

**Speech by the Ambassador of France on the occasion of the presentation of the award  
of the *Ordre National du Mérite* to Mr Clive STOCKIL**

Dear Clive Stockil,  
Distinguished guests,  
Dear friends,

We are gathered this evening for reasons solemn, friendly and happy.

Solemn because, on the proposal of the French Embassy in Zimbabwe, the President of the French Republic has decided to welcome you, Dear Clive Stockil, into the French National Order of Merit.

Friendly and happy, because we are all gathered today to celebrate a defender of the cause of the environment, biodiversity and wildlife, a noble cause to defend in our world which threatens nature more and more for the sake of financial prosperity or even criminal greed.

But what exactly is the National Order of Merit? It is an award given to women and men bestowed with outstanding military or civil virtues and whose purpose above all is to serve – serve their country, serve their values and also serve in favour of other people.

Following the example of Napoleon the 1<sup>st</sup> with the Legion of Honour, General de Gaulle created the Order of Merit in 1963 to distinguish not only those who brought the highest contribution in defending the country, but also to its intellectual, moral and economic development. The Order of Merit is a consecration, which rewards a fulfilled life, but is also a tribute that salutes your destiny and opens a future. It gives the holder the strength to do even more, proving furthermore their qualities that have justified their distinction. The laurels just above the cross that I will give you in an instant, weave in a circle of hope.

The hope that you give to this country, by your action in favour of the protection of wildlife, the hope you give to people around the world to see the values you defend, promoted everywhere on this planet, beyond cultural differences. It is the action of a lifetime, as you continue today at the institution you used to chair for more than a decade : the Save Valley Conservancy.

In a challenging environment, the Save Valley Conservancy is aiming at protecting the region's environment and its exceptional value to the benefit of future generations. It was created by several land owners in 1992, at a time when "sustainable development", which is now the cornerstone of all development policies, was not yet so popular. You then showed, together with your partners, a visionary conception of conservation that is now shared by most of the actors in this field: the conception that wildlife and habitats are assets that can ensure benefits to entire communities and that they should therefore be restored (when necessary), managed wisely and protected for the future.

We are very sensitive to your action as our well known CIRAD (Centre for International Research in Agriculture for Development) has been working in the same field with the competent Zimbabwean authorities and institutions continuously for nearly twenty years now. By training high level Zimbabwean executives of the National Parks Authority and academics in the field of wildlife, with a particular focus on the interests of the local populations, we contribute to the future of the mission you embraced and give Zimbabweans tools of empowerment in this particular area.

The Save Valley Conservancy now covers an area of 3.400 square kilometres and is one of the most successful conservancies in the country. Its main achievement is probably the protection of endangered species from extinction, particularly the black Rhino and the painted dog. Unfortunately, we see every day that the fight against poachers is far from over and that the role played by the Save Valley Conservancy is more needed than ever.

However, the distinction awarded tonight is not to the Save Valley Conservancy but to you, personally, Dear Clive Stockil. So allow me to add to these words I have just consecrated to your institution, the tributes that I dedicate to you personally.

Your fight in favour of wildlife is not limited to the creation and the management of the Conservancy, but is a long progression, from the beginning of your career as a guide and professional hunter. It may seem surprising but it is probably at that time that you got to know and appreciate the value of wildlife. Soon after, you became responsible for wildlife management at Hippo Valley Estate.

But your real awareness of the problem of wildlife conservation came in 1982, with the conflict between the Shangaans and the National Parks Authority. The Shangaans, a traditional group living in the South-East of Zimbabwe, had been moved off their land in the 1970's to allow the creation of the Gonarezhou National Park. The Shangaans, who used to hunt wildlife for their subsistence, were forbidden to kill animals. They began to see wildlife as a nuisance, damaging their homes and destroying their crops. As a result, they were forced to poach and many of them were arrested.

So in 1982, thanks to your knowledge of the Shangaan language, you were a mediator of this conflict and an agreement was reached between the National Parks Authority and the Shangaans : they were allowed to use the benefits of wildlife for the development of their community, giving them an incentive to preserve the animals on their land and in the National Park. They received the meat and a percentage of the revenue from commercial hunting on their land, and the funds were used to improve their living conditions with schools, clinics and electricity and water supplies.

The success of your mediation pushed you to create a programme called Campfire (Communal Areas Management Programme For Indigenous Resources). The programme seeks to empower rural communities for conservation and sustainable development through a number of different activities, in particular harvesting natural resources. Campfire helps manage the wildlife and it's sometimes overpopulation and generates profits for local communities.

You have proved that economic development and conservation of wildlife are not incompatible. Chiredzi Wildlife Investments and the Save Valley Conservancy, that you founded, are an example of this new trend. Thus your conservation efforts that I mentioned earlier are mostly self financed by the activities you propose: lodges, safaris, fishing, hunting permits and trophies, cultural tours,...

Finally, you offered your large experience to support the same approach in other conservation areas, and contributed to the linking of the Save Valley to Gonarezhou National Park, and beyond to the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park.

All your achievements have contributed a lot to the cause of wildlife, preservation of biodiversity, but also improved the livelihoods of the communities that dwell in and around the conservancy and their perception of nature. It is a good way to develop tourism activities and attract investments that will benefit the whole country. It will also encourage other people, not only in Zimbabwe but in other countries of the continent, to follow your steps.

Your passions, your perseverance despite many challenges, and your successes have been considered exemplary by the President of the Republic and justify the recognition by France, who awards you today the Order of Merit. You see that the colour of the ribbon is blue. It is a reminiscence of the most famous French royal Order of the Holy Spirit. So this spirit will now be upon you.

This explains the honour I feel when handing you this medal, because by honouring you, France shows its attachment to the protection of the environment, that it consistently defends in all the international forums and of which wildlife conservation is a critical aspect.

Clive Stockil, on behalf of the President of the Republic, we knight you in the National Order of Merit.

**French National Order of Merit award Presentation,**  
**Acceptance and response.**

**Ambassador PONGE, Government representatives,**  
**ZTA Chair Mrs. Hativagone, Colleagues, Invited guests**

26 July 2001

It is with humility that I accept this prestigious award. The success of the program for which this award has been granted could not have been achieved were it not for the team effort of all those involved. The process of evaluating land use and sustained production of natural resources in the marginal rain fall areas of south east Zimbabwe presented many challenges but also was without doubt, been truly rewarding.

I wish to acknowledge and recognise those organisation and individuals who have contributed to the successful development of the Save Valley Conservancy. (SVC)

1. Parks and Wildlife Management Authority  
(D G Mr. Vitalis Chadenga)
2. Veterinary Services
3. European Union / CIRAD / PARSEL,  
Ambassador Aldo Dell'Araccia
4. Lowveld Rhino Trust (Raoul Du Toit)
5. WWF Dr. Shumba
6. Beit Trust (Tim Johnson)
7. Chairman of the Save Valley Conservancy Trust  
(Alderman Abraham Sithole)
8. Save Valley Wildlife Services / Delta Corporation  
(Alastair Wright)
9. International Finance Corporation
10. US Dep't of the interior (Doug Crowe)
11. Care for the wild
12. Partner – Lin Barrie, for support and  
encouragement.
13. All the members of the Save Valley  
Conservancy, rep (David Goosen & Ox Hacking)

## Brief Project history

1. Drought
2. Land use feasibility study, three corner stones, Environment, Economics and Socio Political
3. Restocking
4. Rhino
5. Elephant
6. Buffalo
7. Plains game
8. Predators
9. Fencing
10. Constitution
11. Research
12. Participation in the implementation of the WLBLRP

The Save Valley Conservancy in developing ecosystem management, and promoting wise and sustainable use of our natural resources whilst recognising the incredible diversity of both habitat and wildlife species which this country has been blessed.

Has provided a valuable extension to Governments far sighted and progressive plan in integrating the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP) with the SVC to create the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA) this has resulted in the Government gazetting the SVC as a tourism development zone

The SVC is geographically well positioned to take advantage of the tourism potential which exists within the sub-continent.

Key factors of National importance are.....

1. Buffalo International Airport
2. The Gonarezhou National Park
3. The Great Zimbabwe Monuments
4. The Save Valley Conservancy
5. Easy access to and from Victoria Falls and Bazaruto Archipelago

Tourism has the potential of becoming one of Zimbabwe's biggest exports with the potential of producing up to 10% of the country's GDP.

Zimbabwe's unique selling point (USP) in addition to the Victoria Falls and the Great Monument is the wilderness areas and the diverse wildlife to be found in their natural environments.

Zimbabwe is truly a **World of Wonders**.

Changana Proverb..... Ha hi ndleleni..... pfuka wa ha lehile. We are on track, the journey is long

Allow me to briefly review the achievements and challenges of this journey.

As mentioned earlier the three fundamentals of sustainable development are Environment, Economics and Socio Political. These are as important today as they were twenty years ago. It would be remiss of me not to take this opportunity to call on both our Government and the International community to recognise the need, and to contribute to consolidating the hard earned successes of this important program.

A brief look at each factor.....

### **Environment**

The rehabilitation of the environment has been largely successful; the return to wilderness of contiguous eco systems with the restocking of all species of wildlife

which naturally occurred in the area, thus creating a world class tourism destination has been achieved.

The challenge to this resource is the escalating poaching threat, particularly the recent upsurge of the Rhino poaching, this if allowed to continue will threaten one of this country's USP's and conservation icons.

Urgent need by the Public, Private and International community to address this threat is needed now.

### **Economics**

I call on the International community to review their policy on Zimbabwe as a tourist destination. Tourism provides the necessary funding to meet the costs of maintaining these valuable conservation areas, the survival of these unique eco systems and the wildlife that live within, should not be seen as only National assets but ultimately must be recognised as global assets. When the last wilderness disappears or the last rhino is butchered for its horn, this will be a loss to the entire world.



My challenge to the diplomatic community is let's speedily work towards promoting Zimbabwe as a preferred tourist destination. Let's get back to the pre 2000 statistics of two million foreign tourist arrivals per annum. We need direct flights from Europe, the Americas and Asia.

Economic viability of conservation programs are key to their sustainability.

### **Socio Political**

I call on Government to urgently review and to finalise through a participatory process a progressive and implementable policy frame work, to create an enabling environment for the development of the wildlife / tourist industry, for without this, not only will we lose one of Zimbabwe's most valuable and finite resource, but we will also lose investment opportunities which will help in rebuilding the national economy, and in the final analysis fail to meet the Socio Political objectives.

As previously mentioned this was a team effort, it remains a team effort, cooperation and determination

by all stakeholders will ensure continued success for the benefit of all.

In closing I would like to thank the French Ambassador who on behalf of the French President honoured me with this prestigious award and for hosting this special occasion.

I would also like to thank all of you for your support and sharing this accession with me.

Let's not forget we **DO** live in a **World of Wonders**.

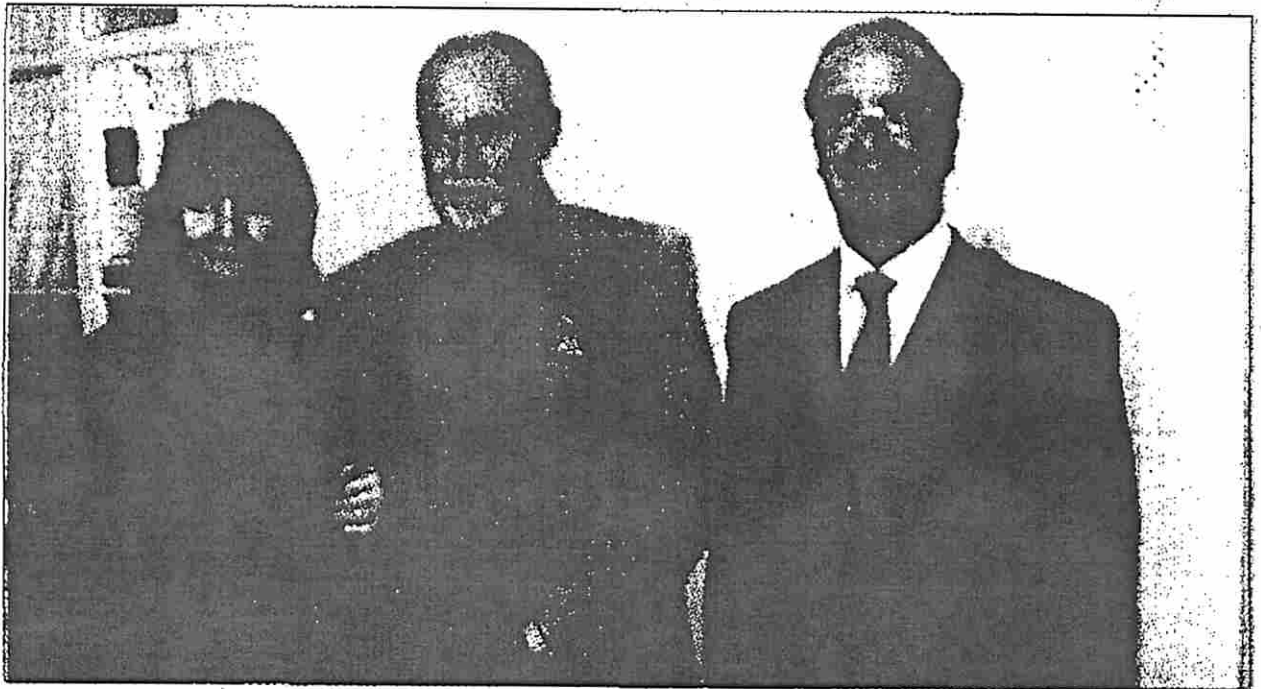
Merci

Ta Tenda

Hi Kesile

Thank you.

# Zimbabwe conservationist knighted by French president



**HONOURED:** Conservationist Clive Glen Stockil and wife Lin with French ambassador to Zimbabwe Francois Ponge shortly after being presented with the French National Order of Merit (Blue badge)

**PATRICE MAKOVA**  
FEATURES EDITOR

**T**he Save Valley Conservancy is a wildlife conservation leader in Zimbabwe and Africa as a whole. Situated in the South Eastern Lowveld, it is a habitat of enormous diversity of plant, animal and bird species in an area of over 3 400 square kilometres.

Conservationist, Clive Glen Stockil, is a founder member of Save Valley Conservancy, the largest private conservancy in the World and for decades he helped initiate projects such as intensive Rhino protection, private game safaris, limited hunting concessions, and multi-species research into the viability of mixed wild and domesticated animal populations on common land.

French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, has thus honoured Stockil with the "French Order of Merit" for his outstanding contribution to conservation efforts in the Save Valley, a feat achieved by a few in the whole World.

The National Order of Merit is an award given to a person bestowed with outstanding military or civil virtues and whose purpose above all is to serve their country, serve their values and also serve in favour of other people.

activities you propose: lodges, safaris, fishing, hunting permits and trophies, cultural tours," he said. Stockil also offered his huge experience to support the same approach in other conservation areas and contributed to the linking of the Save Valley to Gonarezhou National Park and beyond to the Great Limpopo Trans-frontier Park.

The achievements have not only contributed a lot to the cause of wildlife, preservation of biodiversity, but also improved the livelihoods of the communities that dwell in and around the conservancy and their perception of nature.

"It is a good way to develop tourism activities and attract investments that will benefit the whole country. It will also encourage other people, not only in Zimbabwe, but in other countries of the continent to follow your steps," said the French Ambassador. Stockil welcomed the honour bestowed on him by the French saying the success of the Save Valley Conservancy project was a team effort through co-operation and determination by all stakeholders.

He said the project developed an ecosystem management system and promoted wise and sustainable use of natural resources whilst recognizing the incredible diversity of both habitat and wildlife species which the country is blessed with.

The order was created in 1963 by General de Gaulle to distinguish not only those who brought the highest contribution in defending the country, but also to its intellectual, moral and economic development.

France's Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Francois Ponge, knighted Stockil with the National Order of Merit on behalf of President Sarkoz.

Ambassador Ponge said the Save Valley Conservancy is protecting the region's environment and its exceptional value for the benefit of future generations. The conservancy was created by several land owners in 1991 at the height of a devastating massive drought which served as a catalyst to change overall land use from cattle ranching to conservation, at a time when sustainable development, which is now the cornerstone of all development policies, was not yet so popular.

Ambassador Ponge said Stockil said his partners showed a visionary conception of conservation that wildlife and habitats are assets that can ensure benefits to entire communities and should therefore be restored, managed wisely and protected for the future. He said France is sensitive to such actions as demonstrated by its Centre for International Research in Agriculture for Development (CIRAD) which has been working in the same field with Zimbabwean authorities and institutions for nearly 20 years now.

CIRAD is training high level Zimbabwean executives of the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and academics in the field of wildlife, with a particular focus on the interests of the local populations.

"We contribute to the future of the mission Stockil embraced and gave Zimbabweans tools of empowerment in this particular area," Ambassador Ponge said.

He said Save Valley Conservancy's main achievement was the protection of endangered species from extinction, particularly the black Rhino and the painted dog. "Unfortunately, we see every day that the fight against poachers is far from over and that the role played by the Save Valley Conservancy is more needed than ever," said the Ambassador.

He said Stockil's real awareness for the problem of wildlife conservation came in 1982, with the conflict between the Shangaans and the National Parks Authority. The Shangaans, a traditional group living in the South-East of Zimbabwe, had been moved off their land in the 1970's to allow for the creation of the Gonarezhou National Park.

The Shangaans, who used to hunt wildlife for their subsistence, were forbidden to kill animals and they began to see wildlife as a nuisance, damaging their homes and destroying their crops. As a result, they were forced to poach and many of them were arrested.

"So it was in 1982, thanks to Stockil's knowledge of the Shangaan language, you were a mediator of this conflict and an agreement was reached between National Parks and the Shangaans," said Ambassador Ponge.

"They were allowed to use the benefits of wildlife for the development of their community, giving them an incentive to preserve the animals on their land in the National Park.

"They received the meat and a percentage of the revenue from commercial hunting on their land and the funds were used to improve their living conditions with schools, clinics and electricity and water supplies."

He said the success of the mediation efforts pushed Stockil to create the highly successful Communal Areas Management Programme For Indigenous Resources (Campfire) which seeks to empower rural communities for conservation and sustainable development through a number of different activities, in particular harvesting natural resources.

Campfire helps manage the wildlife and its, at-times-over population and generates profits for local communities. Ambassador Ponge said Stockil proved that economic development and conservation of wildlife are not incompatible citing the Chiredzi Wildlife Investments and the Save Valley Conservancy that he founded.

"The conservation efforts are mostly self-financed by the

He said this provides a valuable extension to governments for a progressive plan in integrating the Greater Limpopo Trans-frontier Park with the Save Valley Conservancy (SVC) to create the Greater Limpopo Trans-frontier Conservation area which has already gazetted SVC as a tourism development zone.

"The SVC is geographically well-positioned to take advantage of the tourism potential which exists within the sub-continent, with key factors of national importance being Buffalo Range International Airport, the Gonarezhou National Park, The Great Zimbabwe monuments, the Save Valley Conservancy and easy access to and from Victoria Falls and Bazaruto Archipelago in neighbouring Mozambique," Stockil said.

He said Tourism has the potential of becoming one of Zimbabwe's biggest exports with the potential of producing up to 10 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product.

Stockil said Zimbabwe's unique selling point in addition to the Victoria Falls and the Great Zimbabwe Monuments, is the wilderness areas and the diverse wildlife to be found in their natural environments.

He said the three fundamentals of sustainable development are environment, economics and socio-political.

Stockil said the rehabilitation of the environment has been largely successful, with the return to the wilderness of contiguous ecosystems with the restocking of all species of wildlife which naturally occurred in the area, thus creating a world-class tourism destination.

"The challenge to this resource is the escalating poaching threat, particularly the recent upsurge of the Rhino poaching. This, if allowed to continue will threaten one of this country's unique selling points and conservation icons," he said.

Stockil urged the diplomatic community to exert their countries' policies on Zimbabwe as a tourism destination as the sector provides the necessary funding to meet the costs of maintaining valuable conservation areas.

"The survival of unique eco systems and the wildlife that live within, should not be seen as only national assets. When the last wilderness disappears or the last rhino is slaughtered for its horn, this will be a loss of the entire world," he said.

He challenged the international community to speedily work towards promoting Zimbabwe as a preferred tourist destination to enable the country to get back to the pre-2000 statistics of two million foreign tourist arrivals per annum.

"We need direct flights from Europe, the Americas and Asia. Economic viability of conservation programmes is key to their sustainability," said Stockil. The chairman of the Save Valley Conservancy Trust, Alderman Sithole, was excited about the honour bestowed on Stockil, saying it would not have come without the co-operation of the communities, local authorities and all other stakeholders in the area. "Despite challenges posed by the human/wildlife conflicts as animals such as elephants destroy crops, we have managed to implement successful conservation programmes in the Save Valley because of the support and co-operation shown by the likes of Stockil and the local communities who understand the importance of sustainable utilization of their natural resources," added Alderman Sithole.

Stockil was born in Masvingo and has actively been involved in the development and promotion of tourism in Zimbabwe.

He is the pioneer of the Chiredzi Wildlife Investments, a company that produced the first large-scale crocodile and ostrich farm in the Lowveld.

Stockil then developed and managed the first non-consumptive Safari Lodge in Gonarezhou Park which became a popular destination for tourists.

He is the founder member and was once chairman of the Save Valley Conservancy. Stockil also pioneered the first Campfire project working with the Mahenyé community and established River Lodges of Africa - a joint venture company with the Mahenyé community.

Stockil is a board member of the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA).