

Peace Parks Foundation agreement to develop ecotourism in Mozambique

In a bid to support the management and transformative tourism development of the Maputo Special Reserve (MSR) and Ponta do Ouro Partial Marine Reserve (PPMR), the Peace Parks Foundation - a transfrontier conservation NGO - has signed a partnership agreement with Mozambique to merge these two bodies into one management structure.



The official agreement was signed by PFF CEO, Werner Myburgh, and Mozambique's Minister of Land, Environment and Rural Development, His Excellency Celso Correia, at a gala evening as part of the Nature-based Tourism Conference held in Maputo.

The agreement is based on a strategic business plan, developed by both partners, and initial funding of \$16m donated by the Reinert Foundation, the Wyss Foundation and other private donors. The World Bank funded MozBio programme is also investing into the development of the reserves.

Minister of Land, Environment and Rural Development, Celso Correia said: "Mozambique is proud to partner with Peace Parks Foundation and we are especially pleased to see continued energy and resources being devoted to the development of the Lubombo Transfrontier Conservation Area. Maputo Special Reserve and Ponta do Ouro Partial Marine Reserve have tremendous potential to develop as fully-fledged tourism destinations that will benefit Mozambique and its people.

"The partnership with Peace Parks follows a decade-long relationship to bring us to this point. We look forward to continue working together on these developments and would also like to warmly thank the Reinert Foundation, Wyss Foundation and World Bank who have committed significant funding, as well as those who have supported the development of conservation in Mozambique over the years."

In terms of the partnership, Peace Parks will provide technical and financial support for conservation and tourism development activities, which will entail merging MSR and PPMR into one management structure. The adjacent reserves are contiguous with South Africa's Tembe Elephant Park and World Heritage Site, iSimangaliso Wetland Park, and are all part of the Lubombo Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA).

The merging of eco-regions

Speaking on behalf of Peace Parks Foundation, CEO Werner Myburgh said: "This is the second partnership agreement that Peace Parks Foundation has signed with the Mozambique Government. The first, also with Mozambique, was signed in 2015 to help develop Zinave National Park as an integral component of Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area.

"The purpose of these agreements is to protect large ecosystems by connecting protected areas to the benefit of both people and nature. The Elephant Coast, one of the few protected areas in Africa where elephants occur in a park bordering the ocean, has the potential to become Mozambique's premier eco-tourism destination. This is also the first marine transfrontier conservation area in Africa, jointly managed by Mozambique and South Africa."



More than a 1000 endangered turtles nest along the shore of the Ponta do Ouro Partial Marine Reserve each year.

Situated in the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany Biodiversity Hotspot, MSR is part of one of earth's 36 biologically richest and most endangered terrestrial ecoregions. The reserve is an important component in the protected areas system of Mozambique, combining 1,040km² of coastal lakes, wetlands, swamp forests, grasslands and mangrove forests with the shores of the marine reserve and its wide variety of remarkable bird and marine species.

The marine reserve component stretches across 678km² and is the most important leatherback and loggerhead turtle nesting ground along the entire 2,800km Mozambican coastline, with more than 1,000 turtles coming to nest on these shores every year. Together with the neighbouring iSimangaliso Wetland Park, it forms Africa's first marine transfrontier conservation area.

Tourism development

With just one five-star lodge, Anvil Bay, currently operating, there is a great opportunity for additional accommodation

across a wider cost and experiential offering.

Accordingly, two new five-star coastal lodges will be built by concessionaires, to expand the high-end tourism market. Two mid-level, fully-serviced lodges will also be constructed – one along the coast and the other on the shores of one of the many beautiful freshwater lakes occurring throughout the park.

These lodges will also offer exclusive camping facilities for those who wish to get even closer to nature. A network of 4x4 trails complemented with exclusive campsites will be developed in the low-density tourism areas. A trail camp for guided walks and kayak trails will add a further dimension to the wide-range of tourist attractions being developed.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>