activities (and in some cases from trophy hunting), while preserving the underlying ecosystem. Some of these efforts have met resistance. Increasing the amount of land under protection, for example, can in some cases decrease access to land for cultivation or subsistence hunting or result in limited local benefits, which can generate local opposition to such efforts.

The United States and other international donors provide natural resource management and biodiversity conservation assistance to Tanzania. U.S. programs have supported counter-wildlife trafficking, threatened species habitat conservation, and sustainable coastal resource management efforts, among other ends. Options for Congress in considering such activity might include

- assessing the relative adequacy of, need for, and scope of U.S. programming in this area and related bilateral assistance funding;
- potentially providing support for Tanzania through a debt-for-nature swap, as permitted under the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act (22 U.S.C. §§2431 et seq.);
- advocating for the inclusion of conservation and biodiversity goals under a potential future Millennium Challenge Corporation compact;
- mandating the creation of a foundation to promote long-term management and protection of conservation areas abroad (as proposed by bills such as H.R. 1298 and S. 618); and
- coordinating and engaging with foreign governments, private entities, Indigenous peoples, and other stakeholders to foster biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource use and management.

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Introduction

Tanzania has substantial natural resource wealth, including critical minerals and other mineral resources, agricultural potential, and gradually improving socioeconomic indicators, but most of its nearly 66.7 million people remain poor and face diverse development challenges.¹ Tanzania also has established and maintains significant conservation areas and is richly biodiverse; the country is home to several iconic species, including elephants, lions, black rhinoceros, and giraffes. Tanzania hosts 6 of 25 globally designated biodiversity hotspots,² and approximately 44% of its total land area is protected or conserved in some fashion.³ Protected areas in Tanzania have varying statuses and include national parks, game reserves, marine parks, forest reserves, and wildlife management areas (WMAs). (See **Figure 1** for a map of Tanzania.) Protected wildlife areas cover approximately 28% of the total area of Tanzania, and forest reserves cover approximately 16%. Additional unprotected land also is forested and often supports wildlife or areas with high rates of biodiversity; as of 2021, 51% of Tanzania’s land was forested.⁴

Tanzania also has inland water bodies and wetlands (e.g., Rift Valley Lake ecosystems) that cover approximately 10% of its territory and a 500-mile-long ocean coastline that includes estuaries, coral reefs, mangrove forests, and marine fisheries.⁵ Approximately 10 million people live in coastal areas of Tanzania and depend on healthy interlinked marine and littoral ecosystems to support fisheries, marine crops (e.g., seaweed), and other marine natural resources.

Competition for land resources is high in Tanzania, as much of the population depends on agriculture (e.g., livestock and crops), often as smallholding subsistence producers.⁶ In 2022, agriculture provided an estimated 66% of Tanzania’s total employment and, alongside forestry and fishing, contributed 24% of gross domestic product.⁷

Members of Congress occasionally travel to Tanzania or engage in oversight of U.S. bilateral conservation and related environmental protection and management assistance efforts.⁸ U.S. conservation-related assistance is varied but has focused, in particular, on countering illicit

¹ Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook: Tanzania* database, as of June 6, 2024.

² Such biodiversity hotspots include the Eastern Arc old block-mountain forests, coastal forests, the Great Lakes for cichlid fishes, marine coral reef ecosystems, Rift Valley ecosystems, and the grassland savannas for large mammals (e.g., the Serengeti National Park). Convention on Biological Diversity, *United Republic of Tanzania: Country Profile*.

³ The Convention on Biological Diversity reports that 28% of Tanzania’s total mainland land area is protected, and that forest reserves cover another 15.7% of the country’s land. World Bank data sourced from the UN/ International Union for Conservation of Nature-Administered Protected Planet website states that 38.4% of Tanzania’s terrestrial areas are protected. Convention on Biological Diversity, *United Republic of Tanzania: Country Profile*; and World Bank, “Terrestrial Protected Areas (% of Total Land Area),” *World Development Indicators* database (WDI hereinafter).

⁴ World Bank, “Forest Area (% of Land Area),” WDI.

⁵ Convention on Biological Diversity, *United Republic of Tanzania: Country Profile*.

⁶ Ally Nkwabi et al., “An Overview of Biodiversity in Tanzania and Conservation Efforts,” in *Global Biodiversity: Selected Countries in Africa*, ed. T. Pulliah (Apple Academic Press, 2018), pp. 295-340. Hereinafter, Nkwabi et al., “Overview of Biodiversity in Tanzania.”

⁷ World Bank, “Employment in Agriculture (% of Total Employment) (Modeled ILO Estimate),” and “Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing, Value Added (% of GDP),” WDI.

⁸ The United States is Tanzania’s largest bilateral donor. The White House, “FACT SHEET: Vice President Harris Announces Initiatives to Deepen the U.S. Partnership with Tanzania,” press release, March 30, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/03/30/fact-sheet-vice-president-harris-announces-initiatives-to-deepen-the-u-s-partnership-with-tanzania-2/>; and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), “OECD.Stat.”

poaching and wildlife trafficking, conserving threatened species habitat, and promoting sustainable management of coastal resources.

Figure 1. Map of Tanzania



Source: CRS map.

This report discusses Tanzania and its biodiversity and conservation profile. It provides information on community-based natural resources management, wildlife trafficking, and U.S. and international efforts to address conservation and biodiversity. It also discusses potential options for Congress to address conservation and biodiversity issues in Tanzania.

Background: Tanzania's Conservation and Biodiversity Challenges

Although as much as 44% of Tanzania's total territory is protected, scientists report that most wildlife in Tanzania is found outside of protected areas.⁹ In some cases, this creates tensions between socioeconomic development activities and environmental protection and conservation goals and, at times, conflict between humans and wildlife. Scientists report that the main factors that negatively affect biodiversity in Tanzania include agricultural expansion and overgrazing, resource exploitation (e.g., fishing and timber extraction), invasive species, bushfires, and fuelwood/charcoal consumption.¹⁰ These factors often alter and reduce wildlife and plant species'

⁹ Convention on Biological Diversity, *United Republic of Tanzania*. Human-wildlife conflict is a growing issue in Tanzania due to the conversion of native habitat to agriculture, according to some stakeholders.

¹⁰ Convention on Biological Diversity, *United Republic of Tanzania: Country Profile*.

habitats and increase pressure on biodiversity.¹¹ Tanzania is also affected by deforestation. According to Global Forest Watch, from 2001 to 2023, Tanzania lost nearly 3.2 million hectares (about 12,400 square miles) of tree cover, equivalent to a 12% decrease in tree cover over 22 years. That decrease included the loss of more than 37,000 hectares of humid primary forest.¹² Threats to coastal and marine ecosystems in Tanzania include overfishing, and, in some cases, destructive fishing methods (e.g., the illicit use of dynamite to catch fish), as well as other factors that alter coral reefs and marine resources, such as coastal pollution and erosion. Some stakeholders also contend that inadequate land-use planning and weak institutional capacities relating to the monitoring and enforcement of laws and regulations further threaten Tanzania's biodiversity.¹³

Tanzania has sought to foster biodiversity and conservation by increasing the area of its protected land. Between 1995 and 2014, the government expanded protected areas by more than 20%. Tanzania also has addressed biodiversity through its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and other policies.¹⁴ The plan identified a range of priority actions to help maintain biodiversity from 2015 to 2020, with the aim of significantly improving ecosystem health by 2020 and contributing to human well-being and socioeconomic development. Key approaches have included the following:

- Implementation of policy and regulatory frameworks to preserve biodiversity, such as the implementation of laws that aim to safeguard the conservation and sustainable use of aquatic biodiversity.
- Pursuit of regional and international cooperation, as through participation in the Lake Tanganyika Authority (which includes Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia, and Burundi).
- Programs to strengthen conservation and undertake ongoing monitoring of ecosystem and species health.

Nature-Based Tourism and Tanzania Park System, with a Focus on Serengeti National Park and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area

Nature-based tourism provides a significant economic benefit to Tanzania. According to the World Economic Forum Travel and Tourism Competitive Index, Tanzania ranks first in Africa and 12th worldwide for the quality of its nature-based tourism, and nature-based tourism is the primary driver of foreign visits to Tanzania. In 2022, tourism in Tanzania generated more than \$2.5 billion in annual revenue, or approximately 25% of national foreign exchange earnings, after a sharp dip in tourist arrivals during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Tourism reportedly continues to rebound; in 2023, Tanzania received approximately 1.8 million tourists, up from 1.4 million tourists in 2022; 922,700 tourists in 2021; and 654,000 tourists in 2020.

The Tanganyika National Parks Ordinance of 1959 established the Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA), which oversees 22 national parks in Tanzania that cover approximately 99,000 square kilometers (km²). The first national park established in Tanzania, Serengeti National Park, was created as a game reserve in 1930 and was designated a national park in 1951. (Both actions occurred under British colonial administration but were maintained by the post-independence government of the mainland, then known as Tanganyika, which in 1964 merged in a union with the government of Zanzibar to form Tanzania.) The Park, with an area of approximately 14,700 km², is listed as a World Heritage Site due to its high levels of biodiversity and ecologically unique annual migration of more than 1.5

¹¹ According to the United Nations, the number of threatened species in Tanzania has doubled from 691 in 2010 to 1,464 in 2022. Department of Economics and Social Affairs Statistics Division, *World Statistics Pocketbook 2022 Edition*, United Nations, 2022, p. 252.

¹² Global Forest Watch, *Dashboard*, World Resources Institute, 2024, <https://www.globalforestwatch.org/>.

¹³ Nkwabi et al., "Overview of Biodiversity in Tanzania."

¹⁴ Vice President's Office, Division of Environment, United Republic of Tanzania, *National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2015-2020*, October 2015, <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/tz/tz-nbsap-v2-en.pdf>.

million wildebeest. Wildebeest and several other species—along with a range of predator species—journey in a large loop seeking green pastures for grazing. Management challenges in Serengeti National Park include poaching, impacts from tourism, wildfires, lack of monitoring, and water scarcity.

In 1959, the adjacent Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) was split off from the Serengeti National Park, in large part to provide the pastoralist Maasai people an area to live and graze their cattle, an activity prohibited in Serengeti National Park. The NCA is approximately 3,300 km² and is managed as a multiple use area that aims to both conserve wildlife and support such livestock grazing, a core component of traditional Maasai livelihoods. The NCA is a World Heritage Site and contains the Ngorongoro Crater, the world's largest caldera. The NCA harbors evidence of early human development; fossil evidence of activity by protohuman hominid species millions of years ago has been discovered within the NCA's bounds, notably in the NCA's Olduvai Gorge area.

Sources: U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), “Tanzania Wildlife Conservation Fact Sheet,” December 2022; TanzaniaInvest, “Tourist Arrivals to Tanzania Reached 1.4 Million in 2022 and Revenues Reached USD 2.5 Billion,” February 2023; Bank of Tanzania, *Monthly Economic Review*, January 2024; Tanzania National Parks at tanzaniaparks.go.tz; UNESCO World Heritage Convention, “Ngorongoro Conservation Area” and “Serengeti National Park” at https://www.unesco.org/en/world-heritage/grid?hub=68246&f%5B0%5D=countries%3A52bd3991-91d7-5d58-858a-d320a2a8febe&f%5B1%5D=dataset_filters%3A6b092825-9770-47e0-92c6-084caebeca46#toggle-facets; and Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority, “Archaeological Features,” at ncaa.go.tz/archaeological-features.

Tanzania has several laws that aim to protect biodiversity and promote the sustainable use and management of natural resources. For example, Tanzania amended the Wildlife Conservation Act in 2022, which authorizes financial compensation for landowners affected by human-wildlife conflicts (e.g., loss of livestock to lion predation), among other things.¹⁵ Tanzania, like several other African countries, uses community-based resource management programs to conserve and, in some cases, sustainably utilize natural resources. Some stakeholders report that conservation efforts, including community management of resources, have contributed to successfully restoring some charismatic species in Tanzania.¹⁶

Community Management of Natural Resources in Tanzania

In Tanzania, as in much of Africa, a key complement to state efforts to preserve or otherwise protect biodiverse areas and enforce conservation and wildlife-related laws is a conservation approach known as community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). CBNRM in Tanzania is connected to wildlife management areas (WMAs). Through WMAs, local land is set aside for wildlife, and the government grants certain designated formal user rights to local communities. Typically, CBNRM-implementing communities manage tourism and other activities on such designated land, which provides them with varied forms of revenue, employment, and other benefits derived from tourism or trophy hunting. There are 19 WMAs in Tanzania, comprising approximately 7% of the total national land area, and more are reportedly planned.¹⁷ Some stakeholders note that WMAs have been “relatively successful in terms of wildlife conservation” and have been mainstreamed in Tanzanian wildlife management and

¹⁵ Evodius Waziri Rutta, “Conflict Between Humans and Wildlife in Tanzania Is being Poorly Managed—and Climate Change Is Making It Worse,” *The Conversation*, August 3, 2023.

¹⁶ Huaxia, “Conservation Efforts Pay Off in Tanzania as Wildlife Population Rises,” *XinhuaNet*, June 3, 2023. Charismatic species are animals with symbolic value or popular appeal.

¹⁷ Derek Lee, “Tanzanian Community Wildlife Management Areas Are Successfully Conserving Wildlife,” *One Earth*, October 25, 2021, <https://www.oneearth.org/tanzanian-community-wildlife-management-areas-are-successfully-conserving-wildlife/>. Hereinafter, Derek Lee, *Tanzanian community wildlife management areas*.

poverty reduction policies. One study, for instance, concluded that there are significantly higher densities of wildlife in a community-managed WMA compared with an unprotected control site.¹⁸

In another study, scientists contended that human population density and poverty incidence rates are higher in areas adjacent to protected areas and WMAs relative to other rural communities, which can lead to excessive resource extraction.¹⁹ For example, some communities surrounding protected areas depend on bushmeat as a major source of protein in their diets, which along with charcoal extraction and other uses of local natural resources can affect wildlife populations and alter their habitat.²⁰ In addition, CBNRM programs in Tanzania and elsewhere may not provide sufficient benefits to local communities to offset the opportunity costs incurred when the lands are protected.²¹ One study of WMAs found that the benefits of participating in conservation programs funded by taxes on tourism businesses relative to the costs—and thus incentives to engage in pro-conservation goals—were inadequate in value and not shared equally by community members.²² In other cases, some scientists have contended that CBNRM programs have failed to meet their objectives because project benefits accrue to the community as a whole and may not be accessible at the individual or household level. This can undermine support for and buy-in to CBNRM programs and their conservation goals. This was a key finding of one study that sought to explain shortcomings in efforts to reduce poaching in Serengeti National Park.²³

Wildlife Trafficking in Tanzania

Wildlife poaching and trafficking is an international conservation, security, and crime concern. In Africa, and in some instances in Tanzania, illegal trade in wildlife products—notably African elephant ivory, rhino horns, and pangolin scales—has been linked to transnational smuggling operations. These operations, often abetted by corruption and weak law-enforcement capacity in wildlife product source and destination countries such as Tanzania, reportedly generate millions of dollars in illicit revenue for criminal groups. In some instances, such criminal groups may have ties to rebel or other armed groups in neighboring countries. The U.S. Department of State (State Department) lists Tanzania (along with 27 other countries) as a Focus Country for wildlife trafficking under the Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt Wildlife Trafficking Act of 2016 (END Act; P.L. 114-231).²⁴ The END Act requires an annual report from the State Department that identifies *Focus Countries* (i.e., countries that are major sources of, transit points for, or consumers of wildlife trafficking products) and *Countries of Concern* (i.e., countries in which the government has actively engaged in or knowingly profited from wildlife trafficking).²⁵ Tanzania

¹⁸ Derek Lee, “Evaluating Conservation Effectiveness in a Tanzanian Community Wildlife Management Area,” *Journal of Wildlife Management*, vol. 82, no. 8 (November 2018), pp. 1767-1774.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Derek Lee, *Tanzanian community wildlife management areas*.

²¹ Juma J. Kegamba et al., “Conservation Benefit-Sharing Mechanisms and Their Effectiveness in the Greater Serengeti Ecosystem: Local Communities’ Perspective,” *Biodiversity and Conservation*, vol. 32 (2023), pp. 1901-1930.

²² Emmanuel Sulle and Holti Banka, “Tourism Taxation, Politics and Territorialisation in Tanzania’s Wildlife Management,” *Conservation and Society* vol. 15, no. 4 (2017), pp. 465-473.

²³ Emmanuel Kaaya and Margaret Chapman, “Micro-Credit and Community Wildlife Management: Complementary Strategies to Improve Conservation Outcomes in Serengeti National Park, Tanzania,” *Environmental Management*, vol. 60, no. 3 (September 2017), pp. 464-475.

²⁴ Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, *2021 END Wildlife Trafficking Report*, U.S. State Department, November 4, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/2021-end-wildlife-trafficking-report/>.

²⁵ Section 201 of P.L. 114-231.

is both a wildlife product source country and a trafficking transshipment and export exit point, according to a range of studies.

A notable focus of wildlife crime in Tanzania, and a key conservation and security concern, is elephant poaching and the illegal trade in elephant ivory. After substantial declines in elephant populations in Tanzania prior to 2014, largely due to poaching, populations are now increasing.²⁶ Studies note that the population of African elephants in Tanzania increased from approximately 43,000 individuals in 2014 to 60,000 in 2021.²⁷ This reversal is attributable, in part, to the dismantling of poaching rings and an increase in wildlife crime investigations. Investigators in Tanzania reported in 2020 that they had identified and penetrated at least 11 organized wildlife trafficking syndicates and arrested 21 “kingpins.”²⁸ These increases in arrests and sentencing of wildlife smugglers have left some observers cautiously optimistic about the prospects for improvements in anti-poaching responses in Tanzania. This trend builds on prior law-enforcement actions, such as the 2015 arrest of the “Queen of Ivory,” a businesswoman from the People’s Republic of China (PRC) who was an ivory trafficking kingpin, and the 2017 conviction of the “Devil,” a notorious poacher, and several suspects from the PRC purported to operate a rhino smuggling ring.²⁹

The United States supports several counter-wildlife trafficking initiatives in Tanzania that are part of related global efforts. The State Department has programs that aim to address wildlife poaching and trafficking, improve foreign countries’ law-enforcement capabilities, and enhance anti-trafficking legislation in foreign countries. The State Department administers these counter-wildlife trafficking programs through its Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).³⁰ INL carries out some capacity-building activities through wildlife trafficking courses available to professionals across Africa, including in Tanzania, at its International Law Enforcement Academies, including one hosted by Botswana. The State Department’s Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs also works to strengthen international cooperation on wildlife trafficking.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) maintains an International Wildlife Trade Program that supports implementation of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), including with regard to issuing permits for trade in listed species, and implementation of other U.S. laws that address wildlife trade and wildlife trafficking. FWS also provides technical and financial assistance to governmental and nongovernmental entities in foreign countries, such as Tanzania, to avert poaching, reduce wildlife trafficking, and decrease demand for wildlife contraband. FWS maintains an attaché in Tanzania whose role includes conducting investigations of international wildlife trafficking and facilitating coordination between the United States and Tanzania on bilateral investigations into wildlife crime. The

²⁶ Some contend that “industrial-scale” poaching reduced elephant populations in Tanzania by 60% from 2009 to 2014. Foundation Segre, “Countering Illegal Wildlife Trafficking in Tanzania,” <https://www.fondationsegre.org/countering-illegal-wildlife-trafficking-in-tanzania/>.

²⁷ African Wildlife Foundation, *2022 Elephant Conservation Report*, 2022.

²⁸ Lucy Taylor, “Poaching Declines in Tanzania Following Prosecution of Ivory Trafficking Ringleaders,” *Mongobay*, June 17, 2021.

²⁹ The Queen of Ivory was sentenced to 15 years in prison in 2019, in what authorities claim was the dismantling of one of the biggest ivory smuggling operations in Africa. *China Daily*, “‘Queen of Ivory’ Faces Charge in Tanzania,” October 10, 2015; NPR, “Chinese ‘Ivory Queen’ Sentenced to 15 Years in Jail in Tanzania,” February 19, 2019; World Wildlife Fund, “Tanzania’s Most Wanted Elephant Ivory Trafficker Sentenced to 12 Years in Prison,” March 3, 2017; and UN Office on Drugs and Crime, *Criminalization of Wildlife Trafficking*, 2020, <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/wildlife-crime/module-3/key-issues/criminalization-of-wildlife-trafficking.html>.

³⁰ For more information on the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, see U.S. Department of State, “Wildlife Trafficking.”

specific objectives of the FWS Attaché Program, both in Tanzania and globally, include the following:

- Conducting and supporting wildlife trafficking investigations.
- Assisting in leveraging U.S. assets in countering wildlife trafficking efforts and assisting in regional capacity building.
- Supporting host governments in transnational wildlife investigations.
- Fostering intelligence sharing and investigative support.
- Providing access to technical support in the United States, such as use of the National Fish and Wildlife Forensic Laboratory.

U.S. Laws and Selected Activities Supporting African Elephant Conservation

In the United States, the African elephant is protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA; 16 U.S.C. §§1531-1544; listed as threatened), the African Elephant Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. §§4201 et seq.), and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Under the ESA, a rule on African elephants (4(d)) specifies the number of live animals, ivory, and sport-hunted trophies that may be imported and exported into or from the United States. In 2014, the United States banned elephant trophy imports from Tanzania due to lack of enforcement of rules, weak governance, and questionable management practices. That ban was lifted in 2017, and U.S. trophy imports from Tanzania and other African countries since have been permitted on a case-by-case basis (i.e., rather than being determined solely based on country-wide data). The Biden Administration has proposed a new rule for African elephants that would halt elephant trophy imports from African countries that cannot annually certify that their elephant populations are stable or increasing, do not have up-to-date population data, and do not have adequate conservation legislation for elephants.

The United States provides elephant conservation assistance through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), notably through the FWS-administered African Elephant Conservation Fund, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID has a conservation partnership in southern Tanzania that seeks to secure elephant corridors, detect poachers' camps, and help Tanzanian communities and officials respond to threats from poachers. A project supporting aerial monitoring across a 10,550 km², wildlife-rich zone is reportedly helping to thwart poaching. This project also has increased connectivity between the Ruaha and Katavi National Parks for migratory species, including one of the largest populations of elephants in sub-Saharan Africa, by working with communities to resolve their competing land claims and demarcating two wildlife corridors.

Sources: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, "Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Revision to the Section 4(d) Rule for the African Elephant," 87 *Federal Register* 68975-68995, November 22, 2022; and USAID, "Tanzania: Southern Highlands and Ruaha-Katavi Protection Program (SHARRP)," fact sheet, 2021, https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/SHARPP-Fact_Sheet-Jan-2021.pdf.

International Support for Conservation and Biodiversity in Tanzania

Selected U.S. Efforts

The United States administers several initiatives and programs that aim to conserve biodiversity and implement conservation in Tanzania. Current or recent programs include the following:

- The five-year, \$30 million *Tumaini Kupitia Vitendo* (Hope Through Action) project, a joint U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-Jane Goodall Institute (JGI) initiative launched to expand JGI's efforts to promote

sustainable development, restore ecosystems, and protect species such as chimpanzees.³¹

- The USAID-administered *Heshimu Bahari* (Respect the Ocean) program, a multiyear (2022-2027), \$25 million initiative that aims to foster sustainable management of coastal biodiversity of marine resources with the involvement of local communities.³²
- The USAID-administered *Tuhifadhi Maliasili* (Conserve Natural Resources) program, a multiyear (2021-2026), \$30 million program that seeks to counter threats to animal movement and biodiversity in Tanzania. The program has three key objectives: (1) increase and build institutional capacity of public and private stakeholders, (2) increase private-sector involvement in biodiversity conservation and natural resources management, and (3) improve the policy and regulatory environment for biodiversity conservation and natural resource management.³³
- Jointly with JGI, USAID implemented a 2018-2023 program, Landscape Conservation in Western Tanzania, which aimed to protect chimpanzee populations and conserve their habitat in Western Tanzania, a region that hosts over 90% of Tanzania's estimated 2,200 chimpanzees. This chimpanzee population faces threats from habitat alteration from development (e.g., logging, settlement expansion, agriculture) and wildlife trafficking.³⁴
- Between 2014 and 2022, USAID administered the Southern Highlands and Ruaha-Katavi Protection Program (SHARPP) in Tanzania. SHARPP sought to improve connectivity and facilitate the migration of a 20,000-strong population of elephants, one of East Africa's largest such pachyderm concentrations, between protected biodiverse areas in Tanzania's Southern Highlands and the Ruaha-Katavi region.³⁵
- The State Department and FWS provide intermittent assistance to build counter-wildlife trafficking law-enforcement capacity in Tanzania. Such efforts complement USAID natural resource management programs that support community-based conservation, sustainable livelihoods through conservation enterprises, and reforms to national environmental policies.
- FWS supports wildlife trafficking reduction activities by helping build Tanzanian capacities to enforce CITES and providing technical assistance to the Government of Tanzania to address wildlife trafficking.
- FWS supports capacity-building in Tanzania focused on marine protected area policy implementation and management, as well as law enforcement.³⁶

³¹ U.S. Embassy, Tanzania, "United States and Jane Goodall Institute-Tanzania Launch New \$30 Million USAID Sustainable Development Partnership," November 17, 2023.

³² USAID, "Tanzania: USAID Heshimu Bahari (Respect the Ocean) Project," April 2024.

³³ USAID, "Tanzania: USAID Tuhifadhi Maliasili (Preserve Natural Resources) Project," April 2024.

³⁴ USAID, "Tanzania: Landscape Conservation in Western Tanzania," March 2019.

³⁵ USAID, "Tanzania: Southern Highlands and Ruaha-Katavi Protection Program (SHARPP)," May 2022.

³⁶ In addition to addressing wildlife trafficking, the U.S. Department of the Interior's International Technical Assistance Program provides assistance to improve protected area management, tourism development, natural resource conservation, rural community engagement in natural resources conservation, land cover mapping, and groundwater resource monitoring. For more information, see USAID, "Tanzania: U.S. Department of the Interior: International Technical Assistance Program; U.S. Forest Service: International Programs," fact sheet, January 2022, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/USG-TA_Fact_Sheet_January_2022.pdf.

- FWS aims to reduce human-elephant conflicts in Tanzania by piloting low-cost interventions, such as constructing solar power strobe lights on fence posts to ward off elephants from human settlements.³⁷
- The U.S. Forest Service International Programs work on natural resource management issues in Tanzania, including watershed assessment, ecosystem restoration, land-use planning, wildlife management, and fire suppression and prevention. Specifically, the Forest Service works on increasing Tanzania's capacity to assess forest carbon and forest inventory, as well as to increase field-based resource mapping with forest communities.³⁸

Non-U.S. Government International Conservation Efforts

Multiple internationally supported initiatives seek to protect biodiversity and foster conservation in Tanzania. Implementers of such efforts include the World Bank and the Global Environment Fund (GEF), as well as international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), such as the World Wildlife Fund and the Nature Conservancy (TNC). Summaries of selected initiatives by these entities follow:

- The GEF, a multilateral environmental trust fund that receives U.S. government contributions, supports projects with global environmental benefits related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, the ozone layer, land degradation, and persistent organic pollutants. The GEF has 9 projects in Tanzania that focus on land degradation, climate change, and biodiversity, which are part of a broader range of 51 GEF projects in the country that address environmental protection and sustainability and more broadly, including with respect to countering pollution and climate change impacts. Funding for these 51 projects totals approximately \$185 million. Tanzania also participates in a range of transnational regional projects that complement the 51 GEF projects.³⁹
- Tanzania participates in the Great Green Wall initiative, a UN Convention to Combat Desertification and African Union-supported 22-country effort to combat climate change, stop desertification, and improve livelihoods.⁴⁰ Tanzania is creating a National Action Plan for the Initiative.
- Tanzania benefits from the Restoration Initiative, a multi-institutional, multi-country effort to enhance food and water security, climate, biodiversity conservation, and environment-related job creation.⁴¹ The initiative is supported by the GEF, International Union for the Conservation of Nature, UN agencies, and the Food and Agriculture Organization. In Tanzania, the initiative aims to support landscape restoration, improve landscape management, and implement

³⁷ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Budget Justification and Performance Information, FY2025*, U.S. Department of the Interior, March 2024, https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-03/fy2025-508-fws-greenbook_revised-pex-4.pdf.

³⁸ For more information, see U.S. Forest Service International Programs, "Tanzania," at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/tanzania-international-programs.pdf>.

³⁹ Global Environment Fund, "Tanzania: Country At-A-Glance," <https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/country-profiles/tanzania>.

⁴⁰ For more information, see UN Convention to Combat Desertification, "Great Green Wall Initiative," at <https://www.unccd.int/our-work/ggwi>.

⁴¹ International Union for the Conservation of Nature, "The Restoration Initiative," <https://www.iucn.org/our-work/topic/ecosystem-restoration/restoration-initiative>.

monitoring and evaluation systems to develop and share knowledge. Approximately \$76.5 million in funding is allocated for the period 2020-2025 from several sources.⁴²

- The African Wildlife Foundation, an NGO that aims to protect wildlife and wildlife habitats in Africa, has deployed canine detection units in major Tanzanian trafficking transit sites to disrupt the illegal wildlife trade, support land and forest restoration and sustainable agriculture, and protect wildlife corridors.⁴³
- The World Wildlife Fund, an NGO that funds international conservation projects, supports a range of efforts to maintain ecological integrity and, in turn, support the livelihoods of people and protect selected endangered or iconic species and their habitats in Tanzania, including elephants, black rhinoceros, and lions.⁴⁴
- TNC, an NGO that funds international conservation projects globally, is part of a coalition of 10 partners supporting the Northern Tanzania Rangelands Initiative, which aims to conserve wildlife corridors, secure communal land rights and benefits for indigenous communities, improve climate resilience, and address ranching, among other ends.⁴⁵

Conservation and Biodiversity in Tanzania: Selected Policy Areas

Although there are many, sometimes location-specific conservation and biodiversity policy challenges and efforts to address them in Tanzania, two that have drawn particularly wide attention are (1) the connection between poverty and conservation in Tanzania and (2) the treatment of Indigenous populations and environmental justice.

Poverty and the Environment in Tanzania

Some stakeholders assert that poverty and environment are linked in Tanzania, especially in rural areas, where a majority of the population lives.⁴⁶ Tanzania has a high poverty rate, with approximately 43% of the population living below the international poverty line, as defined by the World Bank.⁴⁷ Approximately 63% of the population, including a large percentage of those living below the poverty line, lives in rural areas and is dependent on agriculture, including subsistence farming, which in some areas has led to the loss of wildlife or otherwise biodiverse land and ecosystem integrity. Some stakeholders assert that the rural poor affect the environment through overexploitation of resources, in part, due to unsustainable and inefficient natural

⁴² International Union for the Conservation of Nature, “United Republic of Tanzania,” <https://www.iucn.org/our-work/topic/ecosystem-restoration/restoration-initiative/projects/united-republic-tanzania>.

⁴³ African Wildlife Foundation, “Where We Work: Tanzania,” 2023, <https://www.awf.org/country/tanzania>.

⁴⁴ World Wildlife Fund, “Wildlife,” https://www.wwf.or.tz/our_work/our_thematic_priorities/wildlife/.

⁴⁵ See Northern Tanzania Rangelands Initiative at <https://www.ntri.co.tz/>.

⁴⁶ U.S. Agency for International Development, *Environment: Tanzania*, <https://www.usaid.gov/tanzania/environment>.

⁴⁷ World Bank, *Sub-Saharan Africa Macro Poverty Outlook: Country-by-country Analysis and Projections for the Developing World*, 2024.

resource management practices.⁴⁸ The rural poor also engage in poaching and deforestation (largely for charcoal consumption), which also are detrimental to the environment.⁴⁹

The poor also are disproportionately affected by the loss or deterioration of natural resources, according to some stakeholders.⁵⁰ Examples include drought and soil degradation, which lowers agricultural productivity; deforestation, which decreases the availability of fuelwood and water supplies; and water contamination, which causes certain diseases, indirectly lowering productivity.⁵¹

Environmental Protection: World Bank Recommendations

The World Bank, echoing a range of other observers, recommends that Tanzania seek to enhance the sustainable management and use of natural resources by undertaking the following actions:

- Increase forest management and conservation efforts to counter deforestation and preserve forestland biodiversity.
- Strengthen land conservation and restoration capacities to both spur economic growth and conserve biodiversity, such as by modernizing farming practices and reducing overgrazing.
- Manage and monitor water resources to ensure water access by an increasing population and the gradually expanding agriculture sector.
- Protect ecosystems and biodiversity to preserve or expand biodiversity hotspots, create ecosystem resilience against climate change, and promote nature-based tourism.
- Manage and protect coastal resources, including by fostering sustainable fishery practices. Enhance resilience to climate change to protect food security and economic growth by supporting a range of environmental sustainability and protection efforts tied to such ends.

Sources: World Bank, *Tanzania 2019: Country Environmental Analysis*; and World Bank, WDI.

Domestic and externally financed efforts have sought to address challenges linking poverty and the environment in Tanzania. Programs aim to alleviate poverty by promoting sustainable natural resources management, which lowers the impact of the rural poor on the environment and might increase the resilience of the rural poor to environmental changes. Some examples are discussed below.

The UN Development Program (UNDP) and the UN Environment Program (UNEP), for instance, supported two programs—the UNDP-UNEP Poverty Environment Initiative (2005-2017) and the UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Action for SDGs (2018-2022)—that sought to address the relationship between poverty reduction and environmental health.⁵² These initiatives provided financial and technical support to assist governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders to manage the environment in an effort to improve livelihoods, reduce poverty and inequalities, and

⁴⁸ U.S. Agency for International Development, *Environment: Tanzania*, <https://www.usaid.gov/tanzania/environment>.

⁴⁹ For example, in 2021, approximately 93% of Tanzanians lacked access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking and used charcoal and firewood for this purpose. See also R. Y. M. Kangalowe and J. G. Lyimo, “Population Dynamics, Rural Livelihoods and Environmental Degradation: Some Experiences from Tanzania,” *Environment, Development, and Sustainability*, vol. 12 (2009), pp. 985-997.

⁵⁰ For example, a review study asserted that environmental degradation can lead some rural poor further into poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa, which includes Tanzania. See Sadat Daaki Ssekibaala and Twaha Ahmed Kasule, “Examination of the Poverty-Environmental Degradation Nexus in Sub-Saharan Africa,” *Regional Sustainability*, vol. 4, no. 3 (September 2023), pp. 296-308.

⁵¹ World Bank, *Tanzania 2019: Country Environmental Analysis-Environmental Trends and Threats, and Pathways to Improved Sustainability*, May 1, 2019, <https://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/356211556727592882/Tanzania-Country-Environmental-Analysis-Environmental-Trends-and-Threats-and-Pathways-to-Improved-Sustainability>. Hereinafter, World Bank, *Tanzania 2019: Country Environmental Analysis*.

⁵² For more information, see UN Development Program, “About the Poverty-Environment Initiative,” at <https://www.unpei.org/about-the-poverty-environment-initiative/>.

lead to sustainable growth. Other programs have supported or continue to support broadly similar aims. USAID, for instance, is implementing the *Tuhifadhi Chakula* (Let's Save Food) initiative, a five-year, \$24 million program to reduce food loss and waste with the aim of improving food security, livelihoods, and economic benefits for people. According to USAID, nearly 40%-50% of crops—and thus water, labor, and fertilizer used to produce them—are lost between the field and end markets in Tanzania. The program aims to lower this percentage.⁵³

Conservation, Tourism, and Alleged Human Rights Abuses

Occasionally, Tanzanian state efforts to promote conservation have resulted in alleged human rights abuses. Currently, Tanzanian officials are implementing a gradual effort to evict, relocate, and resettle a local population of ethnic Maasai from a Game-Controlled Area, which is to be recategorized a game reserve. Under that redesignation, grazing and human settlement would be prohibited and wildlife habitat preservation, safari tourism, and designated hunting activities would be permitted.⁵⁴ In 2022, the Arusha regional council announced that a 1,500-square-kilometer area would be cleared of its human population. In January 2024, the national government announced it also would change the conservation status of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and would no longer permit human settlement.⁵⁵

The issue has gained international notoriety, as the government initially used the coercive state police powers (e.g., the use of force or threat of force to get people to comply with rules) to suppress local Maasai eviction protests and because the relocation initiative reportedly has been driven, in part, by commercial interests associated with a business that owns a hunting concession in the affected area and caters to Emirati royal big game hunters.⁵⁶ In mid-2022, security forces and Maasai clashed in Loliondo during a land-demarkation exercise, which restricted access to grazing sites, water sources, and, in some cases, homes.⁵⁷ The incident reportedly resulted in gunshot injuries to 32 protesters and the arrest on murder charges of 24 local Maasai, including 10 local leaders—though these charges later were dropped, in part because the men were arrested prior to the murder of a policeman they were alleged to have killed. Officials also have at times impounded livestock, a key source of local livelihoods.⁵⁸ The Tanzanian government has

⁵³ U.S. Embassy, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, “U.S. and Tanzania Announce a \$24 Million Food Security Project,” press release, August 8, 2023, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-08/Press%20Release_Tuhifadhi%20Chakula%20Activity%20Funding%20Announcement%20%20%281%29.pdf.

⁵⁴ Tanzania has three general categories of areas that are open to big game hunting: (1) Non-national park game reserve areas, established for the purposes of conservation, in which certain consumptive and nonconsumptive uses are permitted; (2) game-controlled areas, which are for the conservation of wildlife outside of village lands and where activities detrimental to wildlife are prohibited; and (3) wildlife management areas, established by local communities, in which locally implemented natural resource management and wildlife conservation activities take place.

⁵⁵ Latoya Abulu and Laurel Sutherland, “Maasai Protesters Shot, Beaten, as Tanzania Moves Forward with Wildlife Game Reserve,” *Mongobay*, June 14, 2022; and Oakland Institute, “URGENT ALERT: Tanzanian Government on a Rampage Against Indigenous People,” January 25, 2024, <https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/urgent-alert-tanzanian-government-rampage-against-indigenous-people>.

⁵⁶ Paul Tullis, “Maasai Are Getting Pushed off Their Land So Dubai Royalty Can Shoot Lions,” *Bloomberg Businessweek*, May 23, 2023; and Andres Schipani, “Tanzanian Maasai Battle Eviction from Ancestral Land,” *Financial Times*, June 18, 2022.

⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch, “Tanzania Should Halt Plan to Relocate Maasai Pastoralists,” February 22, 2023. Loliondo is on the main migratory route for wildlife north of Ngorongoro Crater, east of Serengeti National Park, and south of Kenya’s Masai Mara National Reserve.

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch, “Tanzania: Maasai Forcibly Displaced for Game Reserve,” April 27, 2023, and “Tanzania’s Eviction of Maasai Pastoralists Continues,” February 2, 2023; Amnesty International, “Tanzania: Authorities Brutally Violated Maasai amid Forced Evictions from Ancestral Lands,” June 6, 2023, and “Tanzania: Prosecutors Drop Murder (continued...)”

responded to allegations that it has engaged in forced evictions involving human rights abuses by stating that the Maasai community is being asked to voluntarily leave the lands and that the relocation is necessary to conserve the area's ecology for ecotourism.⁵⁹

The government of Tanzania also allegedly has engaged in human rights abuses and forced relocations while implementing a World Bank-funded project to expand Ruaha National Park to increase ecotourism and improve natural resources management.⁶⁰ The alleged abuses reportedly included “extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, evictions, torture and cattle seizures perpetrated against local villagers” committed by wildlife rangers.⁶¹ The Tanzanian government has called the allegations “unfounded.” The World Bank announced in April 2024 that it was suspending outstanding undisbursed funding for the project while it investigates the allegations.⁶²

Conservation and Biodiversity in Tanzania: Considerations for Congress

Some stakeholders, such as donor governments and conservation researchers, have outlined recommendations for developed countries that provide conservation and biodiversity assistance to Tanzania, as well as in Africa more broadly. Notable priorities advocated by such actors include (1) supporting locally led conservation through WMAs; (2) supporting holistic, integrated landscape approaches for conservation that combine ecosystem preservation and socioeconomic objectives; (3) building ecotourism-based wildlife economies and conservation-based sources of income; and (4) funding the establishment and maintenance of protected areas and increasing enforcement.⁶³

Some stakeholders, including some Members of Congress, may consider supporting existing or increased U.S. assistance to improve natural resources management in Tanzania, whereas others might contend that Tanzania should assume a greater role in funding and carrying out such activities. Some might argue that non-U.S. international assistance and private donor support provides sufficient support for conservation and biodiversity activities in Tanzania. For those who may doubt the relative need for or extent of U.S. conservation assistance to Tanzania or Africa more broadly, a range of options—such as altering the amount, scope, or focus of such assistance—are available. Further, some in Congress might consider withholding financial assistance for Tanzania in light of alleged human rights abuses associated with natural resources.

For those who may support U.S. assistance to foster biodiversity and conservation activities, the following are among the policy options that Congress could consider:

Charges Against 24 Members of the Maasai,” November 23, 2022; and U.S. Department of State, “Tanzania,” in *2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, April 22, 2024.

⁵⁹ Abdul Halim, “Tanzania: Government Says Maasai Eviction Is to Save Its Tourism Sector,” *The Africa Report*, August 30, 2022.

⁶⁰ Reuters, “World Bank Suspends Tanzania Tourism Fund over Abuse Allegations,” April 24, 2024. See also Oakland Institute, “Campaign Victory: World Bank Suspends Funding for REGROW, a Conservation Project Responsible for Evictions & Human Rights Abuses in Tanzania,” press release, April 22, 2024.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Agence France Presse, “Tanzania Denies Rights Abuse After World Bank Suspends Funds,” April 25, 2024; see also Victoria Schneider, “Human Rights Allegations Prompt World Bank to Freeze Project’s Funds in Tanzania,” *Mongobay*, April 25, 2024.

⁶³ For example, see U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, Testimony of Kaddu Kiew Sebunya, CEO of African Wildlife Foundation, *Advancing Security and Prosperity Through International Conservation*, 118th Cong., May 2, 2023.

- Expanded funding for programs and activities that jointly address development and conservation goals, including under existing initiatives, such as USAID’s *Heshimu Bahari* project, or with new initiatives. Prospective efforts toward that end are already underway; USAID, for instance, is requesting in its FY2025 budget \$4.1 million to “improve natural resources management and the protection of keystone species as a basis for the long-term conservation of Tanzania’s unique ecosystems and a source of sustainable livelihoods.” USAID also is requesting \$4.5 million to “strengthen the climate resilience of communities and vulnerable ecosystems” and enhance “the management of marine protected areas and sustainable wild fisheries and strengthen ... institutions to limit catchment degradation and overexploitation, and pollution of critical surface and groundwater resources in Tanzania.”⁶⁴
- A directive to the U.S. Treasury and State Departments to implement a debt-for-nature swap between Tanzania and the United States to address coral reefs and coastal ecosystems under the Tropical Forest Conservation and Coral Reef Act (22 U.S.C. §§2431 et seq.), economic and political requirements permitting, as prescribed in U.S. law.
- Expanded funding for wildlife and ecosystem conservation in Tanzania and related efforts to help reduce wildlife trafficking in the country through the International Affairs program of FWS, which seeks to help conserve selected species and specific regions in Africa and counter illicit international trade in wildlife products.
- Increased funding for research, whether through USAID, FWS, or other agencies, into best practices and innovation in approaches to jointly addressing poverty reduction and conservation goals, notably in the context of CBNRM programs. Potential foci could include improvements to models of revenue generation and distribution, effective targeting of direct and indirect CBNRM program benefits across communities, and the sustainment of conservation-goal-related behavioral change at the community level.
- Increased training for law-enforcement personnel in Tanzania mandated with countering wildlife poaching and trafficking, potentially through State Department INL programs or via the FWS Attaché Program.
- Creating guidelines to ensure financial aid provided to Tanzania does not lead to human rights concerns and increasing oversight on grant recipients to monitor allegations of human rights abuses associated with financial assistance for Tanzania.
- Expanded support for international organizations that address conservation and biodiversity issues in Tanzania. Currently, the 118th Congress is considering H.R. 1298 and S. 618, the U.S. Foundation for International Conservation Act of 2023. These bills would mandate the State Department’s establishment of a foundation that would promote long-term management and protection of conservation areas abroad, potentially in such countries as Tanzania; accept funds from governments and others and administer the funds for international conservation; increase public-private partnerships to address international conservation; support implementation-ready projects through grants; and coordinate and support

⁶⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Congressional Budget Justification: Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, Fiscal Year 2025, Appendix 2*, 2024.

- foreign governments, private entities, Indigenous peoples, and other stakeholders in conducting biodiversity conservation. This foundation would be intended to address several conservation and biodiversity activities in Tanzania and other parts of the world.

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