

**REPUBLIC OF RWANDA**



**THE PRIME MINISTER**

**PRIME MINISTER**

**Dr. Edouard Ngirente**

**Keynote Address at the Business of Conservation  
Conference (BCC), 2019**

**Kigali, Rwanda | 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

**Kigali Convention Centre (KCC)**

- **Your Excellency Hailemariam Dessalegn, Former Prime Minister, Federal Republic of Ethiopia,**
- **Honourable Ministers here present,**
- **Representatives of International Organisations,**
- **CEOs and Head of tourism and conservation Organizations,**
- **Development Partners,**
- **Distinguished Guests,**

**Good morning and welcome,**

1.As we continue to celebrate the conservation achievements in Rwanda, I am pleased to join you today in this 2019 Business of Conservation Conference representing H.E. Paul Kagame, the President of the Republic of Rwanda.

2.I would like first to thank the African Leadership University for its active involvement in the delivery of this Conference. We were delighted when the African Leadership University chose to open its second campus here in Kigali in September 2017.

## **Distinguished Guests,**

**3.** Rwanda is not new to conservation and the protection of natural heritage. We recognized the critical need for conservation-based tourism and economic development through the protection of our natural ecosystems. We have become a World leader in conservation practices with more than 8.9% of our land base protected as national parks.

**4.** A few of our conservation achievements include the following:

- **Mountain gorilla conservation** in the Virunga Massif - As a result of government, communities and conservation partners working together, the 2016 census revealed an amazing 59% increase in participation from 2003 when we started the Kwita Izina celebrations.
- **Eastern Black Rhino** were successfully reintroduced to Akagera in 2017, 10 years after the last rhino was seen in 2007.

- **African Lions** were successfully reintroduced in 2015 after being hunted to extinction in the 1990s. An additional 2 male lions were translocated in 2017 to add to the genetic diversity of a population that is now thriving and continues to grow. This is a result of our efforts to stop illegal trade, better protection and management of important wetlands and a strong network of conservation champions.
- **The expansion of Volcanoes National Park** by nearly 28 hectares which was celebrated in January, 2018.

**5.** Rwanda has a strong tourism sector with a Tourism Strategy that is, and will continue to be both pro-conservation and pro-people. It is focused on two important areas, sustainability through responsible conservation, tourism and community involvement. It has also been about protecting our natural heritage, providing world-class experiences that profiles the natural and cultural beauty and diversity of Rwanda.

While ensuring that Rwandans benefit from this tourism and conservation – we want to ensure that no Rwandan is left behind.

**6.**To achieve this goal, the Government of Rwanda, together with its partners in the public and private sector, are implementing strategies around the following broad areas: Tourism infrastructure to support increased length of stay; Marketing Rwanda to the World; and Improving service delivery and conservation of our environment/wildlife.

**7.**These strategies have resulted in significant results in Rwanda and for Rwandans over the past 15 years – visits to our national parks increased by 600% since 2003 and 250% growth in revenues from these same visitors.

## **Distinguished Guests,**

- 8.** This solid foundation of conservation, with an aggressive but pro-conservation Tourism Strategy has resulted in significant positive social-economic growth and development benefits for our citizens.
  
- 9.** The Government of Rwanda has invested more than \$5.8 million USD since 2005 into more than 647 projects in communities surrounding the national parks. This Revenue Sharing Program, originally 5% and then increased in 2017 to 10% of all tourism revenues is about investing in communities around our national parks providing economic development capacity and making the lives better for Rwandans. In 2018/19 alone, the Program supported investments worth \$1.7 million USD in 37 projects, an increase of 51% over 2017/18.

**10.** This investment has served as a catalyst for our many conservation and community partners. A conservative estimate from community benefits project investments since 2005 increases to 13 million dollars. The result of this investment is clear to see - for both people and nature.

**11.** We also have an important but little known Special Guarantee Fund in which an additional 5% of all tourism revenues has been used to support the management and compensation resulting from human wildlife conflicts in these same communities surrounding our national parks.

**12.** In short, our experience is that collaboration and effective partnerships are the key to how we have been able to achieve the significant results and benefits of conservation, sustainable tourism and economic benefits in Rwanda, for Rwandans. They are the means by which Rwanda has

achieved conservation results, providing exceptional tourism experiences for visitors at home and from around the World, and improving the lives of Rwandans. It is also the means by which we will achieve additional results in the future.

### **Distinguished Guests,**

**13.** In concluding, I would like to thank you for listening to what Rwanda has done. It was mainly focused on the unique approaches and successes related to sound conservation practices to protect our natural legacy that support an important sustainable tourism sector in order to ensure economic benefits for Rwandans – now and in the future.

**14.** Allow me to add my voice to calls for action that ensure the protection and management of our natural legacy in Africa, but also make use of it in a sustainable way to help drive economies and the benefits for the people of Africa.

**15.** Let me conclude by wishing you a productive conference. It is now my pleasure to declare the 2019 Business of Conservation Conference officially open.

**Thank you for your kind attention.**