MPCC

Malawi Parliamentary Conservation Caucus

NEWS - MAY 2018

"The MPCC joined a growing international network of conservation caucuses, supported by the International Conservation Caucus Foundation, when it was launched in 2015 by H.E. Arthur Peter Mutharika, State President of the Republic of Malawi. MPCC's vision is to provide a non-partisan platform for Malawi's Parliamentarians to engage meaningfully on the value of conservation and natural resource management for the future prosperity of Malawi. The MPCC aims to build partnerships amongst Parliamentarians and across political party lines, develop capacity by educating and informing Honourable Members on pertinent conservation issues, and advocate for the conservation agenda. The model also provides a forum for engagement with government agencies, non-profits and businesses through the Conservation Council, and other conservation caucuses around the world. Please do all you can to support this important cause, for conservation is no longer a luxury, but a necessity that Malawi's very future depends on."

Rt Hon Msowoya, Speaker of Parliament, in support of the MPCC Executive Committee

MPCC PROGRAMME FOR 2018 GETS UNDERWAY

The programme was launched by Speaker of Parliament, Rt Hon Richard Msowoya, who delivered an impassioned speech to media and the MPCC membership on the importance of protecting Malawi's wildlife, forests and environment. He said: "Conservation is now a necessity for the very survival of humanity. We have a moral responsibility to do all we can to turn this tide of destruction before it is too late, for the benefit of our constituents and the country as a whole."

Msowoya emphasised the bi-partisan power of the caucus model in his speech, standing at an open platform to advocate for a conservation agenda, and he appealed to all Members of Parliament to join the Caucus. Current membership stands at 25. He also highlighted the previous achievements of the MPCC, in particular their role in lobbying for the amendment to the National Parks and Wildlife Act, which was passed in record time in 2017. The MPCC is now turning its attention to forestry issues, and is also keen to tackle issues of biodiversity, pollution and natural resource management in the future.

TAKING ACTION TO SUPPORT MALAWI'S FORESTS

As part of their 2018 programme to enhance policy and legal frameworks, the MPCC convened a meeting with the Department of Forestry and the government's Inter-Agency Committee on Combatting Wildlife Crime (IACCWC) to discuss the amendment of the Forestry Act. This meeting forms part of a series of activities that aim to strengthen wildlife legal frameworks, hosted by The ICCF Group with support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services and the World Bank's GEF fund.

The IACCWC includes high-level representation from all departments involved in wildlife law enforcement, such as the Anti-Corruption Bureau, Ministry of Justice, Department of Public Prosecutions and the Malawi Police Service, representing an opportunity to provide input and gain cross-departmental as well as parliamentary support for what has been a long-awaited and much debated piece of legislation. Several issues that could impede or speed up the progress of its passing were shared by the members of the MPCC, which were not previously understood by the Department of Forestry or its supporting partners.

Malawi has the highest rate of deforestation in the SADC region, impacting food security, water supply, floods and drought. The proposed Forestry Act Amendment Bill is an important step forward in the conservation of Malawi's natural resources, not only in terms of deterring forest crime through the updating of penalties, but also in engaging private sector entities to sustainably manage plantations for commercial purposes, and expanding the revenue-generating capacity from sustainable forest management to include payment for the provision of ecosystem services.

MPCC ENGAGES TOBACCO SECTOR ON FORESTRY ISSUES

In March, the MPCC Executive invited key players in the tobacco sector to a roundtable meeting to discuss challenges relating to forestry and to open up dialogue between the private sector and Government. The Ministries of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands, the Tobacco Control Commission, Alliance One, Limbe Leaf, Premium and JTI were all represented. Although the tobacco sector is responsible for just 10% of deforestation in comparison to, for example, the 50% of charcoal consumption (Total Land Care study, 2013), the industry is taking the matter seriously. Discussions included the importance of better policing on environmental protection of farmers through the Tobacco Control Commission, to ensure that sustainability was a key consideration since there is inconsistency across the sector.

The Executive visited Premium and Limbe Leaf forestry projects, at their invitation, further to an informative education visit to an Alliance One project. All three have been deemed impressive and as a result, the MPCC Executive have called for more Government support for those companies that are showing long-term substantial commitment to sustainability.

Limbe Leaf have, for example, planted different types of tree species - including indigenous ones that also contribute to biodiversity - on 921 hectares and will continue to add to the hectares every year. They have also supported the local community through employment on the plantation, as well as the addition of a maternity shelter and kitchen worth MK12.6 million. MPCC Co-Chair, Hon Chilenga, commented, "Limbe Leaf has demonstrated how tobacco production can be sustainable by planting trees at a commercial level, and they have shown great commitment to the cause of environmental sustainability. These are the companies that should be rewarded and supported by the Government, and granted more land to expand their good work."

MPCC CO-HOSTS VISIT FROM THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER

Members of the MPCC played a key role in the recent Royal visit of HRH the Duke of Gloucester, cousin to Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom. One of the objectives of the visit was to bring international attention to Malawi's fight to combat illegal wildlife trade ahead of the Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference to be held in London in October 2018. The Duke has been the Royal Patron of the Lilongwe Wildlife Trust, a local charitable organization, and as a result has played an active part in Malawi's conservation efforts for the past 10 years.

Hon Nyirenda (MPCC Publicity Secretary), and Hons Mwale and Kadzumira (MPCC members) joined the initial high-level briefing on illegal wildlife trade with British High Commissioner, HE Holly Tett, Minister of Tourism, Hon Henry Mussa, and DNPW Director, Brighton Kumchedwa at the Commissioner's Residence. Hon Chilenga also represented MPCC at the Presidential dinner at State House and joined Hon Adams and Hon Nyirenda on a trip to Liwonde National Park.

Hon Nyirenda said: "Given that the objectives of the Malawi Parliamentary Conservation Caucus include building high-level political will to protect Malawi's natural resources, it has been an honour to take part in this briefing with His Royal Highness. Illegal trade in wildlife and forestry products is one of the biggest challenges we face in this arena, but it is a global challenge that requires international collaboration."

UPCOMING MPCC EVENTS

The following events are planned for the next quarter. Please contact Samantha Nampuntha on 0999 389519 or Hon Major on 0999 952722 for more information.

- Networking dinner, Sunbird Restaurant (all MPCC members)
- Forestry roundtable meeting (MPCC exec) and Thuma forestry field trip (all MPCC members)
- Anti-corruption roundtable meeting (MPCC exec and other stakeholders)
- Illegal wildlife trade case review meeting (MPCC exec and other stakeholders)
- Briefing to MPCC Patron, H.E. Peter Mutharika (MPCC exec)

CONSERVATION IN THE NEWS

216 NEW WILDLIFE SPECIES NOW PROTECTED UNDER MALAWI LAW

Malawi Parliament last month passed new regulations that place an additional 216 species under protection. The regulations form a critical secondary law to the National Parks and Wildlife Act (NPWA), which came into effect in 2017, and which most notably increased the maximum penalty for wildlife crime to up to 30 years in prison. Illegal wildlife trade represents one of the greatest threats to the world's wildlife, which is facing an extinction crisis.
Source: https://www.mbc.mw/index.php/extras/programmes/sunday/item/6221-malawi-protects-216-new-wildlife-species-under-law

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONS ON ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE REAPING RESULTS

Recent figures published by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife showed record trafficking arrests, seizures and convictions as a result of recently introduced government initiatives. In 2017 114 arrests were made - an average of 9.5 per month versus 0.7 before the establishment of the DNPW-led investigation unit. Average sentences have risen to 3.6 years in the same period, where the average sentence was just $40 with no prison sentences passed between 2010 and 2014. 125 wildlife traffickers were put behind bars with a record sentence of 18 years passed for a rhino poacher.
Source: www.wildlife.gov.mw

ACB SAYS CORRUPTION WORSENS DEFORESTATION

ACB director Reyneck Matemba made the comments on a visit to Mudi Catchment Forest Reserve as one way of conserving water in Mudi River which is the main water source for Blantyre Water Board. "Some of the deforestation that we have witnessed in this country is a direct result of corrupt activities. People are able to access both natural and artificial forests because they bribe their way through. After cutting the trees, they are able to transport them through the roadblock. Customs, immigration, environmental affairs officers, they are all involved," said Matemba.
Source: http://mwnation.com/acb-says-corruption-worsens-deforestation/

TAIWAN ANNOUNCES PLASTICS BAN

All single-use plastic, including plastic bags, straws and utensils, will be phased out in a blanket ban by 2030 in the island nation of Taiwan. It will be one of the farthest-reaching bans on plastic in the world, and it demonstrates the momentum of the anti-plastic movement as the scale of environmental harm caused by the substance is fully realized. "We aim to implement a blanket ban by 2030 to significantly reduce plastic waste that pollutes the ocean and also gets into the food chain to affect human health," said Lai Ying-yaun, a Taiwanese Environmental Protection Agency official. *Source:* https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/taiwan-ban-on-plastic-bags-straws-utensils-contain/

NORTHERN WHITE RHINO TO GO EXTINCT, HIGHLIGHTING THE HUGE EXTINCTION CRISIS

The world's last male Northern White Rhino died in Kenya earlier this year. About half a million rhinos roamed in Africa and Asia in 1900. But due to poaching – driven by the trade in rhino horn – and habitat loss, that figure had fallen to 70,000 by 1970. Since then the northern white rhino was one of several sub-species that has been pushed to the brink of extinction. Since 1970 average populations of vertebrate animals have more than halved, according to Butfield, and an estimated 10,000 "less celebrated" species are becoming extinct every year. The 'extinction crisis' will have far reaching impacts on biodiversity which ultimately impacts the very survival of humankind.
Source: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/mar/20/last-male-northern-white-rhinos-death-highlights-huge-extinction-crisis

UK IVORY LEGISLATION WILL BE THE 'WORLD'S TOUGHEST'

The sale of ivory of any age, with very limited exceptions, will be banned in an effort to reduce elephant poaching. Previous bans only applied to ivory produced after 1947. The announcement came ahead of the Illegal Wildlife Trade conference which will take place in London in October this year, at which Malawi will be represented.
Source: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-43620012

EU AGREES TO TOTAL BAN ON BEE HARMING PESTICIDES

The ban on neonicotinoids is expected to come into force by the end of 2018 and will mean they can only be used in closed greenhouses. Bees and other insects are vital for global food production as they pollinate three-quarters of all crops. The plummeting numbers of pollinators in recent years have been blamed, in part, on the widespread use of pesticides.
Source: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/apr/27/eu-agrees-total-ban-on-bee-harming-pesticides

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