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Press Statement

For Immediate Release

PRESIDENT LUNGU CALLS FOR COMMUNITY INPUT IN WILDLIFE BUSINESS

Victoria Falls Town, Zimbabwe, (Monday, 24th June, 2019) – **His Excellency Mr Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia** has said only a few people in Africa benefit from wildlife because communities have not been given space to participate in the type of business.

And the President has said the rights of human beings are paramount and should be given priority against a backdrop of efforts to conserve wildlife. President Lungu, however, questioned whether there was a mechanism to protect human beings against conflict with wildlife.

"Have we got capacity to protect those rights? We need mechanisms to protect our people. Animals destroy food crops and claim lives of our people, so since we have seen potential in animal conservation, we need mechanisms to protect people," President Lungu said.

The President was speaking during a panel discussion of Heads of States from Zimbabwe, Namibia and Botswana at the Elephant Hills Resort here.

The four Presidents were in Victoria Falls Town, in Zimbabwe today to attend the First Africa Wildlife Economy Summit under the theme: Communities for Conservation, Harnessing Conservation Tourism, and supporting Governments.

The Summit which closes tomorrow (Tuesday) is a platform to share strategies on leveraging wildlife resources and how wildlife can contribute to the development of African economies.

President Lungu said there was need to acknowledge that people have lived with animals, looked after them, and fed them but that conflict with animals is as a result of lack of appreciation of benefits to be accrued from conservation.

He said community leaders need to be sensitised so that they are involved in protecting wildlife.

Host President Emmerson Mnangagwa, in his opening speech, told delegates that if the Southern African region was allowed to dispose of its ivory and rhino stocks arising from natural attrition, US\$600 million would be raised, revenue that can be used to finance conservation for the next two decades.

President Mnangagwa said wildlife conservation requires financing and that there was need for water fencing and strict law enforcement against poaching.

He, however, is concerned at the rise in the number of elephants, rhinos, and buffaloes as a result of conservation.

President Mokgweetsi Masisi of Botswana said discussions about wildlife are refreshing and timely. He said there was need to isolate various parts of the value chain and maximise value for the benefit of the people.

While Namibia's President Hage Geingob said people must benefit from wildlife and said this can be realised through the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area which boasts of having over 60 percent of the world's elephant population and other animal species.

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