



AFRICAN WILDLIFE CONSULTATIVE FORUM

20 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

20 Years of Leadership in Africa.....	Pg 1
Leadership Quotes.....	Pg 2
Timeline of Historical Accomplishments.....	Pg 3
Added Value of AWCF Over Time.....	Pg 7
Conclusion.....	Pg 8
Selected Staff and Group Pictures.....	Pg 9



20

YEARS OF LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA



Safari Club International Foundation (SCIF) has hosted the African Wildlife Consultative Forum (AWCF) since 2002, bringing this event to the forefront of sustainable use policy and wildlife conservation issues in Africa ever since. As we approach the celebration of nearly two decades of convening African stakeholders under the SCIF banner, this report serves to give historical background on our many accomplishments, provide a view of AWCF's evolution over the years, and show how we are now well positioned to achieve even more together in Africa.

Organizing a gathering for different stakeholder groups to meet freely together was a unique concept in the late 1990s when Safari Club was first planning its strategic involvement in Africa and still operated an office in South Africa. Thus, AWCF itself was a novel idea at its inception for its inclusion of government, professional hunting (PH), community, and academic interests. The collaborative nature of AWCF continues today and contributes to a tradition of transparent discussions on a variety of issues. In 2002, AWCF was officially established as a transition from early meetings of what was then called the African Advisory Board, a more private government to government exchange (and earlier the SCI African Chapter), into a large annual conference of this diverse group. The envisioned role for Safari Club in supporting rural education and regional CITES strategy greatly influenced the need for such a forum. SCIF has facilitated these meetings with an African host nation through its own structural

changes, varying staff capacity, international hunting controversies, and most recently a global pandemic. Continuing to consistently provide the AWCF venue is an accomplishment in its own, a testament to the impact of our brand in Africa, and a commitment from our African partners.

Some institutional knowledge has inevitably been lost, but below is a list of the major milestones and accomplishments of AWCF through its 20-year history. AWCF remains an African led initiative and important platform for discussion, but it is not an official decision-making body. SCIF, however, is transforming it into a professional wildlife conference, increasing communications about AWCF and its sustainable use agenda, sharing African voices in a more effective way, and gaining momentum for joint action on international policy affairs. Today, we are seeing the true value of AWCF, and the relationships built around it, as we take on new challenges.





The purpose of the meeting is the conservation of wildlife, sustainable benefits, and to make life better for our people in Africa. AWCF comes up with African solutions to Africa specific conservation issues. This is an African initiative to resolve African problems. Fast forward from 2002, AWCF has grown by leaps and bounds. One of the greatest achievements has been the protection of hunting in all participating countries. I hope for the future that AWCF will become stronger and stronger.”

– **George Pangeti, SCIF Africa Coordinator, retired ZimParks Board**

“The Foundation is really grateful to have everyone in attendance, and we are proud to see how this forum has grown over the years. I believe AWCF provides the necessary interaction to accomplish Africa’s goals and continue progress in the right direction.”

– **Warren Sackman, SCIF Past President**

“AWCF is important to SCIF’s mission in Africa. There’s just no other organization that holds a range country forum other than SCIF. Together we can take AWCF to new and higher levels with our African country partners.”

– **Brook Minx, SCIF President**

“AWCF is the only forum on the continent of Africa that brings together all the people, parties, and players. AWCF provides stakeholders in African wildlife the only opportunity to come together to promote the wildlife industry, protect hunting, and craft a unified stance on resource management, which is a laudable achievement in itself. But most importantly, where best practices in conservation often take a back seat to the politically expedient, AWCF positions SCIF as the voice for sustainable wildlife conservation with decision makers around the world.”

– **Joe Hosmer, SCIF Past President**

TIMELINE OF HISTORICAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS (2022-PAST)



2022 – 20th AWCF Maputo, Mozambique



New relationships with African Ambassadors to the U.S. help fight trophy ban language in the U.S. Appropriations bill.

AWCF will commemorate its 20th anniversary in Maputo, Mozambique. This meeting is an opportunity to support the National Administration for Conservation Areas and revitalize the country's hunting industry, continuing SCIF's history of capacity building there, particularly with support for lion management planning and to the Mozambique Safari Operators Association.

Grant funding from the Hunter Legacy Fund 100 supports the future vision for AWCF.

SCI/F hosts the Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism from Tanzania, and the Ambassador of Zimbabwe accepts SCI's 2022 International Legislator of the Year Award on behalf of his Minister of Environment at the 50th SCI Convention in Las Vegas. Relationships built over years of AWCF help add this value.



2021 – 19th AWCF Kasane, Botswana ([Video](#), [Community Field Visit Video](#))



SCI/F staff is invited to brief the SADC group of Ambassadors in Washington, D.C. on trophy ban issues.

After several years of planning through the COVID-19 pandemic, the AWCF finally celebrates Botswana's reopening of tourist hunting and community benefits from the special elephant quota at the birthplace of AWCF, the Cresta Mowana Safari Resort in Kasane. This AWCF is vital to the development of a national scale leopard population survey, the first project in SCIF's new research strategy.

Zambia's Director of National Parks and Wildlife authors an op-ed opposing a proposed trophy ban in the state of Connecticut.



2020 – 18th AWCF Virtual ([Video](#))



AWCF is successfully held virtually through the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining momentum for collaborative conservation within the AWCF group during difficult times for the hunting industry in Africa. The important role of hunting tourism to recovery efforts is highlighted.

SCI/F elevates communications efforts around AWCF to the next level. Hundreds of thousands of people are reached through SCI's second-best performing week of the year on social media. These communications efforts, including press releases to new audiences and targeted media op-eds authored by range state authorities, represent a significant change in how SCI/F shares the AWCF brand, increases its visibility, and works with African partners.

A new AWCF logo design is rolled out with the participating country flags around the continent of Africa inside SCIF's traditional circle, symbolizing the collaborative nature of AWCF.

A special session of AWCF is organized to specifically address action on the mounting threat of trophy ban legislation, resulting in a government process to move forward a position statement against such anti-hunting policies.

The AWCF group plays an integral role in defeating California Senate Bill 1175 during the state's legislative session, sending two letters signed by 25 participating entities representing 10 countries, giving testimony, authoring numerous op-eds, along with many other individual letters. Zimbabwe as outgoing AWCF Chair is a leading advocate.



The President of Botswana is awarded SCI's 2020 International Legislator of the Year Award for his bold steps to reopen his country to tourist hunting and sustainable use community-based wildlife reform in the face of the international anti-hunting media.

Zambia's Minister attends the 49th SCI Convention in Reno, along with a record number of African government delegates from 8 countries, showing their commitment to the hunting industry and another measure of AWCF's added value. ZimParks becomes an affiliate member of SCI and exhibits a booth at the Convention, a first step towards African wildlife management authorities marketing directly at the show.

The highest attendance ever is recorded with more than 100 attendees, a testament to AWCF's growing influence. Countries such as Botswana and Eswatini re-commit their attendance while others outside the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, like Cameroon and Ethiopia, continue to attend. A Strategic Action Plan declaration and outline of action items is agreed upon by the AWCF group. SCIF staff visits our anti-poaching partner in the Savé Valley Conservancy.

Communities are officially recognized as the third stakeholder group that make up AWCF, together with governments and professional hunters. While community-based organizations have always been involved, issues of community engagement are further highlighted on the agenda.

A professional [website for AWCF](#) is developed to permanently house the history and outcomes of the annual meetings.

United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Directors continue to provide opening remarks for the agenda in recent years, and high-level delegations attend in-person, including a surrogate representing the Secretary of Interior. USFWS technical staff join a field visit to the Matetsi Complex to learn about Zimbabwe's quota setting and wildlife management. First steps are taken to build similar relationships with the European Commission.

2019 – 17th AWCF
Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe
[\(Video\)](#)



**2018 – 16th AWCF
Kampala, Uganda**

[\(Video\)](#)



Uganda hosts AWCF for the first time in Kampala, a significant event to formally bring Uganda as a non-SADC member into the fold on sustainable use policy and promote their growing safari hunting industry. SCIF staff visits our Tanzania Lion Project in the field.

Tanzania recognizes hosting AWCF during a CITES Animals Committee meeting in Geneva.



**2017 – 15th AWCF
Arusha, Tanzania**



SCIF nominates a core AWCF delegate to the U.S. Department of Interior's International Wildlife Conservation Council, and African presentations to the Council builds relationships between Africa and the U.S.

Then USFWS Acting Director announces a positive enhancement finding on the import of elephant trophies from Zambia and Zimbabwe at AWCF, leading to unforeseen backlash from the media and Trump Administration, resulting in litigation from SCI and other legal action that re-shaped the United States' permitting paradigm.

Research results from SCIF's major investment in the Tanzania Lion Project are presented over the course of several years, sharing the most accurate methods for estimating lion populations directly with range states.

AWCF is used to address Tanzania's ongoing concession block auction, an issue SCI/F would continue to work on with the government and PH stakeholders.



2016

While there is no formal AWCF meeting, a pre-CITES gathering of AWCF participating governments is hosted in Maputo, Mozambique in preparation for CoP17 held in South Africa.

Through engagement with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), including at AWCF and an emphasis on its activity, SCIF is accepted as a science-based member organization.



**2015 – 14th AWCF
South Africa**



SCIF releases the [Conservation Equation](#) story and economic report on hunting in eight African countries produced by Southwick Associates. Input from the PH associations through AWCF is critical to data collection and the document remains a useful resource.

The AWCF agenda focuses on land use planning, in addition to anti-poaching, lion research and elephant management, and international policy.



**2014 – 13th AWCF
Ethiopia**

[\(Video 1\)](#), [\(Video 2\)](#)



Ethiopia hosts AWCF for the first time in Hawasa, a significant event to help spread sustainable use policy to Ethiopia and work with their hunting industry. After SCI/F's Fighting for Lions Campaign raised millions of dollars, AWCF stakeholders play an important role in successfully opposing the petition and rule making process to list African lion as endangered on the U.S. Endangered Species Act. AWCF delegates make a lobbying mission to Washington, DC.



**2013 – 12th AWCF
Livingstone, Zambia**



A letter is sent to U.S. Secretaries of Interior and State regarding effective ways to implement President Obama's agenda to combat wildlife trafficking.

SCIF's Zambia Lion Project makes progress on developing the most accurate methods for aging lion trophies, results that would later be published.

2012 – 11th AWCF
Kasane, Botswana



The AWCF agenda continues to focus on preparations for CITES CoPs, engagement with USFWS, leopard research, along with lion and elephant management.



2011 – 10th AWCF
Swaziland



Swaziland hosts AWCF for the first time. A letter is sent to USFWS regarding CITES' scientific review of African lions and a strategy for community empowerment in the hunting industry is presented to the AWCF group.



2010 – 9th AWCF
Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe



Safari Club's CITES team leads the process for adopting a definition of hunting trophies as a separate form of non-commercial trade with support from African Parties, a major accomplishment in securing the sustainability of international trade in hunting trophies. The AWCF agenda also includes human-wildlife conflict and wildlife genetics.



2009 – 8th AWCF
Mangochi, Malawi



The AWCF agenda tackles preparation for the CITES CoP15, regional conservation status of lions, and an AWCF roadmap. Malawi is engaged in AWCF's early years.



2008 – 7th AWCF
Windhoek, Namibia



Over several years, AWCF led the organization and drafting of guidelines for hunting best practice in Africa. SADC governments followed with a protocol on wildlife, leading them to be more acceptable of hunting with community benefits as key outputs.

The AWCF agenda builds SCIF's brand on lion issues and engagement with the CITES Secretariat.



2007 – 6th AWCF
Pemba, Mozambique



Prior to the CITES CoP14, the Namibian Minister of Environment and Tourism goes to Brussels to lobby for support for sustainable use proposals.

A workshop held in Namibia results in the development of National Codes of Conduct adopted by each national PH association in the years to come.



2006 – 5th AWCF
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania



Various workshops are hosted for regional and national lion management strategies, making SCIF an early leader in lion conservation. Meetings specifically in Douala, Cameroon and Johannesburg, South Africa helped prevent Kenya and West African Parties from putting forth lion listing proposals to CITES for many years. These workshops lead to the development of the original two regional IUCN guidelines for conservation of lion, documents that are now being updated through the joint CITES-CMS African Carnivore Initiative process.

Many national elephant management plans are supported as the AWCF agenda covers regional planning with the IUCN and groups of experts.



2005 – 4th AWCF
Mauritius



A resolution drafted by government representatives at AWCF is sent to the CITES Secretariat, asking CITES to officially recognize the SADC block. Early engagement from the SADC Secretariat lends official recognition to AWCF. Regional strategy on CITES issues would continue to be a critical part of the AWCF agenda.



2004 – 3th AWCF
Sun City, South Africa



Early AWCF meetings involves other African countries such as Angola and Malawi, and even exchanges with wildlife authorities from Kenya.



2003 – 2nd AWCF
Livingstone, Zambia



The 2nd AWCF is opened by Zambia's Minister and shows clear value for the SADC region in discussing CITES strategy among other priority wildlife issues.



2002 – 1st AWCF
Kasane, Botswana



AWCF is born with the first meeting held in Kasane, Botswana.

ADDED VALUE OF AWCF OVER TIME



United States Fish & Wildlife Service Trophy (USFWS) Permitting Policy

Relationships built and increased communications between the USFWS and their African peers is extremely valuable, resulting in recent progress on trophy import permits with Tanzania lions and bontebok for example. USFWS technical staff use AWCF to make their scientific findings and field trips to gather needed information. Annual meetings of African governments and the USFWS are organized at the SCI Convention.



Regional Strategy on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES)

Engagement through AWCF has helped make SCI/F a leader at CITES over the years. AWCF contributes to dialogue with the CITES Secretariat and in building range state capacity, particularly with quota setting and non-detriment findings. Progress is made with inter-SADC discussion on CITES. AWCF gatherings are organized at CoPs with rooms reserved for SADC Parties.



SCIF Conservation Project Development

AWCF plays a critical role in the development and implementation of SCIF conservation projects, historically including the Tanzania and Zambia lion projects, IUCN elephant status report, CAMPFIRE audit, various anti-poaching initiatives, and many others because of in-person engagement with partners and opportunities for staff field visits. The agenda focuses on priority needs in wildlife biology, more recently building on a body of work around SCIF's strategy on leopard research.



African Delegations at SCI Convention and International Affairs

African government wildlife authorities, often headed by Ministers and Ambassadors, attend SCI's Convention to engage directly with SCI, work with their hunting industries, and meet with the USFWS. In the future, more agencies may exhibit and bring community representatives to be exposed to the marketplace.

Relationships with Professional Hunting Associations

The AWCF structure played an important role in the creation of the Operators and Professional Hunting Associations of Africa (OPHAA), now an influential umbrella PH association for many African countries. AWCF helps strengthen relationships with PH associations as SCI/F leadership attend AGMs before and after. The agendas cover transboundary issues, firearms import policy, and repositioning the industry, issues that continue today.



AWCF as a Communications Platform and Networking Opportunity

AWCF facilitates informal communications among stakeholders, including through the creation of a large group chat, leading to a productive platform for discussion and sharing related news. AWCF provides an important networking opportunity and cross-cultural experience for advancement of African wildlife professionals that support sustainable use hunting.



CONCLUSION

While SCI/F and our African partners are still dealing with many of the same issues over time, AWCF has played an important role in the development of the modern African hunting industry and international policy arena, particularly regarding lion management, leopard research, regional elephant strategy, and sustainable hunting best practices. The agenda continues to tackle big issues like community-based natural resource management, human-wildlife conflict, anti-poaching, Trans-Frontier Conservation Areas, and national concession management, promoting a dialogue among range states and the hunting industry with specialized groups such as the IUCN, CITES, and USFWS.

The success of AWCF is indebted to the pioneers within Safari Club that paved the way for this history in Africa, and the dedication of previous staff and volunteers. SCIF thanks the African governments for their commitment to AWCF, along with the PH associations, community organizations, and all attendees for their past support and ongoing engagement. We follow in the footsteps of these conservation giants.

Looking to the future, AWCF will be invaluable in addressing issues of community engagement, proposed trophy bans, priority wildlife research needs, and position of the hunting industry in Africa’s wildlife economy. Our relationships with African partners will continue to add value to SCI and the Convention, as we seek to plan an inaugural AWCF reception.

Celebrate the past two decades of SCIF leadership in Africa with us as we plan for our 20th anniversary AWCF in Maputo, Mozambique in 2022!



AWCF
AFRICAN WILDLIFE
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SELECTED STAFF AND GROUP PICTURES



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2011 AWCF GROUP - Swaziland



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