

In the heart of Kigali, Rwanda, a high-level event hosted by Mongabay Africa and the African Leadership University's School of Wildlife Conservation (ALU SOWC) gathered a diverse group of conservationists, journalists, policymakers, and investors on Wednesday at Kigali Convention Center.

This event marked a significant moment in the history of conservation journalism and the African wildlife economy, aiming to showcase Mongabay's new strategic focus on solutions journalism and highlight investment opportunities within Africa's wildlife sector.

The meeting was also attended by Francis Gatare, CEO of Rwanda Development Board (RDB) and a cabinet member, who gave a key note speech. The main idea was solutions journalism and potential investment opportunities in the African wildlife economy.

Mongabay, founded in 1999 by economist Rhett Ayers Butler, has grown into a globally recognized media platform dedicated to environmental and conservation issues. Operating with more than 100 full-time employees and over 1,000 contributors worldwide, Mongabay produces content in six different languages across six bureaus. The organization's commitment to high-quality, impactful reporting has earned it several prestigious awards, including the 2023 Biophilia Award.

In response to the urgent planetary emergencies of climate change and biodiversity loss, Mongabay extended its operations to Africa in late 2023. This expansion represented a paradigm shift, emphasizing solutions journalism to counter the often-skewed narrative of Africa perpetuated by Western media. Instead of focusing solely on the challenges, Mongabay Africa aims to highlight resilience, innovation, and progress within the continent, offering a more nuanced perspective on African issues.



The School of Wildlife Conservation: Nurturing Entrepreneurial Leaders

Established in 2016, the School of Wildlife Conservation (SOWC) at the African Leadership University is dedicated to advancing wildlife conservation as a burgeoning sector in Africa. The SOWC focuses on nurturing the next generation of entrepreneurial conservation leaders and conducting research into Africa's wildlife

economy.

Through the school's innovative programs in leadership development, education, and research, the SOWC provides a platform for young entrepreneurs to develop and refine business models for the African wildlife economy. At a higher level, the SOWC aims to influence industry decision-makers to embrace sustainable business practices and promote an entrepreneurial approach to conservation efforts.

The Business of Conservation

The conservation sector has long struggled with inefficiency and waste, contributing to the extinction crisis fueled by human activity. The natural environment suffers from unprecedented damage, necessitating new models for managing Earth's natural capital.

The Business of Conservation seeks to establish and uphold economic incentives for the sustainable use of wild resources while eliminating incentives for unsustainable practices. This approach aims to transform conservation into an opportunity for economic and social development, ensuring the sustained or increased growth of natural capital while addressing human needs.

The primary objectives of the launch event in Kigali were to familiarize key audiences in Rwanda with Mongabay's new strategic direction and the SOWC's business of conservation approach. The event aimed to demonstrate how excellent journalism can help policymakers make informed decisions, foster public dialogue, and promote transparency and accountability.

One of the key highlights of the event was the presentation of the Wildlife Economy Investment Index (WEII) for Africa, a flagship initiative of the SOWC. The WEII aims to attract investors to seize opportunities in Africa's wildlife economy by providing a comprehensive overview of the sector's potential.

The event also sought to highlight the role of solutions journalism in transforming Africa's often one-dimensional narrative as a war-torn, disease-ridden, poverty-stricken hellscape. By focusing on positive stories of resilience and innovation, solutions journalism can challenge stereotypes and offer a more balanced and hopeful view of the continent.

As the event drew to a close, attendees left with a renewed sense of optimism and

purpose. The collaboration between Mongabay Africa and the ALU SOWC represents a new dawn for African conservation, one where innovative journalism and entrepreneurial approaches can drive meaningful change. By showcasing solutions and highlighting investment opportunities, this joint effort aims to create a sustainable future for Africa's wildlife and its people.