Joint Press Release by the Zimbabwe Parks & Wildlife Management Authority and Frankfurt Zoological Society

Gonarezhou Conservation Trust: Sharing responsibilities in conservation

Frankfurt Zoological Society and the Zimbabwean Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate have launched the Gonarezhou Conservation Trust. The innovative approach to jointly manage Gonarezhou National Park aims to achieve financial sustainability and to enhance partnerships with the local communities in addition to protecting Zimbabwe’s natural heritage.

(Gonarezhou, 16 September 2016) Today, the Honourable Zimbabwean Minister of Environment, Water and Climate and Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) have officially launched the Gonarezhou Conservation Trust. The new terms of the partnership of the Zimbabwean government and FZS form the basis of an innovative approach to managing Gonarezhou National Park.

“The Gonarezhou Conservation Trust will not only generate the much needed revenue amid ever rising challenges that include poaching activities, but will also bring in sustainability and consistence in the general conservation of Zimbabwe’s wildlife,” said Minister Oppah Muchinguri speaking to the more than 250 guests of the event at Chipinda Pools in Gonarezhou National Park.

“For conservation in Gonarezhou, park security, community involvement and financing, the formation of the trust is a major milestone”, said Karen Laurenson, the FZS Acting Africa Director who is co-chairing the Board of Trustees of the Trust with Tichafa Mundangepfupfu, the Board Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks).

Since 2007, FZS has supported conservation and development of Gonarezhou National Park in close collaboration with ZimParks. “The trust puts this partnership on a new footing. It may well serve as a model for management of other protected areas in Africa,” said Laurenson.

“Enhancing security in the park is vital,” said, who Mundangepfupfu who represented ZimParks at the event. “Through increasing manpower and providing training and oversight the trust will help us to effectively counter poaching and to establish a safe area for wildlife and eventually the reintroduction of black rhinos,” Mundangepfupfu said.

The trust also aims to create benefits and opportunities to the local communities around the park, for instance through tourism development, job creation and educational programmes.
In the long-term, the trust aims for financial sustainability. The costs of the management of the park are to be covered completely by the revenue it generates, for instance through tourism.

Starting with today’s launch, the Park is administered by the Board of Trustees, with equal representation from FZS and ZimParks. A Management Committee will be implementing the Park plan and reporting directly to the Board.

For more information, please see our background document ‘Gonarezhou Conservation Trust Background’.

PHOTOS & CONTACT

Patrick Eickemeier, Africa Communications Manager
Phone: +255 (0)732 98 57 68, E-Mail: patrick.eickemeier@fzs.org

NOTES FOR EDITORS

• The Zimbabwe Parks & Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks) manages one of the largest estates in the country, about 5 million hectares of land or 13% of Zimbabwe's total land area. It should be noted that most of the Parks are located in Ecological Regions Four and Five or rugged mountainous areas which would not have much economic alternative use. The Authority has a mandate to manage the entire wildlife population of Zimbabwe, whether on private or communal lands. The Authority has had a proud history of sound management that endeavours to preserve the unique flora and fauna heritage of Zimbabwe.

• Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) is an internationally operating conservation organisation based in Frankfurt, Germany. Our goal is to protect the natural diversity of species in important ecosystems across the globe – in partnership with and for people. For further information, please visit www.fzs.org

• Gonarezhou National Park is situated in the south-eastern Lowveld of Zimbabwe, and occupies a total area of 5,053 km². The Park was proclaimed in 1975, although various parts of it were designated as a game reserve as early as 1934. Gonarezhou forms part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park which straddles the borders of Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe and joins some of the most established wildlife areas in Southern Africa into a huge conservation area of 35,000km².