



PAGE 3: MAINSTREAMING NATURAL CAPITAL INTO DECISION-MAKING.



PAGE 4: PROGRESS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.



PAGE 5: DATA AND MONITORING FOR SUSTAINABILITY.



PAGE 6: SPREADING THE MESSAGE ACROSS THE GDSA.

# THE GDSA SECRETARIAT IN ACTION

## THE GABORONE DECLARATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN AFRICA 2016 SECRETARIAT ACTIVITY REPORT



The Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa (GDSA) is a regional action framework to help coordinate sustainable development in Africa. Its members include Botswana, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, and Tanzania. Together they are committed to incorporating the value of nature into public and private policies and practices, supporting sustainable production, and improving our data, knowledge and capacity. This collective of African leaders have taken bold steps to unite in their efforts to achieve a sustainable development pathway.

*All photos © Benjamin Drummond*

## Foreword from the Executive Secretary

Dear Colleagues,

The Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa (GDSA) sits at the heart of the continent's move towards sustainable development. As such, it is one of the key platforms in the region that seeks to support the transition of governments towards a green economy and the conservation of the continent's rich ecological resources for both present and future generations.

We have had much success in the past year in helping countries reach key milestones in their commitments under the GDSA and are witnessing the kind of momentum that was envisioned when the Declaration was initially signed in 2012.

As the Secretariat, we have facilitated achievement of regional and national progress on the GDSA's commitments including on natural capital accounting, sustainable production, private sector engagement, and monitoring and measurement of natural capital. We have invested in increasing our outreach of the GDSA's message and mandate by ensuring that we engaged with stakeholders at the policy-level, with member countries, and of course with our partners both in Africa and abroad. Most importantly, we have worked to serve our member countries by providing technical assistance and working to open doors for new opportunities whenever possible.

For the GDSA, 2016 was a landmark year of increased momentum and high-level achievements. Looking forward, we anticipate 2017 bringing even greater opportunities and continued partnership with not only the GDSA member countries, but our partners as well. We look forward to continuing this journey together with our partners into the new year.



Kind regards,



Ruud Jansen  
Executive Secretary  
Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa



## The GDSA and Climate Change



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*“Through sustainable agriculture, payment for ecosystem services, and ecosystem based adaptation, the GDSA will contribute directly to climate change adaptation and will build the adaptive capacity of communities in transitioning key sectors towards a green economy.”*

His Excellency Lieutenant-General Dr Seretse Khama Ian Khama, President of the Republic of Botswana and GDSA Chairman, in an address to the UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP 21) in Paris, December 2015.

## Advances under the commitments of the GDSA

### Recognizing and incorporating the value of natural capital into decision-making

In 2016, the GDSA Secretariat successfully launched its work under the first commitment of the Declaration, which entails incorporation of natural capital into public and private sector decision-making.

*Regional work on incorporating the value of natural capital:* Highlights of the GDSA's work at the regional level on this commitment area in 2016, include:

- Organizing a workshop together with Conservation International and the World Bank led WAVES partnership in June 2016 attended by the delegates of 12 African countries. The purpose of the workshop was to facilitate learning exchange in Africa and to initiate discussions around a GDSA Community of Practice on natural capital accounting (NCA). The workshop resulted in the endorsement of the GDSA NCA Statement. The High Commissioner H.E. John Moreti of the High Commission of the Republic of Botswana in Nairobi addressed workshop attendees.
- In 2016, the Secretariat began work on the development of the GDSA NCA Community of Practice. Progress so far includes the provision of training activities to member countries, including the sponsorship of three government officials from Botswana, Ghana, and Liberia to attend a short course in December 2016 on environmental accounting in Canberra, Australia.

*“Whatever lessons that Botswana has learned, good or bad, will be shared between countries so that we can transform the region because our natural resources are shared across boundaries. The GDSA provides that platform to learn from the experiences that Botswana has generated.”*

Portia Segomelo, WAVES country advisor for Botswana and Rwanda speaking in a promotional video produced by the GDSA, CI, and the World Bank led WAVES partnership, entitled: ‘African countries lead on natural capital accounting’.



Left: Workshop attendees at the NCA workshop in Nairobi in June 2016.

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*Working in Liberia to incorporate the value of natural capital into public sector decision making:* In addition to its regional work, the GDSA has facilitated the initiation of a pilot ecosystem accounting project between Conservation International (CI) and the Liberian Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This project, was undertaken under the umbrella of the GDSA and was initiated in March 2016. Initial analyses were presented to the Liberian government in December 2016. These included preliminary forest and timber accounts as well as substantial work on mapping Liberia's biodiversity, forest carbon, and freshwater natural resources. The outputs of this work will be published in 2017 by CI and the EPA.



Above: Workshop attendees at the stakeholder workshop in Monrovia in December 2016 providing feedback on preliminary results. © Conservation International

### **Pursuing sustainable production in Africa**

The second commitment of the Gaborone Declaration is the pursuit of sustainable production in agriculture, fisheries, and extractive industries in a way that maintains Africa's natural capital. In 2016, the GDSA supported numerous activities under this commitment.

#### *Sustainable Bamboo and Rattan Industries in Africa:*

Discussions on cooperation between the GDSA and the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR, a development organization of 41 member states that promotes innovate mechanisms for poverty alleviation and environmental protection) commenced. In July 2016, a five-person delegation from the GDSA (including officials from Liberia and Botswana) met with INBAR to discuss avenues for collaboration, noting that bamboo and rattan are excellent examples of sustainable development and job creation in Africa. In August 2016, Madam Vohiri (Executive Director of the Liberian Environment Protection Agency) represented the GDSA at a conference hosted by the INBAR in Cameroon. Madam Vohiri gave the keynote speech at the closing ceremony, where she spoke about the importance of the GDSA and invited attendees from other countries to consider having their respective governments join as members.

#### *Renewable Energy in Africa:*

In July 2016, a GDSA delegation visited China to discuss issues surrounding renewable energy with the Chinese National Energy Administration (NEA) and to participate in Eco-Forum Global's Annual Conference.

## Ecosystem Based Adaptation for Food Security Assembly (EBAFOSA)

The GDSA Secretariat is working together with the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food Security to establish Botswana country chapter of Ecosystem Based Adaptation for Food Security Assembly (EBAFOSA). EBAFOSA provides the platform where stakeholders can forge mutually benefitting partnerships aimed at up-scaling EBA driven agriculture and its value chains into policy and implementation through country driven processes to ensure food security, climate adaptation, enhanced productivity of ecosystems and backward and forward linkages to supply and demand side value chains to create numerous income and job opportunities, especially for the youth who form 60% of the unemployed in Africa.

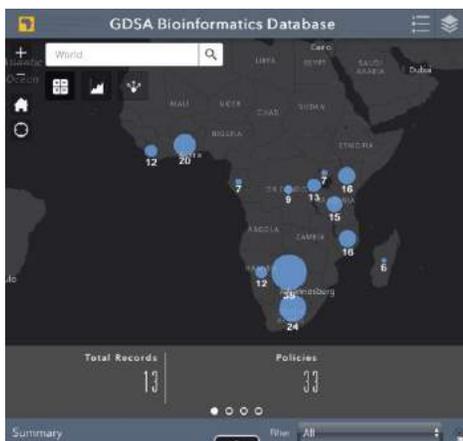
### *Sustainable Finance in Botswana:*

In April 2016, the GDSA helped organize and participated in the first symposium on sustainable finance in Botswana.

### **Generating data and building capacity to support policy networks**

Under the third commitment of the GDSA, the secretariat provided a range of services including the promotion of data generation and building general support in regards to policy on sustainable development. Progress on this commitment in 2016, included:

- South-south exchanges, such as an exchange on renewable energy issues between GDSA member states and Asia.
- Supporting the first regional (SADC) workshop in November 2016 on the establishment of a TWIX (Trade in Wildlife Information eXchange), which is a communications platform and wildlife seizures database for enforcement officials.
- Supporting the establishment of a Wildlife Enforcement Network in Southern Africa (hosting the WEN Advisor at GDSA Secretariat), including the provision of liaison and fundraising support.
- Supporting the establishment and facilitating the workings of the Botswana Conservation Caucus, which is an impartial information sharing and lobby grouping of Members of Parliament (affiliated to the ICCF).



In addition, the GDSA Secretariat closed a project funded by the JRS Biodiversity Foundation, the objective of which was to determine how current policies support biodiversity information generation, use, maintenance and access as well as how they enhance the impact of biodiversity information management. The resulting database is now publicly available on the GDSA website.

Left: The interactive database available on the GDSA website of biodiversity policies and associated literature.

## Spreading the message of sustainable development in Africa

### Staffing up and increasing the secretariat's capacity

In 2016, the Secretariat established a new and fully operational office in Gaborone, Botswana. This included welcoming new staff into the Secretariat including Mr. Disikalala Gaseitsiwe – the former Deputy Permanent Secretary within Botswana's Ministry of Finance and Development Planning – as the Deputy Executive Secretary of the GDSA, Mr. Tiego Mpho as the new Program and Policy Manager, and Dr. Kim Reuter as the new Technical Director for the GDSA.

### Outreach

*Soliciting new members to the join the GDSA:* In 2016, AMCEN (the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment) passed resolutions in support of GDSA's work on natural capital accounting and encouraging AMCEN members to join GDSA.



Above: GDSA at AMCEN. © Conservation International

*Global outreach on the GDSA message:* The GDSA Secretariat hosted official side events at a range of high-profile conferences and meetings, including at the AMCEN 6<sup>th</sup> Special Session in Cairo, the World Conservation Congress organized by IUCN in Hawaii, the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2) in Nairobi, and the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP) in Cancun, Mexico. The combined attendance to these side events was over 200 people from a range of governments and partner entities.

*Informing global dialogues on sustainable development:* The GDSA provided technical support, via the High Commission of the Republic of Botswana, to the successful UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) resolution on natural capital, aligned with the first commitment of the GDSA. The adoption of the resolution marks the first time that the concept of natural capital been used in an Outcome Document of the United Nations and therefore as a legal term in the UN system. The adoption of this resolution has therefore greatly enhanced the concept and legal status of natural capital within the UN system.

In addition, the GDSA Secretariat worked to ensure that the concepts and methods of natural capital valuation, accounting, and analyses were supported in the operative decisions, resolutions and declarations by the sixth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in Cairo, Egypt in April 2016 and the eighth Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea in June 2016.

The GDSA recognizes the importance of research and academic forums. Therefore, in 2016, the GDSA presented at – and participated in – the Ecosystem Services Partnership

Conference in Nairobi, the WaterNet Symposium in Botswana, the United Nations World Tourism Organization working group meeting on measuring sustainable tourism in Madrid, and a workshop on the State of Protected Areas in East Africa organized by the East African Community (EAC) and the IUCN.

*Regional outreach to diplomatic missions and to cooperating partners:* The GDSA Secretariat recognizes the importance of sharing its message with member countries' diplomatic missions around the world as well as with cooperating partners. To that end, the GDSA Secretariat hosted in March 2016, a meeting of the heads of diplomatic missions and representatives of international cooperating partners in Gaborone. This was attended by representatives from 24 governments and partners. In October 2016, the Embassy of the Republic of Botswana, together with the GDSA, organized a meeting of diplomatic missions in Brussels, Belgium at the ACP Offices. This meeting was organized in collaboration with Conservation International and hosted the ambassadors based in Brussels representing the GDSA and Southern African Development Community (SADC) member countries.

*Outreach to the GDSA member states:* To ensure continued flow of information to the GDSA member states, the Secretariat held a GDSA Focal Point meeting in Nairobi, Kenya in March 2016. At this meeting, the Focal Points approved the Focal Point Terms of Reference as well as the GDSA work plan. The Focal Point meeting was attended by representatives from all member countries except Rwanda. In addition, the GDSA Secretariat held individual, in-country meetings with Focal Points in Botswana, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, and Tanzania. These meetings touched on a range of issues relevant to the GDSA commitments.

### **Fundraising support in member countries**

In 2016, the GDSA – together with Conservation International – began providing fundraising support to member countries, particularly in regards to the mobilization of bilateral and multilateral funding from entities like the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The fundraising support included a special focus on natural capital accounting, climate change, payments for ecosystem services, and sustainable development activities.

### **Working with partners**

In 2016, the GDSA Secretariat worked with a range of partners to accomplish its goals. In addition to the Government of Botswana, the member countries, and Conservation International, the GDSA Secretariat worked together with the following entities at either the national or global level:

- Botswana Conservation Caucus (affiliated with the International Conservation Caucus Foundation)
- Chinese NEA (National Energy Administration)
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
- International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR)
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

- World Bank led Wealth Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services partnership (WAVES)
- And other entities not listed here.

## Publications

The GDSA Secretariat published numerous reports and papers in 2016, all of which are available for download on the GDSA website.

### *Informational briefs:*

- Climate Change and impact across the GDSA. Background Brief. *In press.*
- Natural Capital Accounting Community of Practice under the Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa. [Available online.](#)
- Innovative Conservation Finance. Background Brief. [Available online.](#)

### *Full-length reports:*

- Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa & Conservation International. 2016. Workshop on Regional Perspectives on Natural Capital Accounting. Report Prepared for Conservation International and the Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa: Gaborone, Botswana. [Available online.](#)
- Reuter, K.E., Juhn, D., Portela, R., and Venter, J. 2016. Natural Capital Accounting across the Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa: A Desktop Scoping. Report Prepared for the Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa: Gaborone, Botswana. [Available online.](#)



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## Looking forward

The next year will be one of milestones and next steps. The GDSA Secretariat is looking forward to celebrating the five-year anniversary of the signing of the Declaration with expanded programming and renewed country-level outreach. This will of course be achieved via continued close cooperation with the GDSA partners, such as with UNEP in the implementation of the Natural Capital Resolution stemming from UNEA-2. In addition, a second workshop on natural capital accounting - organized together with the World Bank WAVES program - is being discussed. The GDSA hopes to end the year with an expanded set of partnerships across Africa and the globe, in support of the Declaration's commitments. As always, the Secretariat is available to work strategically with the member countries on their respective sustainability goals.



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